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BC-USA-KENNEDY 05-12 0620

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CIA, FBI DIRECTORS BACK RELEASE OF JFK MATERIAL
(EDS: NEW STORY WITH BACKGROUND, DETAIL, QUOTES)

BY ROBERT GREEN

WASHINGTON, MAY 12, REUTER - THE CHIEFS OF THE CIA AND FBI ON TUESDAY URGED THE RELEASE OF STACKS OF CLASSIFIED KENNEDY ASSASSINATION DOCUMENTS TO HELP RESOLVE THE DOUBT, DEBATE AND CONSPIRACY THEORIES THAT SWIRL AROUND MODERN AMERICA'S MOST WRENCHING MURDER.

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY DIRECTOR ROBERT GATES SAID HE BELIEVES A PUBLIC AIRING OF WHAT INVESTIGATORS KNOW WILL FREE HIS AGENCY OF SUSPICIONS -- REVIVED BY HOLLYWOOD IN THE FILM JFK -- THAT IT WAS PART OF A CONSPIRACY TO KILL PRESIDENT JOHN F. KENNEDY IN DALLAS ON NOVEMBER 22, 1963. WE ARE HOPING THAT OPENING UP AND GIVING JOURNALISTS, HISTORIANS AND, MOST IMPORTANTLY, THE PUBLIC ACCESS TO GOVERNMENT FILES WILL HELP TO RESOLVE QUESTIONS THAT STILL LINGER OVER 26 YEARS AFTER THE ASSASSINATION. GATES SAID IN TESTIMONY AT A SENATE GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE HEARING. FURTHER, I BELIEVE THAT MAXIMUM DISCLOSURE WILL DISCREDIT THE THEORY THAT CIA HAD ANYTHING TO DO WITH THE MURDER OF JOHN F. KENNEDY.

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION DIRECTOR WILLIAM SESSIONS ALSO SUPPORTED THE PROPOSED RELEASE OF CLASSIFIED KENNEDY FILES, SAYING, I WHOLLY ENDORSE THE PURPOSE OF THIS BILL TO RELEASE AS MUCH INFORMATION PERTINENT TO THE ASSASSINATION AS WE RESPONSIBLY CAN.

THE SENATE COMMITTEE IS CONSIDERING LEGISLATION TO RELEASE HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF DOCUMENTS ABOUT THE ASSASSINATION THAT HAVE BEEN KEPT SECRET SINCE THE OFFICIAL INVESTIGATION CHAIRED BY SUPREME COURT CHIEF JUSTICE EARL WARREN.

THE WARREN COMMISSION FOUND THAT LEE HARVEY OSWALD ACTED ALONE IN SHOOTING KENNEDY FROM THE DALLAS SCHOOL BOOK DEPOSITORY -- A CONCLUSION QUESTIONED FOR DECADES BY MILLIONS OF AMERICANS ATTRACTED BY CONSPIRACY THEORIES THAT CAST SUSPICION ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES, THE MAFIA, A VARIETY OF FOREIGN GOVERNMENTS AND OTHERS.

THE PROPOSED LEGISLATION WOULD CREATE A FIVE-MEMBER INDEPENDENT PANEL TO DECIDE WHAT KENNEDY INVESTIGATIVE MATERIAL SHOULD BE MADE PUBLIC.

DEMOCRATIC SENATOR DAVID BOREN, CHAIRMAN OF THE SENATE INTELLIGENCE COMMITTEE AND A CO-SPONSOR OF THE LEGISLATION, TESTIFIED THAT HE HAD CHECKED WITH THE KENNEDY FAMILY AND RECEIVED ITS APPROVAL FOR THE BILL.

DEPUTY ASSISTANT ATTORNEY GENERAL DAVID LEITCH SAID THE
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EXECUTIVE BRANCH WAS CONSIDERING ISSUING AN EXECUTIVE ORDER TO RELEASE MANY OF THE DOCUMENTS COVERED BY THE BILL.

THERE IS AN EFFORT UNDER WAY TO SEE IF THAT WOULD WORK,:: LEITCH SAID, ADDING THE PROPOSAL WAS IN THE DRAFTING STAGE AND HE DID NOT KNOW HOW IT WOULD COMPARE WITH THE PROPOSED BILL.

EFFORTS TO WIN RELEASE OF THE DOCUMENTS, MOST OF WHICH ARE BEING HELD UNTIL THE YEAR 2029, HAVE BEEN SPARKED BY THE MOVIE JFK,:: WHICH SUGGESTED THAT THE CIA AND OTHER FEDERAL AGENCIES CONSPIRED TO MURDER KENNEDY AND COVER UP THEIR INVOLVEMENT. THE FILM HAS BEEN CRITICISED FOR MIXING FICTION AND FACT.

GATES SAID THE CIA HAD 300,000 PAGES OF MATERIAL RELATING TO THE ASSASSINATION AND WAS REVIEWING IT TO PREPARE IT FOR RELEASE.

SESSIONS SAID THE FBI HAD MADE PUBLIC 224,000 OF THE 499,000 PAGES OF DOCUMENTS IT HAD ON THE ASSASSINATION.

I FULLY SUPPORT IN PRINCIPLE THE NOTION THAT IT IS TIME TO RE-EXAMINE WHAT REMAINS UNDISCLOSED TO DETERMINE WHETHER THE GOVERNMENTAL INTERESTS IN PROTECTING THESE DOCUMENTS REMAINS,:: SESSIONS SAID IN HIS STATEMENT.

THE BILL'S AUTHORS INCLUDE REPRESENTATIVE LOUIS STOKES, WHO CHAIRED A HOUSE COMMITTEE ON THE ASSASSINATION IN 1977 THAT CONCLUDED IT WAS LIKELY THAT THERE WAS A SECOND GUNMAN.

STOKES HAS SAID TRANSCRIPTS OF FBI EAVESDROPPING ON MOBSTERS MIGHT ADD MORE INFORMATION ON WHETHER ORGANISED CRIME MEMBERS WERE INVOLVED IN A CONSPIRACY.

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