

Assassination Records Review Board
600 E Street NW ▪ Suite 208 ▪ Washington, DC 20530

April 19, 1995

TO: *Review Board Members*

FROM: *Sheryl Walter*

RE: *New executive order on national security classification*

Enclosed is a copy of the executive order (E.O. 12958) signed by President Clinton earlier this week setting new government-wide rules for the classification and declassification of national security information. Also included are copies of news clips about the order, the president's signing statement, and the White House press offices release listing highlights of the new order.

This order does not directly affect the work of the Review Board, as the standards for release of information established in the ARCA are still far broader in favor of public release than are the exemptions in this order. However, the order does set a tone of openness, mandates automatic declassification after 25 years (subject to several exemption categories), and establishes an interagency appeals panel to hear appeals of agency denials of mandatory declassification requests or challenges to classification and to review agency exemptions of 25 year old material from automatic

declassification.

This executive order has been in the works for two years and was the focus of bitter interagency battles, with particular objections to earlier drafts raised by the Pentagon and the intelligence community. It is worth noting that in President Clinton's signing statement, he singles out as a category of information that "we must continue to protect . . . that is critical to the pursuit of our national security interests" the identity of clandestine agents.

If you have any questions on this, please let me know.