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Information Review & Release (IRR) News for 27 - 31 October 2003 Executive Summary

Future Planning Calendar

~~(U//ATUO)~~ **12 November 2003:** Interagency Security Classification Appeals Panel (ISCAP): Next Liaisons' meeting at Crystal City.

~~(U//ATUO)~~ **18 November 2003:** Interagency Security Classification Appeals Panel (ISCAP): Next Principals' meeting at EEOB in Washington, DC.

~~(U//ATUO)~~ **3-5 December 2003:** Historical Review Panel: Next semi-annual meeting.

~~(U//ATUO)~~ **31 December 2006:** The Automatic Declassification Date per Executive Order 12958, as amended.

Overview of IRR Activities -- Last Week

~~(U//ATUO)~~ **HCD Visits JFK Presidential Library**

~~(U//ATUO)~~ On 23 October, JFK team members from CIO/IMS's Historical Collections Division (HCD) met with Mandatory Review Staff archivists at the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library in Boston, Massachusetts. The HCD visitors discussed the volume of documents being reprocessed for the Assassinations Records Review Board (ARRB)—which requires staggered releases. HCD's host contact, Maura Porter (Senior Declassification Archivist) described the time-consuming efforts required of the Mandatory Review Staff to transcribe President Kennedy's audio tapes and transfer them to compact disc. Additionally, with the approaching fortieth anniversary of the assassination, they are experiencing a significant increase in FOIA requests. Following this exchange, the staff led their HCD visitors on a tour of the classified collections, research rooms, and areas closed to the public, including the Ernest Hemingway collection. The discussions promoted a mutual understanding of procedures in play and helped to establish a rapport for future collaboration.

- *An interesting footnote....the library archivists were unaware of the requirements for future releases that the ARRB placed on the Agency. We directed them to an online site where they could review the "President John F. Kennedy Assassination Records Collection Act of 1992."*

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~~(U//ATUO)~~ **FOIA Requests**

~~(U//ATUO)~~ **Don't Forget the "Do Not File" Files**

~~(U//ATUO)~~ The requester is seeking information on George Verbonitz and Matthew Verbonitz, both of whom were born in Severn, Croatia, and died in Pennsylvania. She asks for all records on the individuals, and she instructs us to include "documents, reports, memoranda, letters, bulkies, ELSUR records and indices, Official and Confidential files, Personal and Confidential files, data base references, 'do not file' files, and other miscellaneous files and index citations relating to the subject in other files."

- *The FOIA case manager sent an acknowledgement letter to the requester.*

~~(U//ATUO)~~ **Request for Information on Israel**

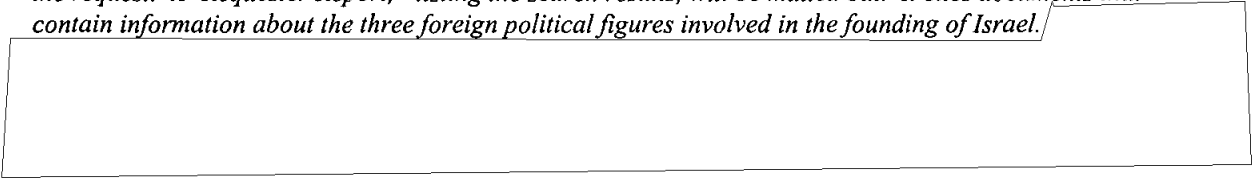
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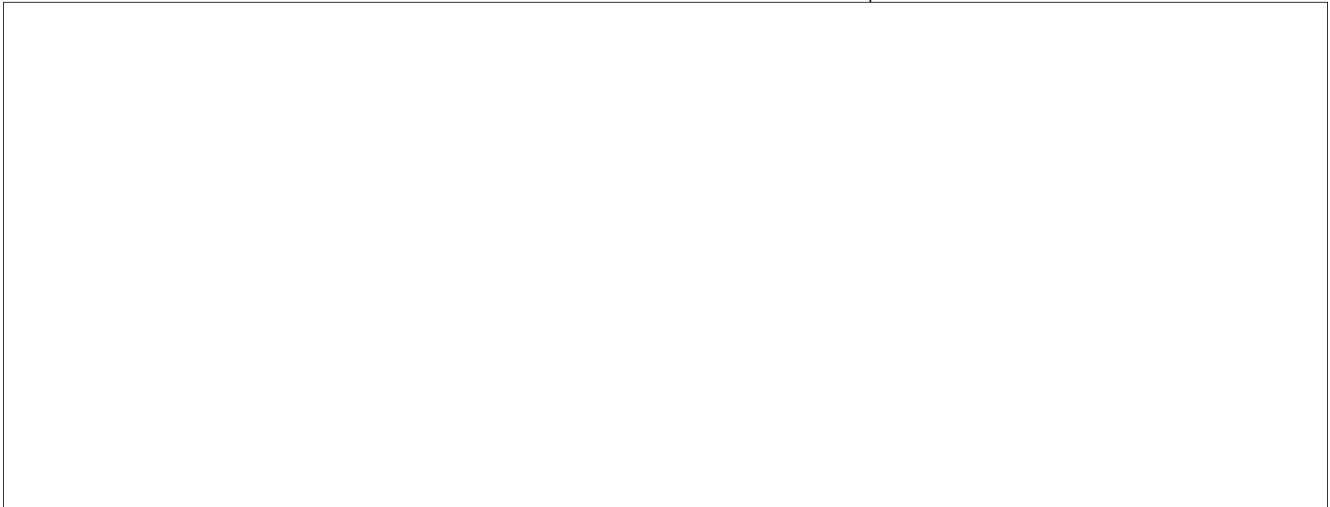
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(U//~~FOUO~~) A requester incarcerated in a Texas institution is requesting "anything you may have on the foundation [sic] of Israel, specifically Menachem Begin, David Ben-Gurion or Ariel Sharon."

- The FOIA case manager found 72 documents in a search of previously released documents on the subject of the request. A "Requester Report," listing the search results, will be mailed out. It cites documents that contain information about the three foreign political figures involved in the founding of Israel.



[Editor: In this context, numerous federal courts have recognized that foreign intelligence services are "zealous ferrets," and that the FOIA does not require the United States to lighten the task of hostile governments by providing them with documentary assistance from which to piece together the information concerning our foreign intelligence activities. However, as stated above, FOIA can sometimes make available overt, or officially released, records containing information unrelated to any classified or covert interest. This would include general background-type information (as in the current case) which one normally might expect the CIA to possess—for example, records on individuals in the context of an election, or their position on public issues.]



(U//~~FOUO~~) CDC Declassification Center

(U//~~FOUO~~) From the Archives:

(U//~~FOUO~~) Timing the Tet Offensive

(U//~~FOUO~~) A National Security Council (NSC) memo, dated 5 February 1968, from Walt Rostow to President Johnson notes that an "agent ... reports that the North Vietnamese army has informed the Viet Cong that support will be withdrawn in March 1968 and therefore the Viet Cong must make every effort to win before March."

- The North Vietnamese/Viet Cong Tet Offensive of 1968 was launched on 31 January. It lasted until the capture of Hue, toward the end of February. A 30-year anniversary article on the Tet Offensive, appearing in the "Los Angeles Times," reports: "The Viet Cong, the anti-Saigon Southerners, suffered devastating losses during Tet -- an estimated 58,000 dead (compared with 3,893 American and 4,954 South Vietnamese dead). The Viet Cong infrastructure never recovered, and increasingly the burden of fighting was borne by North Vietnamese (NVA) regulars." Hanoi's expectation of a general uprising was a gross miscalculation. The devastated Viet Cong became less of an "independent" organization after Tet and, consequently, were in poor position to demand a significant share of the spoils of victory when the NVA tanks rolled into Saigon. The Viet

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(b)(3) *Cong's political arm, the Provisional Revolutionary Government (PRG), was a very visible entity at the Paris Peace Talks, but quickly disappeared from sight with the fall of the South Vietnamese government in 1975.*

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~~(U//AIUC)~~ **McCone Forecast of Soviet Space Feat**

~~(U//AIUC)~~ On 8 August 1962, according to a Memorandum for the Record, DCI McCone addressed a Senate Republican Policy Committee luncheon. His remarks focused on the organization of the intelligence community—and “whether CIA was too big”—as well as on Cuban and Soviet long-range attack capabilities. In the latter context, the DCI noted that “there may be an attempt of a spectacular nature in the space field within the next 24 hours or the next few days.”

- *Indeed, within the next few days, the Soviets set a space first, launching into adjacent orbits the "Vostok" spacecraft and a second spacecraft the next day. The cosmonauts/pilots were said to be in visual contact and able to communicate by radio. The Soviets claimed that the purpose of the launch was to test tandem flights in earth orbits. However, there apparently was some speculation in Western circles that the Soviets might be testing orbital linkups in preparation for an eventual flight to the moon. President Kennedy sent congratulations to the Soviets on "this exceptional feat." Whether DCI McCone got any credit for presumably forecasting this space shot is unknown.*

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~~(U//AIUC)~~ **Voting With Their Feet**

~~(U//AIUC)~~ Multiple current intelligence articles of the early 1950s report on the “flood” of East German refugees into West Berlin. A typical article of November 1952 reports that 4,400 refugees, many of military service age, reached West Berlin in the first week of November and that “the rate of defections is running substantially above the rate of the past few months. In October there was a record high of 15,595, more than triple the number recorded only last May.”

- *As more and more East Germans sought escape from repressive conditions (and military conscription) by voting with their feet, the Soviet and East German governments tried various methods to "seal" their borders. In August 1961, they finally resorted to building the Berlin wall, "created with astounding speed through use of prefabricated concrete blocks." Construction of the wall eerily bore out an earlier speech by then British Prime Minister Winston Churchill that an iron curtain was descending across Europe. Many famous and infamous events occurred in connection with the Berlin wall during its lifetime, including President Reagan's injunction: "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!" The wall came down on 9 November 1989. Germany was reunified less than one year later (3 October 1990).*

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