

PROTOCOL

Access for the Documents of
THE HOUSE SELECT COMMITTEE ON ASSASSINATIONS

I. Legislative History and Mandate

The Select Committee on Assassinations (the Committee) was first established in the second session of the 94th Congress by House Resolution 1540, 122 Cong. Rec. 141 at H10356 (September 17, 1976). The 95th Congress reconstituted the committee by House Resolution 222, 123 Cong. Rec. H800 (February 2, 1977) and extended its duration for the length of the 95th Congress by House Resolution 433, 123 Cong. Rec. H2739 (March 30, 1977). House Resolution 760, 123 Cong. Rec. H10254 (September 28, 1977) granted the committee authority to make applications to courts for grants of immunity and other limited purposes, and to bring and defend lawsuits in particular types of cases in order to obtain information relevant to the committee's inquiry.

The legislative mandate of the select Committee was primarily defined in House Resolution 222:

The select committee or a subcommittee thereof is authorized and directed to conduct a full and complete investigation and study of the circumstances surrounding the assassination and death of President John F. Kennedy and the assassination and death of Martin Luther King, Junior, and of any other persons the select committee shall determine might be related to either death in order to ascertain (1) whether the existing laws of the United States, including but not limited to laws relating to the safety and protection of the President of the United States, assassinations of the President of the United States, deprivation of civil rights, and conspiracies related thereto, as well as the investigatory jurisdiction and capability of agencies and departments of the United States Government, are adequate, either in their provisions or in the manner of their enforcement; and (2) whether there was full disclosure and sharing of information and evidence among agencies and

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departments of the United States Government during the course of all prior investigations into those deaths; and whether any evidence or information which was not in the possession of any agency or department of the United States Government investigating either death would have been of assistance to that agency or department, and why such information was not provided to or collected by the appropriate agency or department; and shall make recommendations to the House, if the select committee deems it appropriate, for the amendment of existing legislation or the enactment of new legislation.

The Select Committee identified four main issues to be analyzed to fulfill its legislative mandate. First, who was or were the assassin(s) of President John F. Kennedy and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.? Second, did the assassin(s) have any aid or assistance either before or after the assassination? Third, did the agencies and departments of the United States Government adequately perform their duties and functions in (a) collecting and sharing information prior to the assassinations, (b) protecting John F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King, Jr. and (c) conducting investigations into each assassination and coordinating the results of those investigations. Fourth, given the evidence the select committee uncovered, was the amendment of existing legislation or the enactment of new legislation appropriate?

II. Committee Organization

The Committee was composed of twelve members of the House.

They were:

	LOUIS STOKES, Ohio, Chairman	
RICHARDSON PREYER, North Carolina		SAMUEL L. DENTON, Ohio
WALTER E. FAUNTROY, District of Columbia		STEWART B. MCKINNEY, Connecticut
YVONNE BRATHWAITE BURKE, California		CHARLES THONE, Nebraska
CHRISTOPHER J. DODD, Connecticut		HAROLD A. RAVIER, Arkansas
HAROLD M. RISS, Tennessee		
ALDO J. VITTOLO, Indiana		
ROBERT W. RUDAK, Pennsylvania		

The Committee was divided into two subcommittees, to carry out the investigation of the two major cases within its mandate. Members serving on each of the subcommittees were as follows:

Subcommittee on the
Assassination of
John F. Kennedy

RICHARDSON PREYER, Chairman
YVONNE BRATHWAITE BURKE

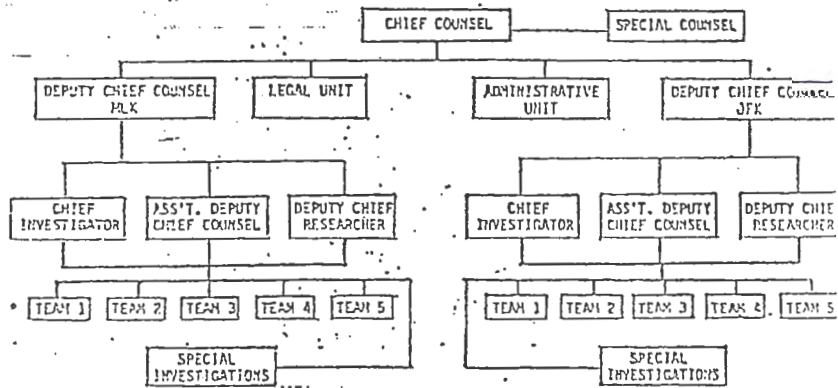
Subcommittee on the
Assassination of
Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

WALTER E. FAUNTROY, Chairman
HAROLD M. RISS

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III. Organization of the Staff

The organization of the staff was designed to facilitate the implementation of the investigative plans that had been formulated for each case. The chief counsel, who was appointed on July 1, 1977, headed the entire staff. The substantive investigation was divided into two task forces, one to investigate the death of President Kennedy and another to investigate the death of Dr. King. Each task force was headed by a deputy chief counsel and then further subdivided to focus on particular issues that had been identified. The individual teams on each task force were composed of a combination of attorneys, investigators and researchers that worked together on particular areas or issues. (See the schematic diagram that depicts the fundamental organization of the staff.)



* Each team was composed of a combination of Attorneys, Investigators and Researchers.

IV. Make-up of the MLK-JFK Document Systems

As the Committee entered the month of December, 1973, it was in possession of approximately 370 cubic feet of files. The material contained in those files reflected the following categories:

- 1) Classified materials on loan from federal agencies;
- 2) Classified materials from federal agencies where no stipulation of loan was made;
- 3) Unclassified materials from federal agencies;
- 4) Materials generated by Committee staff.

been classified by federal agencies (i.e., document request letters, notes from classified documents);

- 5) Materials on loan from private individuals;
- 6) Materials generated and acquired by the staff in the course of its investigation, including, but not limited to:
 - a) interview reports,
 - b) outgoing and incoming correspondence to and from agencies and individuals,
 - c) outside contact reports,
 - d) materials and reports generated by scientific consultants to the Committee, and
 - e) deposition transcripts;
- 7) Transcripts of Committee open session hearings and meetings; and
- 8) Transcripts of Committee executive session hearings and meetings.

As noted, many of these materials were loaned to the Committee by federal, state and local governmental agencies, as well as private individuals. Because of their historical significance, the Committee was concerned about the ultimate disposition of these materials once they were returned to their original custodians. Discussions were had with each of the agencies to assure the retention of the affected materials and the Committee requested that wherever possible, they be retained and kept separate within the agency's file. Those discussions resulted in the following disposition:

- 1) The Central Intelligence Agency
 - a. All classified materials (with the exception of Committee interviews, depositions and executive hearing transcripts) were returned to the agency. The agency agreed to store the materials separately from its other files.
- 2) The Federal Bureau of Investigation.
 - a. All classified materials were returned to the Bureau. They are to be maintained separately.
- 3) The Dallas Police Department. *

* An exception to this category was the dictabelts and tapes of the police department containing the sounds received on the department police radio on Nov. 22, 1963. These materials were turned over to the Department of Justice because of risk of serious bodily harm.

c. All materials loaned to the Committee by the Dallas Police were returned. These items had previously been maintained separately and will continue to be so.

4) Shelby County District Attorney General's Office

c. All materials received from Shelby County were returned. They are separated from other materials held in that office.

5) The Department of State

a. At the Department's request, all documents delivered to the Committee by the Department of State were turned over to the National Archives.

All materials loaned the Committee by private individuals were returned upon request.*

V. Document Retrieval-Generally

Prior to September, 1977, both the MLK Task Force and the JFK Task Force filed their documents alphabetically, by subject, in a random fashion. Neither task force made any attempt to index or cross-reference its materials. The present system was initiated in September of 1977, in order to correct this deficiency. With the exception of the features mentioned below, the filing systems of both task forces are identical.

VI. The MLK Document Filing System

All documents in the filing system bear a six-digit number. The first two digits of this number refer to the month in which the document was placed into the system. The last four digits compose the sequential identifying number assigned to the particular document. Thus, the first document placed into the system bears the number 010001. At the beginning of a new month, the sequential numbers return to one. Thus, 010001 identifies the first document placed into the system in September of 1976; 020001 identifies the first document placed into the system in October of 1976; etc.

* An exception to this category was the picture taken by Mary Mooreman of the assassination. It was turned over to the Department of Justice.

Documents may be retrieved from the system by using one of two methods. If a person seeking information has the number of the file he seeks, he merely follows the numerical sequence until he obtains the file he wants. If he does not have the file number, the information may still be obtained by consulting the system's card catalogue index. This index is a cross-reference, by subject, and person, of every document in the system. These cards are alphabetized, with each card bearing the number and a brief description of the document to which it has reference. As a result, someone having only a subject heading may locate the proper file number or numbers for the document by locating the subject or person alphabetically. It is then a simple matter to obtain the document by following the numerical sequence, as described previously.

VII. The JFK Document Filing System

Like the HLK system, all documents in the JFK system bear a six-digit number. There are, however, two major differences. First the first document placed into the JFK system bears the number 0000 (unlike the HLK system which begins with 010001). The second difference is that the JFK system employs sequential numbering throughout. The first two digits do not have reference to the month that the document was placed into the system, as is the case with the HLK system.

Like its HLK counterpart, the JFK system has a card catalogue index, arranged alphabetically by subject and person. Consequently the two methods of document retrieval described in the HLK section are equally applicable to the JFK system.

Also contained in both the HLK and JFK systems, although not numerically ordered, are various miscellaneous and bulky files. Examples include the files of the Committee's first chief counsel, Richard Sprague, inmate records obtained from the Missouri State Penitentiary at Jefferson City, Missouri, FBI and CIA materials released under E.O. 1.1.A., etc.

VIII. Documents Requiring Special Security

b) Informant Information. A number of the individuals interviewed by the Committee provided information of a highly sensitive nature. Should this information or its sources become known, these individuals might be subjected to risk of serious bodily harm.

For that reason, all materials relating to these individuals have been placed into a special security system. Included in this system are all investigative files as well as card catalogue references to these sources. Because such contacts were logged into the system as they were incorporated, the Committee's document log has also been placed in the special system.

b) Sensitive Information. Staff reviews of the King Security and COINTELPRO files have been put into the special system because, in many instances, the materials reviewed are still classified.

c) Immunized Testimony. Complete isolation of testimony received from witnesses to whom the Committee granted so-called "use immunity" during the course of its executive hearings is vital to enable the Government to meet its burden of demonstrating that evidence presented in any future criminal prosecution of such witnesses was not derived from immunized testimony taken by the Committee. For that reason, all immunized testimony taken in executive (closed) session was therefore secured in the special security system.

d) Autopsy Photographs. The Committee has a number of photographs relating to the Kennedy and King autopsies. For reasons of personal privacy, these photographs should not be released.

e) Classified Information. Because the Committee had access to raw intelligence files from the CIA and FBI that were classified (ranging from Confidential to Top Secret), all questioning of present and former CIA and FBI employees based on such materials that was recorded in interview reports, tape recordings, depositions and executive hearings transcripts, was placed in the special security system.

IX. Administrative Records

In addition to the investigative records, the material generated by the Committee includes the records of the Chief Clerk's Office, the Budget Office, and the Chief Counsel and Staff Director's office.

X. Recommendations for Release

The Committee recommends that access to all of its documents be prohibited for 50 years. If, however, access is given before that time, it is urged that the special security system be excluded from access.