

**Memorandum - ( ) page fax to: Jack Tunheim**

**To: Jack Tunheim**

**From: Tom Samoluk**

**Date: December 28, 1995**

**Re: WMAL Radio (DC) Live Telephone Interview; Thurs., Dec. 28th, 10-11 pm (CST)**

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**I. Introduction**

You are scheduled to do a live telephone interview on WMAL's late night talk show tonight, Thursday, December 28, 1995, from 10:00 to 11:00 p.m. (CST). Our contact at the station and the host of the show, Rita Foley, will call you at your home a few minutes before the interview is scheduled to begin. Just in case there is a problem, the studio number is (202) 686-3010.

This memorandum contains suggested talking points for the interview. Several of them are basic ones which we have used in the past. Updated talking points have been added to reflect the Board's recent activities, which will be the focus of the interview since Foley interviewed you once before (March 7, 1995). I have provided information about today's documents release and recent news clips on other releases to the radio station. This information is attached to for your quick reference.

Please note that if the interviewer does not want to spend a lot of time on the background of the Board and is most interested in recent activities, Section III will be the most helpful.

**II. Basic Talking Points**

1. The ARRB is an independent federal panel, consisting of five private citizens.
2. The Board's mandate is to identify and secure the Kennedy assassination records.
3. It is up to the Board to determine which records are to be made public immediately and which ones will have postponed release dates.
4. The purpose of the law and the Board's work is to provide a full record to the American public, make it available at the National Archives, and allow interested parties to draw their own conclusions about what happened in Dallas 32 years ago.
5. The Board is not re-investigating the assassination of President Kennedy. Our focus is collecting assassination records.

6. The Congress created the Board to have an independent, cost-effective and accountable process for the review and release of these documents.

7. The reality is that there continues to be an intense, unabated interest in the assassination, as reflected in the number of books and documentaries that are still being done. Requests from the public for federal records were showing no sign of slowing and federal agencies were continuing to devote enormous resources to the task of responding to these requests and litigating many of the requests. That costs money. It also costs money to unnecessarily keep records classified. In fact, The Washington Post recently reported that the federal government spends an estimated \$16 billion a year to maintain a system of secrecy. The Review Board will get as many records out in the public domain as possible in the next couple of years. In the long run, the Review Board will have saved a lot of money and resources.

### III. Recent Activities of the Review Board

1. The Review Board is deeply into the process of reviewing and releasing previously classified information. We are meeting regularly in Washington. The focus to date has been on CIA and FBI documents. These early decisions by the Board involve difficult issues related to informants and intelligences sources and methods. They are obviously sensitive issues and are important because of their relevancy to many other documents which the Board will be reviewing in the future.

2. Since mid-July, the Review Board has been releasing CIA documents, many of which had previously been available only in redacted form. These documents relate primarily to Lee Harvey Oswald's visit to Mexico City only weeks before the assassination. Most are now available to the American public in full. Some have a few redactions, but substantive information related to the assassination has been released. (As an example, you could cite the CIA document which is the subject of one of the attached Associated Press story regarding the possible existence of another copy of an "intercept" of an Oswald telephone conversation with the Soviet embassy in Mexico City, which was discovered after the assassination. This is a good example of the Review Board and the JFK Act "in action" with the Board exercising its authority to release the substance of the relevant section of the document, while still protecting the actual text because of the sensitive information it contained about sources and methods. Another example is the Homer Echevarria document which is the subject of the attached Reuters story.)

3. Today's release of the FBI/Swiss documents (Documents - "before and after" - are attached, along with news release and Reuters story) demonstrate a number of points which are worth making:

a. An important part of the historical record has been "beefed up." It is important because there has been a lot written about Oswald's' pre-assassination travels

- b. The records were aggressively pursued by Review Board
  - c. FBI had initially taken an aggressive stance by appealing to the President and the Board had to deal with that for the first time with this group of documents
  - d. Importance of having independent body is demonstrated
  - e. Records show the lengths that the FBI was going to three years before the assassination to find out what Oswald was doing and whether or not someone was posing as Oswald -- Oswald had people's attention even at this point
  - f. American public now gets to see what has been withheld for 35 years
  - g. In many instances blacked out documents lead to speculation. In this instance, we now know that the FBI was protecting a relationship with a foreign government
  - h. Process worked -- the Review Board got the records out and now the American public and historians can make their own judgments about how these documents fit into the puzzle
4. As mentioned earlier, the Board has agreed with the CIA and the FBI that some information relating to sensitive intelligence sources and methods should not be publicly released at this time. We are exercising careful independent judgment, just as the Congress had envisioned. Consistent with the law, we are balancing the need to protect still sensitive government information versus the public's right to know.
5. It is worth noting that the Board has held public hearing on identifying and locating assassination records in New Orleans, Washington, Dallas and Boston to allow for public input and assist the Board in fulfilling its mandate. In connection with our most recent public hearing in New Orleans, the Review Board obtained a significant number of original records related to the assassination investigation and prosecution of Clay Shaw by District Attorney Jim Garrison. We are continuing to pursue additional records which should be in the Collection at the National Archives.
6. The Review Board also recently announced that it has launched an initiative to collect original films and photographs relevant to the assassination. We are hoping that individuals who possess, or know the location of, original films and photographs will contact us. The only way to ensure the preservation of the films and photos is to house them at the National Archives. They are a critical part of the historical record of the assassination and the American public should have access to them.

7. 1996 will undoubtedly be a busy year of the Review Board. We hope to release many records. The difficult issues on which the Board spent time in 1995 will result in records which contain similar types of redactions being released in 1996.

#### **IV. "Broader Implication" Talking Points**

1. The Act which created the Review Board has given the American public an extraordinary and unprecedented opportunity to gain insight into its government and recent history.
2. The Board has the opportunity not only to make publicly available records that may clarify the facts surrounding the assassination, but also, along the way, the opportunity to redefine the meaning of, and need for, secrecy in government.
3. The unprecedented powers given to an independent panel of private citizens will also hopefully help to restore a measure of confidence in government.
4. The controversy surrounding the Kennedy assassination is unlikely to disappear even after the Board's work is completed, But, the American public will know that no information about the assassination is being hidden by the government. Perhaps we will see a way for government business to be conducted more effectively -- and more openly -- in the future.