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ER 78-2313/2

OLC 78-3016

25 AUG 1978

HSCA

Honorable Louis Stokes, Chairman
Select Committee on Assassinations
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Subsequent to our telephone conversation on 16 August, at which time you informed me that subpoenas had been voted by the Committee for four items of information, the matter has been the subject of exchanges between your representatives and mine. I assume that your staff has now made you aware that one of the items had been reviewed by one of your staff representatives the morning of the day before you told me the subpoena was voted. Another was for a memorandum that cannot be located, apparently missing from a file that previously had been reviewed by your representatives. I assume these do not pose a question. The other two items, the subject of this letter, appear to have developed into a different problem.

One of these two remaining items deals with a history of the Mexico City Station, covering the period 1947 to 1969. That history contains only a few pages of reference to the short visit of Lee Harvey Oswald to Mexico City, and to related subsequent events. These pertinent pages have been reviewed by your representatives. Other than these few references the balance of the history deals with operational and management developments over a 22 year period -- subject matter not related in any way to the objectives of your inquiry. In its entirety it constitutes a highly sensitive collection of operational and organizational information, involving intelligence sources and methods, that should receive the most restricted handling.

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Exempt from general
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exemption category 53(1), (2), (3)
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The other item has to do with the so-called "201 file" of a Cuban citizen, and in addition a Covert Action operation directed against several persons, including the subject of the file in question. The activity transcends the time period of the death of President Kennedy, its results evidencing themselves subsequently over the ensuing year and more. The nature of that operation has been described to Mr. Blakey and Mr. Cornwell. It is unusually sensitive, the focus of which is well beyond the subject of your inquiry.

We engaged in discussions with Mr. Cornwell, trying in good faith to arrive at a procedure whereby your staff could have access to relevant materials, and at the same time limit the unnecessary exposure of operational activity that is both sensitive and unrelated to your inquiry. At Mr. Cornwell's request, we took sections of the history designated by him and made them available for review, with knowledgeable officers present to discuss with him any questions that may arise from his review. Similarly, at Mr. Cornwell's directions, we provided the material from the 201 file of the individual of interest to your Committee for the period 1 September 1963 through 31 January 1964. Mr. Cornwell was able to review these various materials only hurriedly on 18 August, and were to be reviewed by him further on his return from Dallas.

On 22 August Mr. Blakey came to review these materials. He declined to review the history on the grounds that he should see it all. Further, Mr. Blakey rejected the principle of any limitation on review of the 201 file of the person in question. He also insisted on seeing the separate operational files as well, although advised that the activity was unusually sensitive and not germane to the subject of your inquiry. In essence, this appeared to negate the progress made to date. However, on 23 August Mr. Blakey returned to the Agency and reviewed the sections of the history selected by Mr. Cornwell. A staff investigator accompanied him and read the 201 file for the period January 1963 through May 1964. In the absence of any statements on the subject we are left with the impression that the issue is still unsettled.

As you know, your Committee has been afforded unprecedented access to the files and information of this Agency. However, the handling of materials is subject to their bearing on the authorized study and

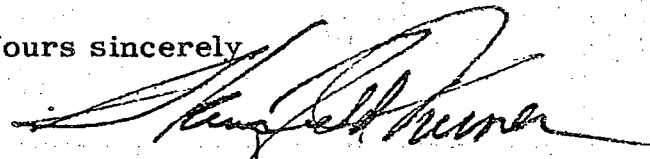
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investigation, subject, of course, to considerations of sensitivity. Until your subpoena, we were unaware that there was a problem different from any number of daily working problems encountered in this inquiry. In fact, as noted, on two of the issues addressed by the subpoena your representatives already had reviewed available material. Subsequent to that, the rather detailed exchanges between your representatives and mine had appeared to have been entered into in good faith, and we had proceeded accordingly.

I trust that we will have the opportunity to discuss this candidly rather than under the conditions resulting from the subpoenas voted by your Committee. Please let me know when you return to Washington so we can discuss further how we might handle the matter.

Yours sincerely



STANSFIELD TURNER

cc: Honorable Richardson Preyer
Honorable Samuel L. Devine

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