

NEWS RELEASE

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JFK ASSASSINATION RECORDS REVIEW BOARD SEEKS ADDITIONAL YEAR FOR RELEASE OF REMAINING SECRET FILES

The Assassination Records Review Board announced today that it is seeking an additional year to complete the release of secret government files related to the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. The Board requests the extension in its fiscal 1996 annual report that was submitted to President Clinton, Congressional leaders and relevant Congressional committees and federal agencies.

“The Review Board has overseen the release of approximately 10,000 previously classified documents related to the assassination of President Kennedy,” said Judge John R. Tunheim, Chairman of the Review Board. “At the end of 1996, the President John F. Kennedy Assassination Records Collection, housed at the National Archives, had grown to approximately 3.3 million pages of documents.”

Highlights of the Review Board’s work to date include the release of:

- * Thousands of CIA documents on Lee Harvey Oswald and the assassination of President Kennedy that make up the CIA’s “Oswald File;”
- * Thousands of records from the investigation of the House Select Committee on Assassinations (HSCA), including a controversial staff report on Oswald’s trip to Mexico City only weeks before the assassination;
- * Thousands of records from the FBI’s “core” file and related assassination files;
- * The original Marine Corps file on Oswald; and
- * Long-lost films taken in Dallas on November 22, 1963.

However, tens of thousands of other assassination records await review and the identification process for new records continues. As a result, the Board has asked the Congress to grant a one-year extension that would permit it to review the important records that were requested of the FBI and the CIA in the course of the HSCA investigation. The so-called CIA “Sequestered Collection” consists of 17 boxes of miscellaneous “working files,” 63 boxes of CIA and HSCA-originated records, as well

as 72 reels of microfilm. The FBI-HSCA Collection totals approximately 280,000 pages.

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The Review Board's 1996 annual report cites early delays caused by an 18-month period between passage of the Act and the appointment of Review Board members, including the review of agency files in the absence of Review Board guidance, the difficulty in locating and constructing of office space suitable for the storage of highly classified material, and hiring a staff and obtaining Top Secret security clearances for each individual. "The protracted start-up prevented the Review Board from being able to engage in the efficient review of records until the second half of its first year," Tunheim said. The Board first released previously classified documents in July 1995.

The annual report also points out that the authors of the legislation creating the Review Board believed that the task would take three years. That estimate was based on the best available information at the time, but the legislation established an unprecedented process. There was no way of knowing the problems of scale and the complexity that the Board has encountered, nor was there any way to factor in the comprehensive approach taken by the Board in fulfilling its mandate. Many agencies have yet to complete their review and the Board is still seeking their compliance.

"It would be a shame to allow the Review Board to expire when it has done so much to enhance the historical record of the assassination of President Kennedy," Tunheim said. "Continuing the Review Board for one additional year will provide the information that the American public has a right to see and allow us to submit to the Congress a truly complete final report."

The Review Board consists of the following members:

Honorable John R. Tunheim, Chair; U.S. District Court Judge, District of Minnesota.

Dr. Henry F. Graff; Professor Emeritus of History at Columbia University.

Dr. Kermit L. Hall; Dean, College of Humanities, and Professor of History at The Ohio State University.

Dr. William L. Joyce; Associate University Librarian for Rare Books and Special Collections at Princeton University.

Dr. Anna K. Nelson; Distinguished Adjunct Historian in Residence at The American University.

At present, the Review Board has until October 1, 1997 to fulfill its mandate.