

February 8, 1996

Mr. Paul L. Hoch  
1525 Acton St.  
Berkeley, CA 94702

Dear Paul:

This is a follow-up to my letter of January 30, 1996, in response to your earlier correspondence with the Review Board. I will attempt to address the points which you raised, in the order that they appear in your letter. Hopefully, along the way I add some other points of interest.

First, I would like to provide a general description of the Review Board's activities. The Board is continuing to review assassination records held by federal agencies, primarily the FBI and CIA. Obviously, this is where the majority of the records are located. In addition, the Board is simultaneously seeking to locate other records held by federal agencies that are relevant to the assassination and should be included in the JFK Collection. The Board is also seeking relevant records held by state and local government agencies, and records which are in private hands. It is important to note that although the public side of the Board's work has been the release of CIA and FBI records, many other initiatives are being undertaken at the same time.

Second, we do not have a transcript of the remarks made by John Tunheim and David Marwell at the COPA conference. However, I believe that COPA has a videotape which is available.

Third, you are correct that the Board has been open to the views of researchers on a range of issues related to the assassination, consistent with our governing law and the legislative history of the JFK Act which encouraged the Board to use the expertise of researchers. Clearly there are judgments which have to be made about what leads are going to be pursued. However, the members of the Board and staff believe that it is critical that the public know that they have the opportunity to have input, which is carefully reviewed.

Fourth, my understanding is that as the Board releases records to the National Archives for inclusion

in the JFK Collection, they are kept segregated for researchers to request them by referring to the date of release by the Board. At the time of your visit in May, the Board had not released any records. Since that time there have been many releases by the Board. As you are on our mailing list, you should be receiving advisories when the Board votes to release records and when the actual release of records is made to the Archives. Our advisories contain brief descriptions of what records are being released. When there are releases of records by federal agencies which do not involve the Review Board, the National Archives does a news release describing the latest addition to the Collection. Perhaps if you do not receive these mailings you should request that the Archives send you their news releases dating back to 1993, when the first post-JFK Act releases were made to the Collection.

Fifth, the Review Board has been contacting individuals outside of the federal agencies regarding their knowledge of the existence and location of assassination records. The Review Board has not been publicizing these efforts to allow interviews to proceed in an effective and efficient manner. As you are aware, at the conclusion of our work all of the Review Board records will become part of the JFK Collection and will be available to the public. In the interim, as we seek to interview various individuals, we may want to seek your input on the lines of inquiry which we should pursue.

Sixth, the "Harvey Lee Oswald" reference and FBI file number of which Peter Dale Scott has advised the Board is the subject of our attention. In another matter brought to our attention by Peter, we were able to convince the CIA to release a particular document which was of great interest to him. He expressed his appreciation for the Board's efforts and I believe that he would also relate that sentiment to you.

Seventh, much of the Review Board's attention has been focused on Mexico City because it is clearly an important area and because of the manner in which the CIA files are organized. This focus is not a result of a predisposition toward any person, theory, or viewpoint. In addition, please be assured that the attention to Mexico City is not at the expense of resources being devoted to other areas of interest including the ones which you mentioned (military intelligence and Oswald, the autopsy, Robert Kennedy's 1963 anti-Castro efforts and the Oswald-Elrod-Masen-Nonte story). I should mention that Mr. Tim Wray is heading our efforts relative to military records, including military intelligence files. Please feel free to call him at (202) 724-0088, ext. 230, if you would like to talk to him directly about any matters relevant to military records.

Eighth, if I may take you up on your offer, it would be helpful if you provided additional information relative to your FOIA requests on:

The FBI interview of Louis Kutner;

Ed Butler; and

FBI file 105-1095-129. This file is not in the Collection. Specifically, any information on which pamphlet is being referred to and its possible location would be of assistance.

Ninth, based on our general understanding of the FBI personnel files and the manner in which commendations and reprimands are handled, it is doubtful that there are any substantive details about the autopsy in the personnel files of Sibert and O'Neill. However, if you could provide us with your relevant files, perhaps we would want to take another look at this area.

Tenth, the Board is seeking assassination records from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms. It would be helpful to us if you provided the ATF document which you found in a Secret Service file and submitted in support of your request.

Eleventh, apparently there are computer tapes containing digitized versions of some of the Zapruder film frames in the HSCA files at the National Archives. However, the equipment is not available at the Archives to make use of the tapes. We intend to pursue with the Archives getting these tapes in a format that can be used.

Twelfth, I spoke with Paul Lee several months ago. He was going to provide some comments on issues related to Review Board treatment of FBI symbol numbers. However, I have not received anything from him yet.

Finally, let me take this opportunity before closing to describe some of the steps we are taking relative to medical and ballistics evidence. In brief, we are attempting to track down all relevant forensics evidence and to ensure that the Archives has fully accessible all of the evidence that can be identified.

We hope to be able to close the loop on this area within the next few months. Our staff is tracking all of the known forensics evidence, including verification of the chain of custody and present location of all probative items and analyses, from bullet fragments, to the clothing worn by Lee Harvey Oswald at his arrest, to neutron activation tests. We are focusing primarily on securing items created by (or examined by) the FBI, the Warren Commission, and the HSCA. We would like to include any other probative forensic evidence in addition to the material in government files. Please let us know your thoughts if you would like to add anything for our consideration in this process.

We are also seeking all of the medical evidence from the government files. The staff is now attempting to ensure that all such evidence (with the exception of the autopsy photos--which as you know are excluded by law from coming within our mandate) be declassified and released as soon as possible. Many such medical records (particularly from the HSCA files) have been identified and steps have been taken to get them released immediately. In addition we are actively seeking any materials that are in private hands. For example, the President of Parkland Hospital agreed, pending

confirmation from his Board, to donate all of the records related to the treatment of President Kennedy, Governor Connolly, Lee Harvey Oswald, and Jack Ruby. Finally, we have subpoenaed Doctors Humes and Boswell to appear for depositions, which are now scheduled to take place later this month.

I hope that this provides a somewhat more expanded and clearer view of the activities of the Review Board. Please contact us if you have questions or information. Again, thank you for writing and we look forward to additional input from you in the future.

Sincerely,

Thomas E. Samoluk, Esq.  
Associate Director