

Assassination Records Review Board

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NEWS RELEASE

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JFK ASSASSINATION RECORDS REVIEW BOARD VOTES TO RELEASE CLASSIFIED CIA INFORMATION FROM OSWALD FILES

The Assassination Records Review Board, an independent federal agency overseeing the review and release of records related to the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, has formally voted to release in full sixteen documents from the CIA's Oswald files which contain information that the Agency has kept classified. These are the Review Board's first formal determinations to release records under the President John F. Kennedy Assassination Records Collection Act of 1992 (JFK Act). Notification of the Board's decisions has been sent to President Clinton and he now has 30 days to agree or disagree with these decisions.

"The unanimous votes to release these CIA documents represent a critical step for the Review Board and an important chapter in the history of the Kennedy assassination," said John R. Tunheim, Chair of the Review Board. "We are demonstrating to the American public that five private citizens are playing the key role in determining what information from the files of the federal government they will be allowed to see regarding this tragic historical event."

The CIA documents which the Review Board voted to release in full principally relate to the opening of Lee Harvey Oswald's "201 file" and to certain issues connected with his visit to Mexico City in the fall of 1963, only weeks before President Kennedy was assassinated. These documents have been publicly available, but contain many redactions. The redactions are based upon one of two provisions in the JFK Act which permit the postponement of information that the Agency thinks: (a) would reveal "an intelligence agent whose identity currently requires protection," or (b) would reveal "an intelligence source or method which is currently utilized" and the disclosure of which "would interfere with the conduct of intelligence activities." After careful review of the documents and the evidence supplied by the CIA, the Review Board voted unanimously to release the records in their entirety without redaction.

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The Review Board's decisions were based on several factors, including: (a) the significant historical interest in the documents in questions, as they involve core issues surrounding the CIA's records relating to Lee Harvey Oswald; (b) the absence of evidence that the release of information would cause harm to the United States; and (c) the lack of evidence that the release of information would cause harm to persons whose names (or pseudonyms) are being revealed.

The Assassination Records Review Board was established by the JFK 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.

The Review Board consists of the following members:

John R. Tunheim, Chair; Minnesota Chief Deputy Attorney General.

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; Adjunct Professor of History at American University.

The Review Board has until October 1, 1996 to fulfill its mandate, plus an additional year at the Board's discretion to complete its responsibilities.

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