

Newly released documents point to state cover-up and complicity in assassination of John F. Kennedy

By Barry Grey
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Information contained in nearly 2,900 previously classified documents released Thursday concerning the assassination of President John F. Kennedy further undermines the official narrative of a lone killer and points to a cover-up and complicity on the part of forces within the US intelligence agencies.

What are generally deemed the most sensitive—and potentially incriminating—documents were withheld, as President Donald Trump acceded to extraordinary pressure from the Central Intelligence Agency and the Federal Bureau of Investigation and delayed their release.

These 300 documents, consisting of thousands of pages of material, include an extensive file on the head of the CIA office in Dallas at the time of the November 22, 1963 killing; a dossier on a prominent Dallas businessman who conferred with nightclub owner Jack Ruby just before Ruby shot and killed the accused assassin Lee Harvey Oswald; files on two anti-Castro Cuban terrorists involved in mass murder; documents concerning Oswald's six-day trip to Mexico City and meetings with Russian and Cuban officials seven weeks before the Kennedy assassination; and information on Watergate burglars and longtime CIA operatives E. Howard Hunt and James McCord.

From the moment the 35th president was killed by a volley of shots as his caravan drove past Dealey Plaza in Dallas up to the present time, there has been a systematic effort to keep from public view critical facts pointing to political motives underlying the murder and to dismiss all questioning of the 1964 Warren Commission Report as “conspiracy theories.”

The commission, announced by Lyndon Johnson a week after Kennedy's assassination and headed by the chief justice of the Supreme Court, Earl Warren, concluded that Oswald, acting alone and using a mail order rifle, killed Kennedy by firing three shots from the sixth floor of the Texas School Book Depository building, which overlooks Dealey Plaza. The commission said Oswald had no connection to US intelligence agencies or other parties.

The American public, with good reason, has never accepted this narrative. A recent poll by FiveThirtyEight and

SurveyMonkey found that only 33 percent of Americans believe the assassination was the work of only one person, while 61 percent believe others were involved. A 1979 report issued by the House Select Committee on Assassinations seconded this view, concluding that Kennedy “was probably assassinated as a result of a conspiracy.”

Kennedy's assassination had a traumatic effect on the American public and continues to haunt the popular imagination. It came at a time of mounting crisis for US imperialism both at home and abroad, signaling the beginning of the end of the United States' post-World War II global economic and geopolitical hegemony. Only weeks before his death, Kennedy sanctioned the coup that overthrew South Vietnamese President Diem, leading to his murder, an event that marked a nodal point in the escalation of the US intervention in Vietnam.

Washington's mounting economic contradictions were reflected in a worsening balance of payments crisis and gold drain, which would lead eight years later to the collapse of the Bretton Woods monetary system and the ending of dollar-gold convertibility.

Domestically, the ruling class faced a growing civil rights insurgency and a militant working class determined to defend and extend its postwar economic gains. The elimination of Kennedy was an inflection point in the transition of US ruling class domestic policy from social reform and relative class compromise to class war and political reaction.

The documents released on Thursday make clear that both the FBI and the CIA were well aware of Oswald's activities and were closely tracking him in the period leading up to the assassination. Yet they failed to warn the Secret Service, tasked with protecting the president, about the former Marine, turned expatriate living in the Soviet Union, turned active member of the Fair Play for Cuba Committee.

One of the more spectacular documents concerns 1975 testimony by Richard Helms, the CIA director under presidents Johnson and Nixon, to the President's Commission on CIA Activities, which was headed by then-Vice President Nelson Rockefeller. A lawyer for the commission is quoted asking

Helms: "Is there any information involved with the assassination of President Kennedy which in any way shows that Lee Harvey Oswald was in some way a CIA agent or agent...?" At that point the document breaks off, without Helms' reply.

Other material documents the fact that the intelligence agencies were closely monitoring Oswald's movements. One document shows that the CIA intercepted Oswald speaking to a Russian KGB agent in Mexico City on September 28, 1963. Another, dated October 25, less than a month before the assassination, is from the New Orleans office of the FBI. In it, the FBI notes Oswald's involvement in the New Orleans chapter of the Fair Play for Cuba Committee and discusses the agency's contacts with Cuban sources concerning Oswald.

A number of documents shed light on the systematic nature of the cover-up, which began virtually the moment the shots rang out on Dealey Plaza. One is a memo from FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover dictated the evening of November 24, 1963, shortly after Jack Ruby shot and killed Oswald, before live TV cameras, as the Dallas police were leading the handcuffed suspect down a corridor in the police headquarters building.

Hoover says, "Last night we received a call in our Dallas office from a man talking in a calm voice and saying he was a member of a committee organized to kill Oswald." He notes that he informed the Dallas police of the call and insisted that they take precautions to prevent an attack on Oswald. Furious that the accused assassin was killed before a confession had been extracted from him, Hoover writes of the need for "something issued so that we can convince the public that Oswald is the real assassin." This was written, of course, before any serious investigation of the killing had begun.

Lyndon Johnson, who told Earl Warren that his commission had a "patriotic mission" to stamp out "dangerous rumors" of state involvement in the assassination, was himself convinced that Kennedy was the victim of a conspiracy. One document in the trove released Thursday shows Richard Helms telling the Rockefeller Commission in 1975 that Johnson "used to go around saying that the reason President Kennedy was assassinated was that he had assassinated President Diem."

In its account of the released documents, the *Washington Post* writes: "The CIA publicly acknowledged in 2014 that John McCone, its director at the time of the assassination, participated in a 'benign cover-up,' according to a paper by agency historian David Robarge. His article said McCone was 'complicit in keeping incendiary and diversionary issues off the commission's agenda.' He wrote that McCone did not tell the commission about CIA-Mafia plots to kill Castro, some of which had been planned at the Mexico City station."

There is ample material in the newly released papers concerning the criminal activities of the US government in the period leading up to the assassination. A 1975 document from the Rockefeller Commission speaks of Attorney General Robert Kennedy telling the FBI that the CIA considered

approaching Chicago mobster Sam Giancana to have the mafia go to Cuba and kill Fidel Castro for \$150,000. Schemes to assassinate Castro included the use of gunmen, poison pills, a skin-diving suit contaminated with a disabling fungus and tuberculosis, and a "booby-trap spectacular seashell."

Behind the public face of the Kennedy administration marked by rhetoric about the defense of democracy around the world, both John and Robert Kennedy had a particular fascination with assassination plots, particularly against Castro. It was less than three years since the Bay of Pigs debacle, in which President Kennedy signed off on the CIA scheme to use Cuban anti-Castro expatriates to invade the island, murder Castro and install a US puppet regime.

Despite the failure of the plot and Kennedy's fury over the CIA's false assurances and incompetence, his administration remained mired in the swamp of anticommunist adventurers and terrorists. Two of the CIA's anti-Castro allies, Luis Posada and Orlando Bosch, were implicated in the blowing up of a Cuban commercial airliner and death of 73 innocent passengers in 1976. Posada escaped from prison in Venezuela with the aid of an anti-Castro group with close ties to the Reagan administration. He was subsequently implicated in terrorist bombings in Cuba in the late 1990s.

Other illegal activities described in the newly released documents include the FBI's relentless wiretapping of Martin Luther King, Jr., whom Hoover considered to be part of a world communist conspiracy, and FBI spying on Mark Lane, a liberal lawyer and author of a number of books debunking the Warren Commission Report.

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