

JFK ASSASSINATION SYSTEM

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May 29, 1975

To : David Belin

From : Pete Clapper

Pete R. Clapper

Subj : Public Affairs Considerations in Deleting Assassination Findings

The President and the Commission must be prepared to face heavy criticism from the press and public if the President decides not to publish the Commission's findings in connection with alleged CIA assassination plots.

The omission of these findings will be viewed as a cover-up and will cast doubt upon the rest of the report. Who can be blamed for asking, "What else did the President and the Commission choose not to include?"

The contention that the Commission has not had time to complete an investigation of the allegations is weak. On March 16, the Vice President acknowledged in an airport interview with CBS Correspondent Daniel Schorr that the Commission was looking into some allegations of assassinations. Thirteen days later, the President issued an executive order extending the deadline for submission of the report until June 6. It will be difficult to convince the press and public that the new area of investigation was not considered during those 13 days in determining the length of the extension.

It will be equally hard to justify the omission on grounds that the findings are incomplete. In a sense, all the findings are incomplete due to the constraints of time. Yet the other findings are there.

Far better to publish partial findings with the expressed hope that a subsequent investigation can be based on them than to provide such findings sub rosa to the Senate Select Committee. You may be assured that the press will learn of such a transfer of information and will speculate on the reasons for it in a manner unflattering to the President.

Mr. Ford has promised an open administration. Yet he may order his Commission to bottle up facts which the public is bound to learn from other sources - indeed, with his help. If the reason for this curious procedure is that the Chief Executive should not be the one to admit that some previous administrations plotted assassinations, it is an argument that cannot gracefully be made in public. Citizens would be encouraged to think there is a conspiracy among Presidents to protect their predecessors as they would have their successors protect them. If the object is to foster detente with Castro, we should remind ourselves that he already knows of the attempts on his life and might welcome the chance to show the world his magnanimity in the wake of an official disclosure in the report.

All of this seems convoluted because a convoluted course has been recommended. I am constantly impressed with the refusal of our leadership to try candor on the people. The kind of ploy which this deletion from the report represents will make life needlessly rough on this administration.

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Rockefeller Commission

From Pete Clapper to David Belin

Public Considerations for deleting assassination findings

1975/05/29

Source: JFK Assass Recrds, GRFL, Rock Commission, Belin, Gray, Greene files Correspondence Box 8, f II-Z
memo from staff