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Frederick Baron
Special Assistant
to the Attorney General

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Mary C. Lawton
Deputy Assistant Attorney General
Office of Legal Counsel

FBI request for authority for records destruction

The FBI in its memorandum of March 9, 1977 to the Attorney General requested authority to undertake destruction of obsolete domestic security investigation files in its field offices. The destruction would be consistent with its archival retention plan and would affect only field office files (the substance of which is duplicated at Headquarters). Files relating to matters in litigation (about 200 cases) and to the King and Kennedy assassinations would be excepted from the destruction even where they are duplicative of Headquarters files. The FBI wishes to resume destruction in order to relieve a critical space shortage.

In my view the destruction is proper and should be encouraged. I suggest, however, that the Congress be advised prior to Attorney General approval. I would suggest that Paul Daly make personal contact with the staff of the Judiciary Committees and Senate Select Committee advising them of the proposed destruction and of a forthcoming communication to the Committee chairmen from the Attorney General. When Paul has completed this, a letterhead memorandum explaining the destruction and transmitting a copy of the archival retention plan should be forwarded to the Committees. After allowing time for Committee comment, the Attorney General should then instruct the FBI to proceed with the destruction. I will have this set in motion if you approve.