

GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION

Washington, D. C.

March 8, 1967

Honorable Theodore R. Kupferman
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Kupferman:

Since the National Archives is a part of the General Services Administration, the President has referred to me your letter of February 16, 1967, concerning the x-rays and photographs made during the autopsy of President Kennedy.

As you know, the photographs and x-rays were deposited in the National Archives by the Kennedy family under certain conditions, which were accepted by me pursuant to Section 507 of the Federal Records Act of 1950, as amended (44 U.S.C. 397). This statute provides for the acceptance of such materials by the Administrator of General Services subject to restrictions on availability specified by the donors or depositors.

The condition specified by the donors and depositors relating to the autopsy materials that is most directly applicable to your request states that access shall be permitted only to

"Any person authorized to act for a committee of the Congress, for a Presidential committee or commission, or for any other official agency of the United States Government, having authority to investigate matters relating to the death of the late President, for purposes within the investigative jurisdiction of such committee, commission or agency."

Related conditions provide that examination by any person not authorized to act for a congressional committee or other official body having authority to investigate the assassination is barred for five years except with the consent of the Kennedy family representative, Mr. Burke Marshall. Following the five-year period and during the lifetimes of the late President's immediate family, access to nonofficial persons is limited to experts in the field of pathology or related sciences for serious purposes relevant to investigation of the assassination.

Letter from General Services Administration

The General Services Administration has no authority to make any exceptions to the foregoing conditions. Your letter indicates that you have already sought an exception from Mr. Marshall and that he has considered your request but declined to make an exception.

The law cited above, which was enacted to encourage voluntary deposit in the National Archives of Presidential papers and other historical materials relating to a President or former President, requires that the Government comply with the restrictions under which such materials are deposited. We accepted the autopsy photographs and x-rays on the terms described above because we concluded that it was in the public interest to assure acquisition and preservation of these materials.

The public interest in the x-rays and photographs as a part of the historical record of the assassination of President Kennedy is appropriately served, not only by their deposit and preservation in National Archives, but also by the provision for unrestricted access by any official government body, including committees of the Congress, having authority to investigate matters relating to the assassination.

Sincerely yours,

(signed)

Lawson B. Knott, Jr.
Administrator