

NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20550



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GENERAL  
January 22, 1980

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Mr. Robert L. Keuch  
Special Counsel to the  
Attorney General  
Office of the Attorney General  
Washington, D.C. 20530

Dear Mr. Keuch:

As you may be aware, prior to release of the Committee report on the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, the National Science Foundation was contacted directly by members of the House Select Committee on Assassinations to encourage a broader base of research in forensic acoustics. Dr. Sanderson, Assistant Director for Engineering and Applied Science, met with Representative Stokes and explained the Foundation's program of applied research to the Congressman; emphasizing NSF's willingness to support unsolicited applied research projects in this area if they met NSF quality standards. I believe this to be a sound position for general research in this area.

At the same time, I recognize the importance of specific studies and experiments in an effort to understand evidence associated with the audio tape of President Kennedy's assassination. Further, the possible importance of this tape to the continued search for any evidence that might suggest a conspiracy warrants the involvement of the nation's best scientific talent. Therefore, although it represents a substantial departure from normal NSF activities, I propose that NSF, in cooperation with the Department of Justice, arrange for the National Academy of Sciences to undertake further evaluation of this tape and associated data, including further experiments or tests if needed.

I will arrange with the National Academy of Sciences for an independent scientific panel of national stature to be assembled. This panel would review existing information about the audio tape; recommend further studies involving the tape; assist in identifying appropriate

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scientists to carry out needed experiments; and evaluate the results of those experiments. The panel (working as a National Academy of Sciences Committee) would be charged with preparing an independent technical report for public distribution within a reasonable time.

The National Academy of Sciences is recognized as the most prestigious, independent scientific organization in the country, dating from President Lincoln's time, and having the nation's most outstanding scientists as members. Although I fear that no course of action will completely satisfy all critics, I believe NSF sponsorship of the National Academy in evaluating the assassination tape and associated data will satisfy most reasonable men.

If you are interested in pursuing this course, please contact me so that we can begin arranging the activity.

Sincerely yours,

  
Richard C. Atkinson  
Director