FOREIGN GOVERNMENTS

1. Introduction

In an effort to compile a more complete record of the assassination, the Review Board focused considerable attention on an effort to obtain copies of records contained in the files of foreign governments. The JFK Act specifically instructed the Board to take steps to obtain such records which have been the object of much interest since the assassination. In particular, the Board focused much of its efforts on the KGB records thought to be maintained both in Russian and in Belarus, and on Cuban and Mexican government records. Congress anticipated, and indeed required in the JFK Act that the Department of State to assist the Review Board by attempting to secure from Russia all Soviet Government records relating to the assassination. While the Department of State occasionally helped facilitate contacts with foreign counterparts, and individual State Department employees provided helpful assistance and advice, overall the Department of State was more of a hindrance than a help to the Review Board. The Board certainly expected much more help than it received from a Department that obviously did not consider pursuit of foreign records about the Kennedy assassination to be a priority. Letters of request to the Department from the Board went unanswered for long periods of time, cables that contained communications from foreign sources or from United States embassy personnel to the Board sat for months on the desks of State Department employees without being transmitted to the Board, and important opportunities were missed because the Department did not believe the issue was important enough to raise. The Review Board has identified significant records, but does not believe that these collections will not be obtained in full until the Department of State determines that such an effort is an important priority.

2. Russia

The Review Board believes that the records of the former KGB exist in Moscow that reflect surveillance of Lee Harvey Oswald and Marina Oswald during 1959-1962 and that reflect the Soviet investigation into the circumstances of the Kennedy assassination. The United States Embassy made requests for these records and a Review Board delegation later visited Moscow and met with representatives of three different archives where it was believed that records existed. The Board received a number of individual records which have been released in the JFK Collection but was unsuccessful in obtaining permission to review or copy the larger sets of files which exist in Moscow. The Board received a significant boost to its efforts when Vice President Gore asked Russian Prime Minister Chernomyrdin in March 1998 to release the files. Unfortunately, the issue was not again raised in September 1998 during the Clinton-Yeltsin summit meeting. Additional approaches to the Russians continue, but the Review Board strongly recommends that the United States government in general and the State Department in particular should continue to pursue the release of these important KGB records.

3. Belarus

With the assistance of the United States Embassy in Minsk, Chairman Tunheim, Board Member Hall and Executive Director Marwell in November 1996 reviewed the extensive KGB

surveillance file kept in Minsk by the Belarussian KGB. The file details over two years of extensive surveillance and analysis by the KGB of Lee Harvey Oswald during the time that he resided in the Belarussian capital. Some of these records were utilized by Norman Mailer in his book *Oswald's Tale*. The Board was unable to obtain a copy of the file, in part due to the deteriorating relationship between the United States and Belarus in 1997-98. Mailer's collaborator in *Oswald's Tale*, Lawrence Schiller agreed in response to the Board's request to donate copies of documents from the Minsk files, but the records will not be released in the JFK Collection until a later date. Additional efforts are still underway to obtain the files which are unquestionably of strong historical interest. Again, the Board strongly recommends that all possible efforts be made to obtain for the American people this important record of the activities of accused assassin Lee Harvey Oswald during the years prior to the assassination.

3. Cuba (see my edits)
4. Mexico (see my edits).

5. Other Governments

The Review Board requested and received records of other foreign governments for inclusion in the JFK Collection, including England, ... (what do we have to add here?)