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DATE: 11-14-2017

JFK Assassination System
Identification Form

Date: 3/31/201

Agency Information

AGENCY : FBI
RECORD NUMBER : 124-10372-10290
RECORD SERIES : HQ
AGENCY FILE NUMBER : 62C-HQ-1029205-1182

Document Information

ORIGINATOR : FBI
FROM : HQ
TO : WH
TITLE :
DATE : 05/10/1996
PAGES : 15
SUBJECTS :
JFKARCA OF 1992
DOCUMENT TYPE : PAPER, TEXTUAL DOCUMENT
CLASSIFICATION : Secret
RESTRICTIONS : 1B; 1C
CURRENT STATUS : Redact
DATE OF LAST REVIEW : 04/01/1999
OPENING CRITERIA : INDEFINITE
COMMENTS : INC PETITION

May 10, 1996

BY HAND

The Honorable William J. Clinton
President of the United States
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

For the reasons set forth in detail in the enclosure, this letter requests that you exercise your authority, under Section 9(d) of the President John F. Kennedy Assassination Records Collection Act of 1992, to postpone public disclosure of portions of thirteen documents ordered released by the Assassination Records Review Board. (U)

Consistent with the spirit of the Act, the FBI has cooperated extensively with the Board and made the broadest disclosure of documents in our history. Over 600,000 pages of material have been transferred to the National Archives, and we are working to transfer another 250,000. We have withheld very little, deferred to the Board whenever possible, and appealed on only one previous occasion. Nonetheless, when vital national interests would be compromised by the release of certain information we have asked the Board to postpone disclosure. Unfortunately, in this instance the Board has refused to accede to our request. (U)

Disclosure of the documents in question would reveal investigative or surveillance techniques used to gather important information from foreign countries. Disclosure of this material would compromise those techniques and impair foreign relations

Working Paper attached

1 - Director
1 - Mr. Kennedy
1 - Mr. R. Bucknam
1 - Mr. Bryant
1 - Ms. Morris
1 - Mr. Perry
PWK:pwk (22)

Deo. Dir. _____
ADD Adm. _____
ADD Inv. _____
Asst. Dir.: _____
Adm. Servs. _____
Crim. Inv. _____
CJIS _____
Info. Mgmt. _____
Insp. _____
Intell. _____
Lab. _____
Legal Coun. _____
Tech. Servs. _____
Training _____
Off. of EEOA _____
Off. Liaison _____
& Int. Affs. _____
Off. of Public _____
& Cong. Affs. _____
TOM Office _____
Telephone Rm. _____
Director's Office _____

1 - Mr. Lewis
1 - Mr. Collingwood
1 - Mr. K. O'Brien
1 - Mr. Maddock
1 - Mr. Bowman
1 - Mr. Divers

1 - Ms. Keeley
1 - Mr. P. Kelley
1 - Mr. D. Evans
1 - ALU Tickler
1 - ALU Library

DECLASSIFIED BY 568 SLG/bcl
ON 3/12/99

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APPROVED:

Director _____
Deputy Director _____
Chief of Staff _____
Asst. Dir. _____
Adm. Servs. _____
Crim. Inv. _____
CJIS _____
Info. Mgmt. _____
Insp. _____
Intell. _____
Lab. _____
Legal Coun. _____
Tech. Servs. _____
Training _____
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& Int. Affs. _____
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TOM Office _____
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Director's Office _____

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The Honorable William J. Clinton

with the concerned countries. Those countries and others in which we have investigative interests will quickly take countermeasures once they realize the significance of the material at issue. Given the inevitable ramifications of such disclosures, the State Department considers release of these documents significantly prejudicial to foreign relations and supports our appeal. (U)

In our view, the gravity of the resulting injury to our intelligence gathering abilities and to our foreign relations far outweighs the interest served by making this information public. I must, consequently, appeal the release of this information.
(U)

Sincerely,

Louis J. Freeh
Director

Enclosure

- 1 - Honorable Warren M. Christopher
The Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
Washington, D.C.
- 1 - The Honorable Jamie S. Gorelick
The Deputy Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
Washington, D.C.
- 1 - Mr. David G. Marwell
Executive Director
Assassination Records Review Board
Washington, D.C.

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Document 10019 is a two-page document that relates to various investigative activities, including an interview of an individual named Cedric Younger Von Roldeston, who was also known as Arthur Swift. Von Roldeston claimed to have visited the Soviet Embassy in Washington, D.C. To confirm this claim, the document reveals that the "lookout logs" maintained by the Bureau on visitors to the Soviet Embassy were checked. Similarly, the document notes that Arthur Swift wrote to, and received a reply from, the Soviet Ambassador, thus revealing the existence of a "mail cover" on the Soviet Embassy. We seek to postpone disclosure of the words "lookout logs" and "USSR Ambassador." (S)(u)

Document 10140 is a two-page teletype that originated in Boston and describes the activities of a mentally disturbed individual. The document is unremarkable from our perspective except for the portion which discloses that the Bureau maintained a "mail cover" on the USSR Embassy. We seek to postpone the word "correspondence" from the document. Similarly, document 124-10027-10405 (HQ 62-109060-1739) is a three-page document that describes the activities of a man named Allen. We seek to postpone language on the second page which would reveal the existence of an FBI "mail cover" on the Soviet Embassy. (S)(u)

Document 10396 originated in New York and concerns a telephone conversation on a dedicated circuit between a correspondent in the United States of Tass, a Soviet government controlled news organization, and an employee in Moscow of Pravda, a communist-party controlled news organization. We intercepted this conversation through technical surveillance of the transoceanic cable on which the circuit was carried. The conversation focused on American press coverage of Lee Harvey Oswald and related matters. We seek to postpone disclosure of the Tass correspondent's name, his Tass affiliation, the identity of the individual to whom he was speaking and her Pravda affiliation, and language which suggests that the information was gleaned from a telephone conversation between the two. (S)

Similarly, document 10048 concerns a telephone conversation between a correspondent of the Polish Government's official newspaper, "Trybuna Ludu," and an attorney hired by the mother of Lee Harvey Oswald. We seek to protect the symbol number for the "informant" mentioned in the document since the number reveals that the information was really obtained from a telephone tap on a diplomatic establishment of the Polish. (S)

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(S)
[government].⁶ We also seek to postpone disclosure of other information in the document which would reveal that the information was derived from a telephone conversation. At least one of the parties to the conversation is alive and would likely recall that the conversation was [telephonic] if this information is not protected, thus confirming the existence of [our tap] (S) (X)

Document 10222 is a two-page teletype that discusses a statement released to the press by the Cuban government. We seek to protect from disclosure those portions of the document, including the symbol number, [that reveal our interception of teletype traffic between the Cuban government in Havana, Cuba and the Cuban Mission to the United Nations in New York, New York.] (S) (X)

Document 124-10027-10133 (HQ 62-109060-2155) is a one-page memorandum that discusses an apparent crank letter sent to the Bureau alleging that President Johnson conspired with communist agents to assassinate President Kennedy. We seek to protect the words "Soviet official" and "Soviet officials in the U.S." since, in context, they demonstrate that we had typewriter specimens of Soviet government typewriters and fingerprint samples of some Soviet officials in the United States. (X)(U)

Discussion

In executing its law enforcement and counter-intelligence missions, the FBI employs a wide variety of investigative techniques and procedures. Some of these methods are widely known. That we implement wiretaps and mail covers to gather information, for example, is hardly a surprise. How, when, where, and under what circumstances we make such interceptions, are, however, closely guarded secrets. Similarly, that we often attempt to "follow the money" through analysis of financial records may be intuitive but how, when, and why we do so are matters the disclosure of which may seriously erode our ability to carry out analogous operations in the future. Further, if the target of such activity is a foreign nation, disclosure of the activity's existence will inevitably prejudice foreign relations. (U)

⁶ In the second paragraph of the State Department memorandum of 4/3/96, the State Department inadvertently refers to the "name of the informant" when discussing this document. Although the document refers to an informant, the source of the information was, as indicated above, [really an intercept of a conversation between two individuals.] (S).

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Even were Russia to pay little heed to the practical aspects of these disclosures, it surely could not diplomatically countenance this direct acknowledgement of our use of the technique to monitor its diplomatic establishment's bank accounts and financial transactions. We cannot with certainty predict the exact nature of the Russian reaction, but we are confident that United States--Russian relations will significantly suffer. The State Department concurs in this view. (S)(u)

Just as importantly, other nations that utilize diplomatic bank accounts and locally issued monies will be sensitized to our ability to monitor their own financial activities. In addition to employing their own countermeasures, we would expect such countries at the least to seek assurances from the United States that we will respect the security of their accounts--assurances that may prove diplomatically difficult if not impossible to provide. Foreign nations could also be expected to argue that our use of such techniques against their establishments and officials violates international treaties and law, as well as diplomatic standards. For these and similar reasons, neither the State Department nor the FBI officially acknowledges that the FBI uses particular techniques to investigate foreign officials or establishments. Given today's uncertain and evolving relationships between the United States and many countries, particularly Russia and the other former members of the Soviet bloc, we cannot afford to reverse that long standing policy now. (S)(u)

We seek to postpone portions of Document 10396 for similar reasons. As noted above, this two-page document originated in New York and reports on a telephone conversation between two Soviet news correspondents, one in New York and one in Moscow. The Board has agreed to postpone disclosure of the symbol number. We are gratified for this action since disclosure of the symbol would have revealed that the document was the fruit of a telephone intercept in New York City. The Board, however, refuses to postpone the name of the subject--the correspondent in New York--and his Tass affiliation, the identity of the individual to whom he was speaking and her Pravda affiliation, and language which suggests that the information was gleaned from a telephone conversation between the two. In other words, the Board refuses to protect the very information that we sought and the Board decided to protect by postponing disclosure of the symbol number. (S)(u)

For virtually identical reasons, we also seek to protect the indicated portions of documents 10048 and 10222. The former concerns an interception of a [telephone] conversation (S)

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between a Polish government news correspondent and an American attorney while the latter reports on [an intercepted teletype sent by one component of the Cuban government to another.] (S)

Again, one may surmise that the FBI has an interest in eavesdropping on the telephone and teletype conversations of the agents of its adversaries without being privy to any classified materials. That, however, does not mean that the how, when, where, and why of such electronic interceptions are well or even hardly known. On the contrary, our abilities in this regard are, and should remain, closely guarded secrets. Electronic intercepts of foreign conversations is an investigative technique that we employ on a daily basis. We cannot afford to compromise its effectiveness by admitting that, as long ago as 1963, we were able to and did intercept a [transoceanic telephone conversation conducted on a dedicated circuit] between two foreign individuals, one of whom was located in the Soviet capitol, or that we were able to and did intercept a [wire transmission from Havana to New York City.] (S) Disclosure would also reveal the speed with which we were able to translate and digest these conversations and transmissions, our interests and priorities, and what we considered important or trivial. Such information will be used to develop and deploy effective countermeasures. ~~(S)~~

Similar arguments apply to documents 10019, 10140, and 124-10027-10405 (HQ 62-109060-1739) concerning mail covers on the Soviet Embassy. Together these documents show that we were able to track a wide variety of correspondence going to and from a number of Soviet officials at the Embassy. Our abilities, interests, uses, and priorities can all be cogently surmised if this information is released. Perhaps more importantly, official acknowledgement of this technique will cause the government concerned and others in which we have investigative interests to reassess the security of their written communication systems, complicating, if not weakening, our collection efforts. ~~(S)~~ (u)

Portions of document 124-10027-10133 (HQ 62-109060-2155) should be protected for essentially the same reasons. Here, however, we would note that our ability to compare typewriting specimens and fingerprints to known samples from Soviet officials is not commonly known or even suspected. Even if it were, an official acknowledgement that we employed such techniques as long ago as the early 1960's under the circumstances outlined in this document would provide foreign governments with ample reason to tighten their security, change their habits, and deploy false leads, making it all the more difficult to execute our counter-intelligence mission. ~~(S)~~ (u)

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Two other points are also worth making. First, if we officially confirm what the public may logically suspect about the nature and extent of our counter-intelligence investigative activities outlined in these documents, the countries in question would be all but compelled to diplomatically respond. We may presume that most nations will tolerate in diplomatic stoicism the clandestine intelligence activities of their peers so long as such activities remain officially covert but no country can be expected to countenance the publicly avowed targeting and investigation of their diplomatic inviolate establishments and agents without reaction. The inevitable ramifications of such official acknowledgements would complicate and impair the relations of even long-standing allies, much less those of former enemies or neutrals. Uncertainties in this arena may adversely affect evolving relationships in others. When the relationships in question are in a state of evolution, such as those between Russia and the United States, the impact of such a disclosure may prove especially harmful. (S)(u)

Second, if we declassify today the investigative techniques that we use when targeting foreign establishments, officials, and agents, we may not under prevailing classification principles keep classified the same information tomorrow.⁷ Thus, even though the consequences of a seemingly innocuous disclosure may be well understood in a particular context, assessing their impact from all other relevant perspectives is difficult at best. If, for example, we declassify our use of mail covers, wire interceptions, lookout logs, money traces, and so forth to investigate Soviet officials in this instance, then all other uses of the same techniques on the same officials in other situations may prove impossible to classify in the future on the grounds that disclosure would compromise foreign relations. Put differently, once we discard the policy against officially acknowledging our use of particular investigative techniques against specific foreign establishments and agents, we can no longer use it to justify withholding similarly sensitive information in the future. Just as importantly, once the policy is breached, we may not be able to use it to shield our use of similar techniques on other countries which we target for surveillance. The same issue, for example, can be expected to arise with regard to our investigation of other members of the former Soviet bloc, [France, Venezuela, Israel], and a large number of other nations. (S)

⁷ See Fitzgibbon v. CIA, 911 F.2d 755 (D.C. Cir. 1990).

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