

CIA to Release Some JFK Documents

Gates Says He Is 'Determined' to Declassify Assassination Files

5/13/92
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CIA Director Robert M. Gates expressed determination yesterday to release "every relevant scrap of paper in CIA's possession" about the assassination of President John F. Kennedy to dispel the notion that the intelligence agency or other elements of the government were involved in the murder.

Gates made the pledge in an emotional postscript to testimony before a Senate committee on a bill that could require disclosure of as many as a million pages of still secret records relevant to the 1963 assassination.

The Justice Department has warned that it probably would recommend a veto of the measure if Congress passes it in its current form, but Gates said that "because of high interest in the JFK papers, I am not waiting for legislation."

The CIA director promised a first installment this week. He said he has ordered declassification of all CIA files on Lee Harvey Oswald that were compiled before the assassination and said they will be made public at the National Archives "with quite minimal deletions" in a day or two.

The packet, according to one source, will include 11 CIA documents on Oswald, six of them never released before, and 22 documents on Oswald from other agencies, all of them previously released. They deal with Oswald's defection to the Soviet Union in 1959 and his activities after his return to the United States in 1962.

"There is very little new here, and it is not worthy of archives," another source said.

According to the Associated Press, which yesterday reviewed a set of the records provided to the committee, the documents show that government agents used informers as well as face-to-face interviews to keep occasional track of Oswald before the assassination.

Gates told the Senate Governmental Affairs Committee that the



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Director Gates says release is "small fraction of what we hold" on 1963 killing.

110-page packet was "a small fraction of what we hold," but described it as "an earnest of my commitment immediately to begin review for declassification of this material."

Closing his appearance with some personal remarks, Gates said: "The only thing more horrifying to me than the assassination itself is the

insidious, perverse notion that elements of the American government, that my own agency, had some part in it. I am determined personally to make public or to expose to disinterested eyes every relevant scrap of paper in CIA's possession in the hope of helping to dispel this corrosive suspicion. With or without legislation, I intend to proceed."

The JFK records bill, sponsored by Sen. David L. Boren (D-Okla.), chairman of the Senate intelligence committee, and Rep. Louis Stokes (D-Ohio), former chairman of the House assassinations committee, grew out of the controversy over the Oliver Stone movie "JFK" and its allegations of high-level government involvement in plotting the Kennedy assassination and then covering up the conspiracy.

The measure would create an independent, court-appointed board with power to review and release all congressional and executive branch records "relevant" to the assassination. The president would still be able to block release, and the board would have discretion to postpone disclosure for specified reasons, such as exposure of current intelligence sources and methods or substantial invasions of privacy.

The Justice Department maintains the bill is "constitutionally flawed," objects to the idea of a court-appointed review board and contends the reasons stipulated for nondisclosure are too narrow. Deputy Assistant Attorney General David G. Leitch said yesterday that the Justice Department was willing to work with the committee to produce an acceptable bill, but confirmed the department also is drafting an executive order as a possible alternative.

Other witnesses, such as James H. Lesar, head of the nonprofit Assassinations Archives and Research Center, said legislation was essential and the Justice Department's restrictive standards would do "devastating damage to the ideal of full disclosure."

The CIA's collection of records pertaining to the assassination consists of 250,000 to 300,000 pages, including 33,000 on Oswald—most of them received from other agencies—that were compiled after the 1963 assassination. FBI Director William S. Sessions said the bureau's holdings at last count totaled 499,431 pages, including more than 263,000 that have yet to be processed, much less released.