

11/85

Recent inquiry with the Los Angeles Police Commission about the processing of the Robert F. Kennedy assassination files has brought a report that work is nearing completion on redaction of the 1500 page summary of the investigation and that release of an edited version of the summary report is possible in December. While this information makes clear that serious work has been done in connection with the Police Commission disclosure commitments of July 1985 (see resolution adopted) some worrisome features of the present situation should be noted:

1.) Virtually no work has been done with respect to the main body of the official investigative file, comprising 50,000 pages in comparison with the 1500 pages of the summary report. Petitioners before the Police Commission in July had emphasized that the primary investigative files, not the summary report, were the key substantive materials. It is not clear that even a detailed survey of the main body of the files has yet occurred, although essential for any understanding of the scope and demands of the disclosure process as a whole.

2.) In spite of numerous references to the importance of relevant scholarly and archival assistance in these deliberations, at the July meeting and since, no efforts have apparently been made by the Police Commission in the past three months to contact or to draw upon such help. Such expertise bears directly on the fundamental issue of the standards to be employed for deletions

and withholdings from released material, as well as on ancillary questions of access, procedure and future disposition of the files.

3.) Although significant categories of the main files could be released with little or no deletion, as pointed out in July, no such material has been released to date. No such categories have been specified for early release in the future.

4.) The requested inventories and indexes of the files, merely outlining their categories, contents and organization, have not been released. Without such documents even a focused concept of the information and problems at issue in the disclosure process is impossible.

5.) Although the Commission mandate included consideration of the method of distribution for the files and their long-term disposition, preliminary contacts or planning on this question have not apparently taken place.

6.) The Commission's July deliberations gave positive comment to an examination of the files by qualified archivists to determine whether all materials were being preserved in the best possible condition. No such examination has occurred or been invited.

7.) At the present rate of processing, 1500 pages per four months, the entire assassination file would not become available to the public until 1997. No specific plan or timetable for future work has so far been suggested.

Present comment is impossible about the standards thus far evolved for deletions from the files to protect privacy, confidentiality and related interests. Any estimate of the work done to date

on the summary report must also await its release.

The above problems are not irreparable, but they do suggest serious potential dangers in the disclosure process, particularly the dangers of exclusion of meaningful outside input and of ongoing delay. Such concerns deserve close attention by the Commission and by other parties involved in the period ahead.

MOTION OF THE BOARD OF POLICE COMMISSIONERS  
REGARDING THE RELEASE OF MATERIAL FROM THE  
ROBERT F. KENNEDY FILES

That the President appoint a subcommittee to:

- (1) immediately commence, together with Department personnel and the City Attorney, to redact the 10 volume summary in accordance with the following standard: remove items that are prohibited by law from being released, and those items which were to be held in confidence per agreements with other public agencies and information from informants; with due respect to issues of privacy and national security and any other privileges not enumerated above.
- (2) develop, in concert with experts, standards for redaction and release of the 50,000 additional documents, with the clear intent that the documents be released when redacted in accordance with the standards to be developed.

As amended by Commissioner Schlei:

- (2a) and that the subcommittee also determine the method of distribution, and
- (2b) the site for eventual depositing of the files.

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Los Angeles Board of Police Commissioners - 8/85

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