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Subject: Final report
Laura, I have at length read the final report, and I write now to provide some comment on it. It is really a marvelous collaborative effort, and I think that you all have collectively outdone yourselves! It reads for the moment like a draft, but it contains lots of really useful and important information. My comments proceed through the draft in the order of the chapters, which I think is probably most functional at this stage. First, as I commented last week, the first chapter in places (esp. p. 14, ff.) tends to sound self-serving and exaggerates the problem of access to government records and investigations of the assassination in order to set up a successful intervention by the Review Board. In setting up the background to the creation of the Board and the problem that we were charged to confront, I think the report should be understated and restrained. In places, it reflects engagement if not emotional involvement which we must take care to avoid. A second problem is the excessive length of some of the paragraphs (e.g., p. 29), though that is easily remedied. The organization of the second chapter is eccentric, moving from composition of the Board and the executive leadership to the definition of an assassination record to our respective nominations and a long section on our answers to questions posed by the Committee after our hearings (this section should be summarized at best and probably deleted)! The section on the definition of an assassination record is too long and detailed, esp. the comments on the definition, and its organization is not readily apparent. (The definition as published in the Federal Register would make an excellent Appendix.) The section from pp. 27 to 34 constitutes a useful summary of Board activity, but then there is at the end a list of witnesses at hearings that is hard to link to the text of the chapter. The third chapter, on the review process, contains a careful, (too?) detailed description of the review process. There was information there that I had not seen before, and that very likely would have made me a more effective Board member had I been more knowledgeable about how the review system was put together and what problems it faced. This chapter is very effective, if perhaps a bit too detailed, in laying that out. I also think this chapter might have emphasized a bit more the nature of the process by which early, unfocused contradictory discussion on a handful of documents produced a gradually defining and specifying "common law" that guided the work of the Board-- and the agencies-- over the last two or more years. The course of evolution of the behavior of the agencies-- sending their PR staff and asking us to trust them-- also changed dramatically and might also be recorded more carefully. (And the substitute language codes on p. 11 of chapter 3 also need more discussion about how they were formulated rather than being buried in a footnote.) I like very much chapter 4, though I am inclined to start it on p. 9, second paragraph. The emphasis would then be on the JFK Act and its terms and the FOIA and Exec. Order provisions

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