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Casket Mystery Highlight of New JFK Data Release

CIA files on Oswald also of interest

WASHINGTON POST

WASHINGTON — The National Archives will release this week the latest cache of documents relating to the assassination of President Kennedy, reportedly including details of the dumping at sea of the bronze casket in which his body was transported from Dallas to Washington.

The release also will include 50,000 pages of CIA documents relating to the presumed Kennedy assassin, Lee Harvey Oswald, as well as intelligence files on Cuba and other matters.

It is the latest unveiling of information gathered in accordance with the President John F. Kennedy Assassination Records Collection Act of 1992, which urged government agencies to review their files for information that might shed light on the assassination.

Although the release will include CIA materials and data about Kennedy's 1960 presidential campaign, the details about the casket are likely to draw the closest scrutiny.

The 43 pages on the casket are to be made available tomorrow.

The information will reveal the disposition of the casket, the archives said, which reportedly had a handle knocked off as it was being used to transport the president's body from Dallas, where he was killed Nov. 22, 1963, to Washington.

The damaged casket was replaced with the mahogany one in which Kennedy was buried by Joseph Gawler's & Sons Inc. funeral home in Washington. But the fate of the damaged casket has long been a mystery.

The archive documents will detail how the casket was loaded aboard a military plane and flown off the Maryland-Delaware coast, where it was dropped into water 9,000 feet deep in a military dump site.

Kermit L. Hall, a historian with the now-defunct Assassination Records Review Board, which examined Kennedy documents, told the Associated Press that a map and coordinates marking the exact location exists.

Hall said the casket was dumped because of fears it might become an object of morbid curiosity.

There also was pressure from former U.S. Representative Earle Cabell, D-Texas, who was mayor of Dallas when Kennedy was assassinated, to dispose of the extra casket to keep it from becoming a public focus.

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