

PRESIDENT'S COMMISSION
ON THE
ASSASSINATION OF PRESIDENT KENNEDY
200 Maryland Ave. NE.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20002

*Memo to Staff
by Lee Rankin*

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General Counsel

January 13, 1964

MEMORANDUM TO THE STAFF

This memorandum constitutes my official welcome to each of you as a member of the Commission staff. We have an important job to do and I know you share my desire to accomplish it with thoroughness, imagination and speed. The following matters will be of interest to you.

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1. Personnel: To help you get acquainted with the other members of the staff presently on duty and those scheduled to report by next week I am attaching a copy of the Press Release prepared for release yesterday. Mr. Leon D. Hubert, Jr. of New Orleans is the additional senior staff member referred to in the release. The secretaries in my outer office are Mrs. Julia Eide, Mrs. Beverly Ann Heckman and Mrs. Anne V. Welsh. Miss M. Josephine Farrar of Archives is in charge of our file room and is assisted by Mrs. Ruth D. Shirley. Each of you, I am sure, will want to become acquainted with these and the other members of the staff at an early opportunity.

In addition to the legal staff, we have given some thought to specialized services which may be of assistance to the Commission. Dr. Winfred Overholser, recently retired as Superintendent of St. Elizabeth's Hospital, is available to advise the Commission and staff on psychiatric and related issues which are developed in the course of the Commission's work. We have consulted with the State Department regarding an able Russian specialist, in or out of Government, who may supply a special expertise on questions relating to Marina Oswald or Lee Harvey Oswald's experiences in the USSR. In addition, we are obtaining names of historians who may be available to consult periodically with the Commission or staff, and to assist in the drafting of the report.

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2. Terms of Employment: In addition to the matter of compensation, which I have discussed or will discuss with each of you personally, I know that you are interested in your status as government employees. As you may know, the Conflict of Interest statutes (18 U.S.C. 202-209) distinguish between regular officers and employees of the government and a category of officers and employees designated in 18 U.S.C. 202 as "special Government employees." This category includes, among others, officers and employees of government agencies who are appointed or employed to serve, with or without compensation, for not more than 130 days during any period of 365 consecutive days either on a full-time or intermittent basis. Special government employees are excepted from certain of the prohibitions imposed upon regular employees.

Members of this staff will be designated as special government employees. As applied to this category of employees sections 203 and 205 of Title 18 prevent him from representing another person before a department, agency or court only (1) in matters in which he has participated personally and substantially in his governmental capacity, and (2) under certain circumstances, in any matter pending before the agency he serves. I do not believe that the restrictions of sections 203 or 205 will be of real concern because the restrictions do not preclude your representational activities before any agency or body other than the Commission.

3. Housekeeping Arrangements: I apologize for the disarray of many of our offices. There may still be further adjustment concerning matters such as arrangement of desks, phones and electrical outlets, but I am hopeful that these matters will be finally resolved sometime this week. On matters such as keys, special supplies, employment forms, information relating to security or other matters, Mrs. Heckman of my office will be glad to assist you.

4. Files and Mail Room: The files maintained by the Commission are under the supervision of Miss Farrar. It is planned, of course, that these files will include all the raw materials and product of the Commission's work, arranged in a way both convenient for our purposes and for the subsequent use of the materials by historians. Miss Farrar is currently in the process of setting up a subject index of our work, and I suggest that you may wish to become acquainted with her system in the near future.

At the moment, however, certain basic materials are being maintained in the files in the front office. These include copies of the basic reports submitted by the FBI, Secret Service and the State Department, as well as the bulky underlying materials initially submitted by the FBI after they were requested by the Commission.

During these first few days I think it is important to keep these materials available for the entire staff and I ask that you inform the secretaries prior to removing copies of these underlying reports from the office.

5. Outline and Organization of Work: Attached for your information is a tentative outline dividing the substance of the Commission's work into six areas. The areas are as follows: (1) Assassination of President Kennedy on November 22, 1963; (2) Lee Harvey Oswald as the Assassin of President Kennedy; (3) Lee Harvey Oswald: Background and Possible Motive; (4) Oswald's Foreign Activity (Military Excluded); (5) Murder of Lee Harvey Oswald by Jack L. Ruby; and (6) Security Precautions to Protect the President. Any such division of the work at this point, of course, must necessarily be tentative and I am sure that this outline will undergo substantial revision over the next few weeks.

Each of the first five areas will be assigned to a team of two lawyers, one senior staff member and one junior staff member. I would like the assignments of senior lawyers to be as follows: (1) Mr. Adams, (2) Mr. Ball, (3) Mr. Jenner, (4) Mr. Coleman, and (5) Mr. Hubert. I will retain immediate responsibility for the area of security precautions. Assignments of junior staff lawyers will be made this week. All the investigative reports, as well as any significant letters from the public or articles from the press, relevant to each of these areas will be assigned for review to the appropriate team of lawyers.

I would like each team of lawyers to prepare as soon as possible a comprehensive memorandum. At the very least, I suggest that this memorandum include the following: (a) summary of the facts already developed by the agencies in the area, (b) definition and discussion of the problems raised by the investigation and any public commentary, (c) recommendations as to further investigation to be conducted by the agencies, (d) recommendations as to the taking of testimony by the Commission in the area under study, and (e) a revised outline of the area, if you think this would be useful. In addition, I assume your memorandum will contain whatever other information, analysis or recommendations you consider important to the work of the Commission. Once these memoranda have been prepared, I think that we and the members of the Commission will be in a much better position than we presently are to assess the scope of the work which remains to be done.

During the past few weeks high priority has been given to the preparation for taking the testimony of Mrs. Oswald. Professor Redlich has been reviewing all the interviews of Mrs. Oswald and related

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material in order to prepare this interrogation. I expect that the result of his work will be submitted to me this week and that the testimony of Mrs. Oswald will be taken later in the month. The FBI has been requested to conduct a complete background investigation of the Paines and it is contemplated that similar investigations will be requested of other people in Dallas and Fort Worth who associated closely with Oswald and his family.

In addition, two other projects have been initiated which are designed to assist our work. First, a chronological chart will be prepared which contains appropriate date and time of the relevant facts developed in this investigation. Such a chronological chart will serve a useful function in portraying facts of interest to the Commission and, in addition, might serve as a useful investigative tool in deciding what additional investigation, if any, is desirable. Certain areas of concern to the Commission, such as the movements of Lee Harvey Oswald on November 22, 1963, or the movements of Jack L. Ruby on November 24, 1963, particularly lend themselves to this approach. In view of the tedious nature of this project, I have taken steps to enlist the assistance of two agents of the Internal Revenue Service to work on this project on a full-time basis. The other major project which has been initiated is the preparation of a name index, which will contain the names and brief identification of each person whose name comes up in the course of this investigation. Miss Farrar will be in charge of this project.

I intend to make every effort to see that all the members of the staff are kept generally advised of the progress of this investigation. At the appropriate time I think it may be useful for copies of the summary memorandum from each area to be distributed to each member of the staff. The Chief Justice and I are anxious to hold frequent meetings of the staff to discuss the work and take maximum advantage of your diversified experiences and insights. I am sure that other ways of achieving this will occur to each of you and I want you to feel free to make suggestions on this and any other matters to me.

6. Basic Materials: It is necessary for the Commission to obtain all material currently in the possession of government agencies relevant to the assassination of President Kennedy. To this end, we have written to the ten major Executive Departments, fifteen commissions or agencies, and four Congressional committees, soliciting such information. With regard to the major departments and investigative agencies, I have requested that, where not already done, an official be designated to serve as liaison with the Commission. In addition, I have requested

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each of these departments or agencies to make the necessary arrangements to ensure that all relevant information which subsequently comes to their attention is made available to the Commission as soon as possible.

We have hired a professional clipping service to supply the Commission staff with a good sampling of articles relating to the work of the Commission. As of late December we began obtaining every pertinent article from the 100 major cities in the United States. The clipping service is also reviewing newspaper and magazine articles which came out immediately following the assassination and will supply us with the pertinent articles from the 15 or 20 principal newspapers in the country, the Dallas papers and the leading magazines. All the clippings received by the Commission will be reviewed and those of particular interest will be distributed to the appropriate members of the staff. All the clippings are filed by Miss Farrar.

Attached is an index of the source materials in the possession of the Commission as of January 10, 1964. It is intended, of course, that each of you have a set of the basic FBI, State and Secret Service reports, listed in the index as items 1, 2, and 3. Additional copies of these have been requested and I anticipate that they will be delivered to the Commission within the next few days. Items 4 thru 7 are the major FBI reports underlying the summary report. In addition to the two copies of these reports maintained in my front office, copies have been made of these materials for distribution according to subject matter to the appropriate team of lawyers. The same is being done with the other FBI reports subsequently submitted and listed in the index as items 8 thru 75. In order to advise you of the general nature of these reports, I have prepared xerox copies of the synopses and table of contents (where supplied) of these FBI reports. If you have not already done so, Mrs. Welsh in the front office will be glad to give you these materials.

Where possible, it is intended that sufficient copies of all materials will be made so that one set will be maintained in our files for general use and other copies may be used on a working basis by the lawyers mainly concerned with the subject matter dealt with in the report. In some instances, however, such as the materials supplied by the Attorney General of Texas, military records, or tax returns, production of extra copies does not appear to be as necessary. Where this is the case, the materials will be filed by Miss Farrar and available for general use. If during your review of any of these

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materials you decide that additional copies should be made please make the necessary arrangements. The materials listed in items 81-100 were all received by the Commission in the last two days and have not yet been even superficially reviewed. Additional copies of much of this material will be made and distributed as soon as possible.

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Arrangements have been made for a showing of films relating to the assassination on Thursday, January 16, 1964 at 3:30 p.m. in Room 2334 of the Treasury Building. I hope that all members of the staff will be able to attend.

J. Lee Rankin
General Counsel

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