

Mr. Maurice Isserman
P.O.Box 103
Ashfield, Mass. 06330

12/4/87

Dear Maurice,

After we spoke about the advantages of requesting FBI field office files and I explained how the FBI processes requests involving larger quantities of records I recalled that I had not gone into the possible disadvantages.

The major disadvantage is the amount of time it will take for the last of the field office records to be processed.

You can and I think you should get a time estimate and you should then assume the FBI will not get it all done by the time indicated. If your book contract requires production of a manuscript by a stated date this may make problems. Without some kind of special intervention it is likely that only one analyst would be assigned to the processing and you might expect about 200 pages a week after they get started.

If you do request field office records the probability is that they'll start with FBIHQ records and then not include many field office records on the claim they had been "previously processed." First time they did that with me I found I had no way of knowing which FBIHQ records were which field office records. I was able, with some effort, to get them to indicate this on the worksheets used in FOIA processing. However, I understand that since they they have refused to provide such worksheets. You will need something like this and if you ask for it in advance it would be easier for them to make the proper notations as they process. They may, in fact, do this on the q.t. for their own information and not let you know.

I also caught them lying in claiming that the only field office records that I didn't get were "previously processed." One field office then produced 3500 pp more. In political matters, where the possibility of embarrassment to the FBI is greater, you can expect more stonewalling.

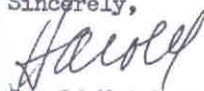
Your request will be political ^{ly} delicate for the FBI not only because it is political but because of its operational involvements.

~~The first law is cover the Bureau's ass.~~
The first law is cover the Bureau's ass, the second is cover your own. You will see many FBIHQ directives that include the caution, "without embarrassing the Bureau." This charges the field offices to pull something off only if they will not get caught at it.

How you word your request is important. For example, don't use words like "files" on people. Say "records" or better, "information." Feel free if you'd like me to look at your request before you file it. You can use xeroxes of the FBIHQ request for the field offices.

For the future, I enclose an FBI list of the field offices of that period, a list of the file classifications and an FBI sheet indicating what marks added mean.

Sincerely,


Harold Weisberg