

Draft Cable to US Interests Section Havana

February 26, 1997

Assassination Records Review Board

1. The President John F. Kennedy Assassination Records Collection Act of 1992, 44 U.S.C. § 2107 (Supp. V 1994) (JFK Act) was signed into law on October 26, 1992. The JFK Act established a process for identifying and securing all records relating to the assassination of President Kennedy and collecting them in the President John F. Kennedy Assassination Records Collection at the National Archives in College Park, Maryland. The JFK Act also established the Assassination Records Review Board (ARRB) to coordinate and oversee the process. The Department has been working closely with the ARRB to ensure full compliance with these requirements and over a two years ago produced its collection for public access at the National Archives.

Search for Foreign Records

2. The JFK Act envisioned an approach to foreign governments for any records they might maintain. Specifically, Section 10 (b)(2) of the JFK Act states that it is the "sense of Congress that the Secretary of State should contact ... [any] foreign government that may hold information relevant to the assassination and seek disclosure of such information." The Department of State has previously assisted the ARRB in making contacts with the governments of Russia, Belarus, Great Britain, Germany, Mexico, Japan, and France.

Past Contacts with Cuba Relating to the Kennedy Assassination

3. It is believed that the Warren Commission did not make any contact with the Cuban government in 1963-64. The House Select Committee on Assassinations (HSCA) made contact with the Cuban government in 1978. The HSCA, including Chairman Louis Stokes (D-Ohio) made two trips to Cuba in 1978. It is believed that the HSCA spoke with the following persons: President Fidel Castro Ruz, Oscar Fernandez Mell, Armando Torres Santrayll, Ricardo Escartin, Jose Ramon Fernandez, Felipe Villa, Aramis Guetierrez, Eusebio Azcue Lopez, Juan Nilo Otero, Maria Teresa Proenza, Alfredo Mirabal Diaz, Jose Verdacia Verdacia, Orestes Guillermo Ruiz Perez, Rolando Cubela Secades (who was then incarcerated in prison). It is the ARRB's understanding that the Cuban government was cooperative in 1978 and provided a small number of records to the HSCA.

Types of Information Sought

4. In its Congressionally-mandated search for assassination records, the ARRB wishes to make appropriate contacts with Cuban government officials for the purpose of determining whether the government of Cuba has any information or records related to the Kennedy assassination. The types of information of interest to the ARRB include: (1) Lee Harvey Oswald's visit to

the Cuban Consulate in Mexico City in 1963; (2) contacts between the government of the USSR and Cuba regarding Oswald and the assassination; (3) internal investigations by the Cuban government on the Kennedy assassination; (4) activities of Cuban exiles in the US during 1963; and (5) the incarceration of Santo Trafficante in Trescornia prison in 1959.

Approach to Cuban Government through Cuban Interests Section in Washington

5. The ARRB wishes to make its approach to the Cuban Government through the Cuban Interests Section in Washington. To support this effort, the Department will arrange a meeting in the near future between the Cuban Interests Section in Washington and ARRB staff. At that meeting, the ARRB staff will discuss the types of information and records that the ARRB is seeking from the Cuban government and will make some suggestions regarding persons in Cuba who may have knowledge regarding information and records related to the assassination.

Action Requested

6. Post is requested to make appropriate contacts with GOC officials to advise them that inquiries will be made through the Cuban Interests Section in Washington.