

---

Agency Information

AGENCY : HSCA  
RECORD NUMBER : 180-10117-10040  
  
RECORD SERIES : NUMBERED FILES  
  
AGENCY FILE NUMBER : 014696

---

Document Information

ORIGINATOR : HSCA  
FROM :  
TO :

TITLE : BUSINESS MEETING

DATE : 11/15/1976  
PAGES : 144

SUBJECTS :

GRODEN, ROBERT  
HSA; FINAL REPORT  
HSCA; METHODOLOGY  
WC; STAFF  
LOVELADY, NOLAN  
PHOTOGRAPHS AND FILMS; ZAPRUDER  
WC; METHODOLOGY  
HSCA; STAFF

DOCUMENT TYPE : TRANSCRIPT  
CLASSIFICATION : Unclassified  
RESTRICTIONS : Open in Full  
CURRENT STATUS : Redact  
DATE OF LAST REVIEW : 08/16/1993

OPENING CRITERIA :

COMMENTS : MLK material withdrawn, pp. 11-35. Box 279.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

ORIGINAL

EXECUTIVE SESSION

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

---

HEARINGS

BEFORE THE COMMITTEE

on

SELECT COMMITTEE ON ASSASSINATIONS

EXECUTIVE SESSION

014696

BUSINESS MEETING

Monday, November 15, 1976

Washington, D. C.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Official Reporters to Committees

GPO 16-75107-1

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE SESSION

5212  
CAPS  
CTR (Committee  
BUSINESS MEETING

- 5/24 -

1248  
CAPS  
CTR (Monday, November 15, 1976

U.S. House of Representatives, [ ]

Select Committee on Assassinations, [ ]

Washington, D. C. [ ]

9 The committee proceeded into executive session at 10:35  
10 a.m., in Room 2310, Rayburn House Office Building, the  
11 ~~Honorable~~ Thomas N. Downing (Chairman) presiding.

12 Present: Representatives Downing, (presiding), Devine,  
13 Gonzalez, McKinney, Preyer, Thone, Stokes, Fauntroy, Burke,  
14 Dodd, Ford, and Anderson.

15 Also present: Richard A. Sprague, Chief Counsel and  
16 Director; Kenneth Brooten, Counsel; Donovan L. Gay, Chief  
17 Researcher; Richard Feeney, Billie Gay Larson, Rebecca Martin,  
18 Committee Staff; ~~Gus Edwards~~, Christine Groden, Robert Groden,  
19 Consultants; Gail Beagle, Bruce Gwinn, Percy Harvey, Joe  
20 McGee, Vicki Peckham Administrative Assistants; Peter D.  
21 Lennon, Robert H. Maloney, Henry Spring, <sup>islativ</sup> ~~Legat~~ Assistants;  
22 Quentin L. Burgess, Staff Assistant; and William Briggs,  
23 Staff Member.

Gus Edwards, special assistant;

1 Chairman Downing. For the purposes of the record, I  
2 would like each person in the room to identify themselves  
3 with their title.

4 Mr. Burgess. Quentin Burgess. I am with Mrs. Burke's  
5 office.

6 Mr. Maloney. Robert Maloney. Congressman Stokes'  
7 office.

8 Ms. Beagle. Gail Beagle, Congressman Gonzalez's office.

9 ~~Ms.~~ <sup>Mrs.</sup> Martin. Rebecca Martin, with the committee staff.

10 Mr. Gay. Donovan L. Gay, committee staff.

11 Mr. Sprague. Richard A. Sprague, chief counsel.

12 Mr. Feeney. Richard Feeney, committee staff.

13 Ms. Peckham. Vicki Peckham, Mr. Thone's office.

14 Ms. Larson. Billie Gay Larson, committee staff.

15 Mr. Lennon. Peter Lennon, Mr. Dodd's staff.

16 Mr. McGee. Joe McGee, Mr. McKinney' staff.

17 Mr. Spring. Henry Spring, Mr. McKinney's office.

18 Ms. Groden. Christine Groden, consultant.

19 Mr. Groden. Robert Groden, consultant.

20 Mr. Briggs. William Briggs, Congressman Fauntroy's staff.

21 Chairman Downing. The first item on the executive  
22 session will be a presentation by Mr. Sprague.

23 Mr. Sprague. Mr. Chairman and members of the ~~Select~~  
24 ~~Committee~~:

25 I would like to take up what has been done up to this

1 point, what analysis has been made by the staff with regard  
 2 to what the needs are of staff in the direction of the  
 3 investigation. Suffice to say that in being asked to  
 4 become chief counsel and director of this investigation,  
 5 I have entered upon those duties with a number of assumptions.  
 6 The first assumption is that it is the intent of the Congress  
 7 in passing the resolution on the investigation of the two  
 8 assassinations of Dr. King and President Kennedy, to see  
 9 that the investigations are done in a thorough professional  
 10 manner, the kind of manner that can withstand, as it ought  
 11 to, any searching analysis as to what has been done on a  
 12 day-by-day basis.

13 ¶ With that in mind, I have also accepted the basic  
 14 assumption that since one of the reasons that these  
 15 investigations have come to pass is that  $\frac{2}{11}$

16 Chairman Downing. Let me interrupt, Mr. Sprague.

17 John Anderson has been appointed to fill in the vacancy  
 18 *in the position* formerly occupied by Congress<sup>man</sup> Talcott, and he is on his way  
 19 here now, so if you will just desist for the moment, and  
 20 we will wait for Mr. Anderson.

21 [Short recess.]

22 Chairman Downing. The committee will again come to  
 23 order.

24 I have a letter here from Mr. John J. Rhodes, minority  
 25 leader, addressed to the Speaker: "As a result of the

1 resignation of the Honorable Burt L. Talcott for the  
2 Select Committee on Assassinations, I now make the appointment  
3 of the Honorable John B. Anderson."

4 *A* Mr. Anderson, welcome aboard. This committee is very  
5 grateful to have your talents.

6 Mr. Anderson. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

7 Mr. Harvey. Percy Harvey from Mr. Harold Ford's staff.  
8 Chairman Downing. John, Mr. Sprague is just beginning  
9 his presentation.

10 All right, Mr. Sprague.

11 Mr. Sprague. Mr. Chairman, if I may, I will just  
12 start from the beginning.

13 As I was stating, upon taking this position as chief  
14 counsel and director, I have taken it with a number of  
15 assumptions which I think I ought to state preliminarily.  
16 One is that the Congress of the United States, in passing  
17 the resolution for the Select Committee on Assassinations,  
18 intends that there be a thorough, hopefully definitive  
19 investigation with regard to each of the assassinations,  
20 Martin Luther King and President Kennedy.

21 Secondly, I have made an assumption that one of the  
22 reasons that these investigations have come into being is  
23 that questions have arisen, criticism has arisen, with  
24 regard to prior investigations, the extent to which other  
25 agencies of government, particularly the Executive Branch  
of government, participated in those previous investigations,

1 and the extent to which those other agencies withheld  
2 information, or did certain acts that perhaps indicate  
3 destruction of documents affecting the results of the  
4 investigation.

5 A I am not stating, saying whether those things are  
6 so or not. I want to say to this committee that I have  
7 no conclusions, I have not the slightest opinion, with  
8 regard to either death, with regard to any wrongdoing by  
9 any agencies of government, with regard to any inaccuracies,  
10 with regard to what has been developed in the past. I take  
11 the function now to be to thoroughly investigate and  
12 ascertain what is the evidence, indicating who in fact  
13 were the participants in either of the assassinations.

14 Is there any additional evidence that was not known  
15 earlier?

16 In addition, is there any evidence indicating that  
17 there may have been participation in each of the assassinations  
18 by more than one person, and whether or not any agencies  
19 of government have impeded attempts to ascertain the answers  
20 to those questions before?

21 With that again being an assumption on my part, I take  
22 it that this Congress would not, in authorizing this  
23 investigation, have as its investigators the agencies of  
24 the Federal Government that perhaps might be part of the  
25 area to be investigated. By that, to be specific, it seems

1 to me that what has to be for this investigation to be  
2 thorough, at least attempt to be definitive, is an independent  
3 investigative staff of the Congress, not beholden to any  
4 other agency of government. Again that is one of the  
5 assumptions that I have made in analyzing what has to be  
6 done, and making a determination to recommend to you as  
7 to what kind of staff is necessary for this investigation.  
8 I am not stating whether or not the Congress was aware as  
9 to what really is involved in the investigation of two  
10 homicides, two deaths. It is not something that you do with  
11 three investigators and two file clerks.

12 Upon taking this assignment, I have instituted a number  
13 of measures, and have taken certain actions up to this  
14 point, one of which was to be in touch with agencies of  
15 the Executive Branch of government, the CIA, the Department  
16 of Justice, who spoke in behalf of that department and the  
17 FBI, to initiate requests for access to material in their  
18 possession. Suffice to say that the indications up to this  
19 point have been that of full cooperation, and I might say  
20 that in speaking to the representative from the CIA, he  
21 advised me that just at the initiation of our investigation,  
22 the CIA has some 64 cartons of documents for examination  
23 and review, which points out to some extent really the  
24 size of the task that is being undertaken here, because  
25 we are dealing there with just one <sup>agency</sup> ~~branch~~ of the Executive



1 Branch of government in terms of a mass of materials.

2 In order to investigate, it seems to me that there  
3 must be a review made as to what has been done up until now.  
4 I do not see how, in looking and deciding the directions  
5 to go, there can be any intelligent approach without finding  
6 out what has been done, <sup>zing</sup> analysis <sup>ing</sup> of it, determination in  
7 <sup>what</sup> these areas <sup>more</sup> ~~what~~ needs to be done, <sup>in order to</sup> ~~if anything in addition,~~  
8 ~~to do so~~ be able to make a determination what else has  
9 to be done.

10 Each of you has before you a book in which we have  
11 laid out an approach in each of these two cases. The  
12 question I think was raised as to why should we proceed on  
13 both matters, the two assassinations at the same time?

14 With regard to that question, let me respond as follows:  
15 I think it important that we proceed simultaneously, for  
16 the reason that, as I look at it, as a homicide investigator-  
17 prosecutor, we are being called to the scene of two homicides  
18 really 13 years later and 8 years later. I do not think  
19 it is in the interests of this Congress, if it means what  
20 it said, investigating the matters thoroughly, that the  
21 Congress ought to be part of any further delay.

22 For example, it has come to my attention that since  
23 at least the resolution on which this committee is presently  
24 here as passed by the Congress, that authorities in Tennessee  
25 have destroyed some documents relating to the surveillance

1 on Dr. King. If that be so, and I have sent an investigative  
2 team down to Memphis, it emphasizes the fact that any delay  
3 on either one of these investigations is not really in the  
4 interests of the Congress to do a thorough job.

5 ¶ There is another reason. As again an investigator  
6 and homicide prosecutor, to me one of the essentials in a  
7 thorough investigation is not to have a time limitation.  
8 This is a different species of animal than the Congress  
9 wanting to have say the unemployment statistics in Michigan  
10 a week from Thursday and you can get it. You cannot in this  
11 area say wrap up that matter by <sup>6</sup> six months from today. Once  
12 you put a limitation, a time barrier, that is destructive of  
13 the investigative team, because what happens, and I speak  
14 from experience here, the areas of inquiry, the people  
15 who are being subject to the investigation, use then that  
16 time limitation as a point where they know that if they get  
17 a delay, if they get lost for a while, if they tie you up in  
18 court for a while, they can really end up preventing the  
19 conclusion of the investigation. I think it would be a  
20 mistake, and again my main assumption is that what is  
21 intended here is to do a thorough job, professional job,  
22 definitive as can be, to start imposing some barrier of  
23 time. I If we were to proceed, for example, in the King  
24 assassination first, there would be a great push to get that  
25 wrapped up, so we could get on Kennedy ~~and vice versa~~. If

1 we were to be proceeding on Kennedy, there would nonetheless  
2 be a push to get that wrapped up, to be proceeding on King  
3 ~~and~~ I think that that kind of pressure ought not to exist,  
4 that again in our main thesis of doing it thoroughly, we  
5 ought to be willing to do them both.

6 ¶ Now what do I mean when I say "thoroughly"? I am aware  
7 of Perry Mason on TV, and the appearance that you start  
8 at ~~a~~ Point A and you go to Point Z and it is a nice path.  
9 Maybe I am not that good an investigator. I have never been  
10 able to do that.

11 I think a great number of questions have arisen in  
12 each case, which I will get into in a moment, which  
13 unfortunately make the public question the integrity of  
14 government, the integrity of officials. Questions have been  
15 raised on each of these cases going into the thoroughness  
16 of the investigation. For my part, as your chief counsel  
17 and director, I feel that it is necessary in the investigation  
18 to be willing to be patient and thorough. I never can tell  
19 whether a street, an avenue of an investigation is a dead  
20 end, whether it is in fact not relevant until I go down  
21 that street.

22 What I think is required when we talk about a thorough  
23 investigation is a willingness to take up the areas of  
24 tangential materiality, to be willing to go down those  
25 roads, make a determination when we get down there, yes,

