AGENCY: HSCA
RECORD NUMBER: 180-10116-10324
RECORD SERIES: TRANSCRIPT OF EXECUTIVE SESSION HEARINGS
AGENCY FILE NUMBER:

Document Information

ORIGINATOR: HSCA
FROM: 
TO: 
TITLE: EXECUTIVE SESSION BUSINESS MEETING

DATE: 04/24/1978
PAGES: 24

SUBJECTS:
CHURCH COMMITTEE
CIA, FILES
LAW ENFORCEMENT
HSCA, METHODOLOGY
CLANDESTINE OPERATIONS

DOCUMENT TYPE: TRANSCRIPT
CLASSIFICATION: Unclassified
RESTRICTIONS: Open in Full
CURRENT STATUS: Redact
DATE OF LAST REVIEW: 08/17/1993

OPENING CRITERIA:

COMMENTS: Box 1. Folder title: Executive Session Business meeting.
EXECUTIVE SESSION

BUSINESS MEETING

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MONDAY, APRIL 24, 1978

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House of Representatives,
Select Committee on Assassinations
Washington, D. C.

The committee met at 4:30 p.m., in room 1301, Longworth
House Office Building, Hon. Louis Stokes (chairman of the
committee) presiding.

Present: Representatives Stokes, Preyer, Dodd, Ford,
Fithian, Edgar, Devine and Sawyer.

Present Also: G. Robert Blakey, Chief Counsel and
Director; L. Svenosen, E. Berning, C. Mathews, J. Wolf and
M. Wills.

Chairman Stokes. A quorum of the committee being present,
the committee will come to order.

Mr. Blakey. Mr. Chairman, the issues before the
committee this afternoon will all be over facets of the
investigation. Consequently it would be appropriate at this
time if a motion were made to go into Executive Session.

Chairman Stokes. The Chair will entertain such a motion.

Mr. Fithian. I so move, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Stokes. It is properly moved that for reasons
under the rules of the committee that the committee go into Executive Session. The Clerk will call the role.

Ms. Berning. Mr. Stokes?
Chairman Stokes. Aye.

Ms. Berning. Mr. Devine?
Mr. Devine. Aye.

Ms. Berning. Mr. Preyer?
Mr. Preyer. Aye.

Ms. Berning. Mr. McKinney?
(No response)

Ms. Berning. Mr. Fauntroy?
(No response)

Ms. Berning. Mr. Thone?
(No response)

Ms. Berning. Mrs. Burke?
(Aye by proxy)

Ms. Berning. Mr. Dodd?
Mr. Dodd. Aye.

Ms. Berning. Mr. Ford?
Mr. Ford. Aye.

Ms. Berning. Mr. Edgar?
Mr. Edgar. Aye.

Ms. Berning. Mr. Fithian?
Mr. Fithian. Aye.

Ms. Berning. Eight ayes, Mr. Chairman.
Chairman Stokes. Eight members of the committee having
voted in the affirmative, this meeting is now in Executive
Session and all members of the public are asked to remove
themselves from the room. Mr. Blakey.

Mr. Blakey, Mr. Chairman, the first matter on the agen-
da should be the immunities. I had not thought it would be
necessary to bring the immunity matter before the committee
in light of the fact that we had done so at our last Monday
meeting. As it turned out, two witnesses on the
Kennedy side whom we had scheduled for deposits and
thought were cooperative told the staff that they would
refuse to cooperate and would claim self-incrimination.

Consequently we had to face the possibility of subpoena-
ing them before the committee. That gave rise to the
need for immunities. As long as the full committee was
going to be asked to do it again, I ask that the entire
schedule of witnesses that we could reasonably foresee
through both May and June, on both sides, be prepared to be
immunized at this time. It is a little in advance of when
we might absolutely need it in some cases, but it seemed to
me appropriate to get that all over with.

You have before you, therefore, a resolution that would
authorize the Committee Staff to go before the District
Court to get the order. Again I would point out for you
that this, of course, does not grant anyone immunity.
The witness would still have to appear and claim his privilege and the committee or subcommittee at that time sitting would have to make a decision whether to communicate the order to the individual.

I think most of these witnesses, some of them, I will have to ask help for. Basically they are those people who are involved in the investigation somewhere and who could have, on any fair analysis of it, a possible claim of privilege. They are either the organized crime-type connected or people who from the nature of the kind of questioning that we would ask them could legitimately claim the privilege.

As in the past, this is contingency planning. We do not necessarily know that all of these people will claim the privilege.

Chairman Stokes. Are there any questions relative to this immunity order? If there are no questions, the Chair will entertain a motion.

Mr. Preyer. I so move, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Stokes. It has been properly moved that the resolution for immunity be adopted. The Clerk will call the role.

Ms. Berning. Mr. Stokes?

Mr. Stokes. Aye.

Ms. Berning. Mr. Devine?
Mr. Devine. Aye.

Ms. Berning. Mr. Preyer?

Mr. Preyer. Aye.

Ms. Berning. Mr. McKinney?

(No Response.)

Ms. Berning. Mr. Fauntroy?

(No Response.)

Ms. Berning. Mr. Thone?

(No Response.)

Ms. Berning. Mrs. Burke?

(Aye by proxy.)

Ms. Berning. Mr. Sawyer?

Mr. Sawyer. Aye.

Ms. Berning. Mr. Dodd?

Mr. Dodd. Aye.

Ms. Berning. Mr. Fithian?

Mr. Fithian. Aye.

Ms. Berning. Mr. Edgar?

Mr. Edgar. Aye.

Ms. Berning. Mr. Ford?

Mr. Ford. Aye.

Ms. Berning. Nine ayes, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Stokes. Nine members of the committee having voted in the affirmative, the resolution for immunity is adopted.
Mr. Blakey?

Mr. Blakey. Mr. Chairman, the next matter that I have to bring to the attention of the committee is one which you, of course, are familiar with and is somewhat of a housekeeping nature. Nevertheless, I thought that it ought to be brought to the attention of the full committee.

In May of 1977 the CIA contacted Congressman (blank) and brought to his attention what was, in the agency's terms, the moratorium document destruction. During the course of the Church Committee investigation, the Church Committee asked the agencies, the FBI and the CIA, to cease destroying in a routine fashion any and all documents.

The CIA responded by refusing to destroy any further documents, put a moratorium on their own document destroying process. The other investigation agencies agreed that they would not destroy any documents even remotely relating to the investigations pending before the Church Committee. The Church Committee has since lifted that moratorium on December 21, 1977.

The agency has contacted the committee and asked us our opinion on the document destruction program. My recommendation to the Chairman was that the committee respond by keeping it in operation at least for the life of the committee, which would be through December of 1978.

In that vein, the Chairman wrote Admiral Turner on
April 13 pointing out that the document destruction program,
if resumed at this time, could have the appearance of an
impropriety, although it is doubtful, in fact, that it would
be in fact an obstruction of the investigation.

The CIA responded by asking me to come over and meet
with them and I did one morning last week at about 7:30.
They really pointed out the scope of the impact that this
moratorium has had on them for this length of time. They
tell me that the documents are increasing at the rate of
approximately 100 boxes a day and this comes out to a cubic
foot a box, a hundred cubic feet a day; that if it were at
all possible, they would like to have some relief from this.

They also pointed out that the normal process for docu-
ment destruction requires them to submit to the Archives
schedules for destruction after which, should they be approv-
ed by the Archivist, they should go the normal course.
The agency is currently not complying with the law in that
regard in order that they would be in a position of not de-
stroying records during the course of our investigation.

I am bringing this to your attention because it seems to
me that we have a decent case to make that some of the
material that they have ought to be destroyed at this time,
that it has no remote relationship to our investigation.
Nevertheless, there is always a possibility that you will
read on the front page of the Washington Post something to
the effect that the committee agrees with the CIA to destroy documents and there will be sometime later on the last page of the Washington Post that we have explained to them that it is essentially trash that is being thrown away and not documents going to the heart of the investigation.

I really have brought it to your attention to get the advice of the committee on, I think, the political dimensions of the decision to suggest to the agency that they begin the routine document destruction. Obviously anything most remotely related to this investigation should be preserved to December 31.

Chairman Stokes. Are there any comments? Mr. Fithian.

Mr. Fithian. What kind of documents are they accumulating at one hundred cubic feet a day?

Mr. Blakey. Among other things, there would be receipts for exchange of documents between various buildings, just simply receipts that the couriers have to pick up and take. They have not even destroyed those receipts.

Mr. Fithian. You are only talking about documents pertaining to this investigation?

Mr. Blakey. No. All documents of the CIA are currently not now being destroyed. No documents are being destroyed. That is if a courier comes over here and delivers to us a copy of the background investigation that they have looked at we will give them a receipt and they will get a receipt
from us. Those receipts go back to the agency. Those receipts are not being destroyed. They have not been destroying receipts now since the ban was originally placed on them. This goes back to the middle of the Church Committee investigation.

It is a little more complicated than receipts. For example, they pointed out to me that they have a number of files now dealing with Operation CHAOS. I am sure you will all recall that the agency conducted investigations of domestic dissidents during the war. It is not lawful for them to retain those files. Private individuals have actually written the CIA asking them that the file on them be destroyed because the agency has no right to retain it.

Under the moratorium requesting the agency not to destroy any files during the course of this investigation the CHAOS Investigation Files, which are nothing even remotely related as far as I can see to our inquiry, are currently being retained by the agency.

Mr. Fithian. What kind of instruction can we give them to allow certain categories to be destroyed and yet not open ourselves up to the fact that they may indeed destroy something that we need?

Mr. Blakey. They have a schedule where they identify each document or each class of documents. If the committee authorizes me, I can review those schedules along with the
Archivist and where it is not even remotely related to us, for example, in the CHAOS File, and they are otherwise authorized by law to destroy it, I can say that the committee has no interest in this and this can be destroyed.

I think if we could give them relief enough to let them destroy about a hundred boxes a day they could at least tread water between now and December. I really want you to recognize ---

Chairman Stokes. What happens if they accidentally destroy something that we wanted?

Mr. Blakey. We have been had.

Chairman Stokes. There would be no way to explain that.

Mr. Blakey. No way we could explain it. If we want to play hard ball and insist that they do it, not destroy any further documents, what we will probably have to do is go sit with the Archivist and get him to suspend the order to destroy documents. They have a group now scheduled for destruction that are not being destroyed because of communications with this committee.

Chairman Stokes. It seems to me that if you are talking about seven months you are not really being mean. We are trying to protect the committee's integrity of process here. It seems to me that is something we should not get into. Speaking as an individual, personally I do not think we ought to get into that problem that they have.
Mr. Dodd?

Mr. Dodd. I think we could also probably save the CIA from itself in this case. They are the ones who would be suffering the brunt of criticism, I think, if it became public knowledge that they have requested permission to destroy documentation during the proceedings in which we are looking at the various documents, papers and so forth, be they so insignificant as a routing slip.

Mr. Blakey. Let me say, and it ought to be put in the record, we requested the DOD files on Oswald that were maintained in, I think, San Antonio. When we went to ask for them, as opposed to the national files, we were told that these were the files that were destroyed routinely by the agency after the Irvin Committee explained about too many records being retained by DOD.

Those are the files that our witness, I guess on Thursday, Jones, indicated were substantially different from the picture painted to us of Oswald's performance. There is no way that we can establish what those files actually contained.

So, this committee has suffered from the loss of files in DOD. It has suffered from the loss of files in Memphis and it has suffered from the loss of files elsewhere.

Chairman Stokes. The Church Committee protected themselves, did they not, by requesting a moratorium?
Mr. Blakey. Yes, sir.

Chairman Stokes. Is there any further comment? Mr. Edgar?

Mr. Edgar. Mr. Chairman, I would agree with the comments that you make. I think that they can find a storage room for seven months and pile up paper. Perhaps we can suggest to them that they have some kind of resource recovery process where they use the burning of the files for some energy-producing source at the end of it or recycle the paper.

I would hope that we would be in agreement that they ought to keep them for seven months, whether they have value to us or not. I think the appearance of impropriety would damage our investigation and also, perhaps, damage the CIA.

Mr. Blakey. I promised to bring it before the committee. I think that I have done what I have promised them to do. I have no hesitancy going back to them and suggesting that you thought it best that they keep them.

Mr. Sawyer. It might also provide incentive to hold down Federal paper work a little. If they cannot keep treading water, let them drown in it for a while.

Chairman Stokes. That is a good point.

Mr. Edgar. I so move.

Chairman Stokes. I think, then, that the concensus of the committee has been expressed, you have brought it to
our attention and the committee has taken no further action.

The next item.

Mr. Blakey. In a somewhat lighter vein, I have some
good news for one of you and some bad news for all of you.
I should inform you today that you have all be viewed indi-
vidually and collectively by Edward Fields and J. B. Stoner.
I graciously accepted service of process for you, only
after carefully noting that everybodies' name appeared in
the suit except for Mr. Stokes.

Chairman Stokes. Judgment proof.

Mr. Blakey. Some of you have bad news and one
of you has good news.

Mr. Dodd. For years I have filled out applications
and resumes asking the question, "Have you ever been sued"
and I have always said no.

Mr. Blakey. Frankly, this is in a light vein because
both actions, one action by Mr. Stoner, one action by Mr.
Fields, ask for declaratory judgment in quashing subpoenas
executed on them and to which they fulfilled their obliga-
tions last week.

Even if we had to respond on the merits in these
instances a good argument could be made that everything is
moot now anyway. In fact, what we do need from you at this
time is permission to go into court in your behalf and move
to dismiss these actions under it.
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seeming to gain much for the time we have put in.

You ought to be aware that the Staff is following the
current policy of taking by deposition or by statement almost
all of the evidence that we can, that the only matters that
are being directly brought into these Executive Hearings
are those that are contentious, where the witness may be
potentially cited for contempt, maybe lying to the committee,
or maybe resisting any effort to talk with us unless a
subpoena is involved.

That means, necessarily, that you are carrying the brunt
of the least productive phases of what we are doing.

In fact, on a number of levels in both the Kennedy
and King Cases some progress is being made. I think it would
be appropriate if we could have a general briefing meeting
sometime in the not too distant future, probably late in
the afternoon, where we could sit down and
go over exactly where we are in all cases.

Just to give you a for instance, on the Kennedy side
we have been exploring the finances of the Ruby family.
We found that Eva Grant, Jack's sister, had no sudden increase
of wealth in the period following the assassination. Indeed,
she is on welfare now, or social security, in Los Angeles.

Her brother, Earl Ruby, apparently did have a sudden
increase in wealth in 1964. He has gone from a marginal
businessman into a substantial businessman growing out of at
for whatever comment or statement he would like to make in
regard to the Memphis affair. I do not know whether we should
stay on the record or off the record. I would prefer talking
with members of the committee.

Mr. Blakey. I do not think it is necessary on the record.
I would see no reason to have the Court Reporter here for
the only remaining items since they are just general
discussion.

Chairman Stokes. Can we by common consent or without
objection dispense with the formal proceedings? The reporter
is excused.

(Whereupon at 5:30 p.m. the committee proceeded with
an informal session.)