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UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

Memorandum

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Gale
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Sullivan
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Trotter
Tele. Room
Holmes
Gandy

TO : Mr. Belmont

DATE: 12-5-63

FROM : C. A. Evans

SUBJECT: ASSASSINATION OF THE PRESIDENT

Deputy Attorney General Katzenbach advised he attended the organizational meeting of the President's Commission to report on the assassination of President Kennedy held today. He noted that the meeting did not get around to the point of discussing the appointment of Chief Counsel or other staff members. The consensus of Commission members was that it would be inadvisable to have a large number of witnesses to testify before the Commission but rather the report submitted by the FBI and other agencies should be fully utilized. In this regard, questions were raised as to the evaluation of information furnished by various witnesses. Katzenbach was asked, for example, whether the Commission would be furnished with background information including a criminal record, if any, on various persons interviewed. He said he told the Commission members that this would be highly impractical as obviously the FBI could not conduct a background investigation on every person they interviewed. On the other hand, he noted that if the testimony of a particular witness, who had been interviewed by the FBI, was inconsistent with other known information or otherwise questioned, then he believed the FBI would honor a Commission reques or additional facts on such a witness. It was suggested that once the Commission is organized, it might be desirable to have a liaison arrangement directly between the Commission and the FBI if it related to investigative matters. I will make no commitment at this time. Katzenbach is in charge of resentment

With reference to the FBI report, which Katzenbach received today, he said he was having it reviewed by his attorneys and he planned to read it himself tonight. It is Katzenbach's feeling that unless he notes something of a particularly disabling nature, he felt the report should go to the President as prepared by the Bureau without any change. He hopes to do this tomorrow because obviously the Commission cannot begin any activity until they have the report.

1 - Mr. Mohr
1 - Mr. DeLoach
1 - Mr. Sullivan
1 - Mr. Rosen

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Memorandum to Mr. Belmont
Re: Assassination of the President

At the meeting today, Katzenbach said Senator Richard B. Russell, a Commission member, was most sarcastic in asking whether the Commission would get the report before the FBI had leaked all of its contents to the press. Katzenbach said he immediately spoke up and said that he had talked with the Director and other ranking officials in the FBI and he knew that no leak of information from the FBI to the press would ever be condoned. He said he told Senator Russell that newspaper reporters have their own ways of developing information and just because they get a story it does not mean that it was leaked to them.

The position of Texas State Attorney General Carr, is, according to Katzenbach, most untenable. Carr at the request of President Johnson announced that he was going to have a State Board of Inquiry look into the President's assassination. Now White House officials have told Carr it would be inadvisable for him to proceed. Carr is in Washington and will probably see President Johnson. Katzenbach anticipates Carr will make some kind of statement to the press pointing out that investigation in this case has extended to many areas outside the State of Texas and that action by the Federal Government is the only way the full story can be ascertained. This will be his excuse for not proceeding with the State Inquiry.

ACTION:

Any further information received concerning this matter will be brought to your attention promptly.

(see addendum, page 3)

Memorandum to Mr. Belmont
Re: Assassination of the President

ADDENDUM (AHB:csh), 12/6/63:

Mr. Katzenbach called me on the night of 12/5/63. He said he had read our report and it was "sensational." He wanted to know whether we thought a public statement should be made, either by the Department or the White House, to the effect that the report was finished, and the status of the matter. I advised him we had no opinion on this; that this was up to the Department; that we had done the investigation, and were continuing to follow out leads, and we had given the report to the Department.

Katzenbach said if we did not object he would go through with his original promise and let high officials of CIA, State and Secret Service look at this report on the morning of 12/6. I told him we had no objection.

Katzenbach asked whether we had any views as to how the report should be transmitted to the White House or the commission. I advised him that, here again, the commission had not asked the FBI for the investigation; that the President had, and that we had done the investigation, prepared the report, given it to the Department, and it was up to the Department to decide what should be done with it.

Mr. Katzenbach said that if Warren Olney is appointed as counsel for the Presidential commission, Katzenbach is going to try to get an attorney from the Criminal Division in with the commission, so that he will know what is going on.

Katzenbach said he would probably like to get together with us on the morning of 12/6 to discuss the report, although he had very few questions. I told him we would come over and discuss it with him at any time he wanted.

A. H. Belmont