

Office of the Director

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Washington, D.C. 20535

June 16, 1986

Honorable Don Edwards
Chairman, Subcommittee
on Civil and Constitutional
Rights
House of Representatives
Washington, D. C. 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Your letters of March 25, and June 9, 1986, expressed concern regarding the FBI's Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) release of documents pertaining to the assassination of Robert F. Kennedy (RFK) and, in particular, the withholding of the names of law enforcement personnel connected with the investigation of the assassination.

The FBI has not routinely withheld the identities of law enforcement personnel from the RFK assassination releases. The decision to withhold such identities pursuant to the FOIA is dependent upon a balancing of the public's interest in disclosure and the individual's right to privacy. In this instance, the case agent and supervisor's names are being released. The names of other Special Agents and officers of the Los Angeles Police Department are also being released where their involvement in the assassination investigation is already a matter of public knowledge.

The identities of remaining FBI and other law enforcement personnel are being withheld as disclosure would constitute an unwarranted invasion of their privacy. Absent some evidence of misconduct, wrongdoing and impropriety or questions bearing on the reliability, accuracy and truthfulness of the reports prepared by the personnel assigned to this investigation, the privacy interests of the FBI Special Agents and other personnel involved in the investigation outweigh any public interest in disclosure of their identities. Public identification could conceivably subject them to harassment or annoyance in the conduct of their official duties and in their private lives resulting in an unwarranted invasion of their privacy.

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FBI

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Because of the historical importance of the RFK assassination investigation I considered the possibility of contacting each agent in order to determine if they would voluntarily agree to the release of their names. The number of Agents involved, however, has made the cost and time required for this project prohibitive. The problem is complicated by the amount of time that has passed since the close of the RFK investigation. Many of the Agents involved have undoubtedly retired, and it simply would not be practical for the Bureau to contact each of these Agents individually.

I hope to have been of some assistance to you in explaining the position taken by the FBI in this matter.

Sincerely yours,

William H. Webster
Director