

NEWS RELEASE

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FBI WITHDRAWS PRESIDENTIAL APPEAL OF ALL REMAINING DOCUMENTS RELEASED BY
JFK ASSASSINATION RECORDS REVIEW BOARD

The Assassination Records Review Board, an independent Federal agency, announced today that the FBI has withdrawn all of its pending appeals to the President opposing Review Board decisions to release previously classified information in 110 documents (including duplicates) pertaining to the assassination of President John F. Kennedy.

The Review Board voted to release the FBI documents at issue during meetings conducted from May through November 1996. The FBI subsequently appealed the Board's decisions to President Clinton, but did not brief these appeals pending a Presidential decision on 21 earlier appeals that had been fully briefed. The FBI withdrew appeals on those 21 documents on December 13, 1996.

"The FBI's decision to withdraw all of its remaining appeals sets an important precedent," said John R. Tunheim, Board Chairman and U.S. District Court Judge for the District of Minnesota.

In a recent letter to White House Counsel Charles Ruff, FBI General Counsel Howard Shapiro notified the White House that the FBI was withdrawing "all outstanding appeals" opposing the release of information in 110 different records that had previously been classified as "Secret." In his letter, Shapiro said that the FBI had "resolved all remaining issues with the Board and, consequently, hereby withdraw all pending appeals." The appealed documents include information on the FBI's investigations of Lee Harvey Oswald while he was residing in the Soviet Union, foreign reaction to the assassination of President Kennedy, the background investigation of Marina Oswald, and other investigations undertaken

following the Nov. 22, 1963 assassination.

The FBI had previously argued that releasing the information in the assassination records would prejudice current foreign counterintelligence operations and harm foreign relations. The Review Board determined that public interest in the information outweighed the evidence that the FBI offered to prevent release of the information.

The FBI is one of the leading Federal agencies in releasing previously classified documents relating to the Kennedy assassination. On top of the tens of thousands of records it released following the passage of the JFK Assassinations Records Collection Act of 1992, the FBI has unilaterally released nearly 2,000 previously classified documents in addition to the more than 1,300 documents released pursuant to votes of the Review Board.

The FBI will transfer the appealed documents to the National Archives where they will be placed into The President John F. Kennedy Assassination Records Collection.

The Review Board was established by the President John F. Kennedy Assassination Records Collection Act, which was signed into law by President George Bush. The five members of the Board were appointed by President Clinton, confirmed by the U.S. Senate and sworn in on April 11, 1994. The law gives the Review Board the mandate and the authority to identify, secure and make available all records related to the assassination of President Kennedy. It is the responsibility of the Board to determine which records are to be made public immediately and which ones will have postponed release dates.