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OLC # 78-2411/1

7 July 1978

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MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT : HSCA Requests and CIA Responses

1. The Chief Counsel and Staff Director of the HSCA, Mr. Blakey, has set a deadline of 17 July for the Agency's responses to its requests. As explained by him, any requests submitted to the Agency prior to that date and not fulfilled by us (accepting the lead time for normal research) will be held as not "in compliance" with HSCA requests. This gambit was a follow-on to statements by us that we are now in a state of high production, accompanied with reminders that HSCA people are far behind in reviewing material provided for the HSCA.

2. We have explained to Mr. Blakey that the loosely stated requirements cause considerable difficulty in researching in response to requests. Requests come with first names "lnu" and last names "fnu." In one instance a request was for information concerning an unnamed organization in Dallas, Texas. The problem appears to be the result of a decision taken within the HSCA staff early in its inquiry, to seek information on any reference that turned up, regardless of relevance, on the long, long chance that it might produce some useful lead. The principle has been adhered to so unswervingly, that it can be characterized as unthinking and indiscriminate. A result has been to choke the system, so to speak, with meaningless and irrelevant requests that are difficult if not impossible to research. HSCA personnel have been told of the difficulty in research on such badly described informational desires, e.g., in IMS some 40% of research is required for some 5% of the requests. We have sought an assignment of priorities,

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and a review of earlier requests to see if there is still interest in having them pursued. With the exception of one investigator, there has been resistance to any review of practice, of earlier requests, or assignment of priorities. They will do nothing to refine or facilitate the existing process.

3. While it is correct to say that the Agency could have provided a higher priority to HSCA requests--at least in the Directorate of Operations--the fact is that research staffs have been cut, with other demanding requirements also to be met (such as from the Secret Service). To the extent that HSCA could have cooperated in ordering its investigation and helping hold down truly baseless requests, it has not done so. In a very real sense, both organizations--CIA and HSCA--can assume some of the fault for the present state. One thing that does not ring true about HSCA protests on this score, is its failure to take advantage of the extensive files made available for its review. It has not reviewed even half of that being held in the Agency for this purpose. Given this background, there is some reason for skepticism in the announcement that past requests not fulfilled by 17 July will be considered as not in compliance and, as stated orally by Mr. Blakey, not the subject of further research. There is some basis, given the HSCA track record on this, to see this as an admission that much of the old requests (which they have declined to winnow out when requested) are truly not relevant to the investigation. Representations by HSCA on this score are viewed as being somewhat cynical and false.

4. Sensing some tactical maneuver on the part of the HSCA staff, tied to the status of CIA responses to HSCA requests, new emphasis has been put on providing materials for review in response to requests. Fortunately, this already had been given a new priority, and an increased flow of materials had begun to arrive in the review area. It is possible that our description of this development to HSCA was a contributing factor to HSCA decisions to set a deadline now. For the next few days--until the 17 July deadline--we are taking no so-called follow-on requests for processing, although we are accepting them. We are accepting requests on new areas of inquiry, for handling along with those already under process, although as a practical matter the turn-around

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time for normal processing cannot be shortened by less than ten days. We will see how total production stands by the deadline, and then just how many unanswered requests there are from the past (not the current new ones), and how important they are to Mr. Blakey.

5. However, the first finger-pointing time may be upon us, and we should be prepared for it.



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