

Data Set 6

Several short 2 to 3 minute clips from the Documentary *JFK: 3 SHOTS THAT CHANGED AMERICA*. The clips briefly explore the different theories behind the assassination.

Final Data Set

Whodunit

So who killed John Kennedy?

"The usual suspects are so numerous that whatever group you want to have a grudge against, you can pick your case based on the Kennedy assassination," says John McAdams, the Marquette professor. "Anything is possible to believe if you are willing to take the most unreliable evidence or most unreliable inferences and run with them."

Here is a short list of suspects and theories.

Lee Harvey Oswald, Lone Gunman

The best argument for the Warren Commission's controversial conclusion may be the serendipity through which Oswald landed a job at the Texas School Book Depository weeks before the murder—a second-hand referral. Simmering with anger about Cuba, Oswald learned that Kennedy's motorcade route would pass by his building. He secreted a rifle into the building, took a place at a sixth-floor window and fired the shots that killed the president and injured Gov. Connally, believers say.

Second Unidentified Assassin on the Grassy Knoll

The notion of a second assassin or an assassination team at Dealey Plaza has been fomented over the years by suspicious shadows, gunman-like silhouettes and puffs of smoke that turn up in moving and still pictures shot by witnesses on the day of the Kennedy murder. These photographic hieroglyphs have been deciphered since the day after the shooting, and figures such as "Black Dog Man" and "Umbrella Man" are totems among both doubters and believers. Oliver Stone used the mysterious Umbrella Man in "J.F.K." to signal the assassination team by pumping his umbrella up and down. The film left out one fact: the Umbrella Man had long ago been identified, questioned and cleared of having any part in the assassination.

The Cubans

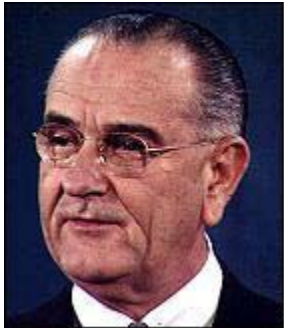
The simplest Cuba theory is that Fidel Castro ordered Kennedy murdered because Kennedy had tried to have him murdered. In a variation, exiled Cubans who were angered at Kennedy's failure in the Bay of Pigs invasion arranged to have him killed. And in a second version of that variation, the same right-wing Cubans ordered the murder because Kennedy had resolved the Cuban missile crisis by promising the Soviets that he would keep his hands off Castro. Oswald served as a foil to the Cubans, and Ruby's job was to silence him.

The Kennedy-for-Castro postulate had a marquee believer: Lyndon Johnson. Six months before he died, Johnson told a journalist, "I never believed that Oswald acted alone, although I can accept that he pulled the trigger." He said he believed Castro ordered the retaliatory murder.

The Cuban conspiracy theories gained weight because Oswald adored Castro and had tried to travel to Cuba not long before the assassination, and because Jack Ruby had visited the island nation in 1959. Mere coincidences, say the lone-gunman believers. Impossible coincidences, say the doubters.

The KGB

Under this theory, Soviet agents—again, using Oswald as a foil—killed Kennedy because the president had embarrassed Premier Nikita Khrushchev in the missile crisis "stare-down." Debunkers dismiss this scheme since Kennedy had promised a hands-off-Cuba policy and had made other concessions that cast Khrushchev as a clever negotiator, not a failure. Conspiracy theorists happily note that Oswald had lived in the Soviet Union during a defection dalliance, spoke a little Russian and was obsessed with Russian literature and music.



Lyndon Johnson

LBJ

Lyndon Johnson is a seminal figure in any number of the conspiracy theories. As noted, he believed Oswald was a puppet for Castro. New Orleans DA Jim Garrison also fingered Johnson as a marionette pulling strings behind Garrison's personal conspiracy theory. He played a role in the KGB conspiracy theory, as well, by ordering the Warren Commission to "leave that stone unturned," according to adherents, when it learned of a Soviet connection to the murder.

In newly released telephone recordings made during his presidency, Johnson sounded flummoxed and frustrated as various aides, politicians and newsmen briefed him on conspiracy theories about the assassination. But the subject regularly came up in the Oval Office.

In a 1967 conversation with Attorney General Ramsey Clark, Johnson referred to the CIA's covert efforts to kill Castro.

He said, "It's incredible. I don't believe there's a thing in the world to it, and I don't think we oughta seriously consider it. But I think you oughta know about it."

Which proved, above all else, that even the president might not know everything the government is doing.



Sam Giancana
The Mafia

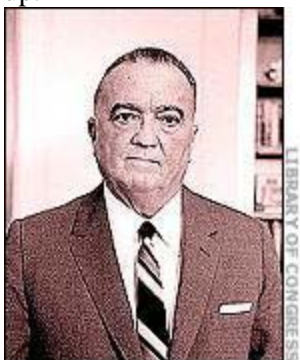
The Mafia liked Kennedy's religion but hated his politics.

The president and his brother, Attorney General Robert Kennedy, had pushed for probes of union racketeering, angering Teamsters boss Jimmy Hoffa. His appeasement deal with Nikita Khrushchev to keep U.S. hands off Cuba under Castro also stuck in the craw of the mob, which had financial interests in Havana's casinos, which were popular with Americans before the revolution. And then there was the bizarre plot arranged by the CIA to use Mafia hitmen to whack Castro. Some believe the Mafia got angry when the Kennedys became impatient and called off the mob goons. Lastly, there may have been a complicated romantic entanglement since mobster Sam Giancana and Jack Kennedy reportedly shared the same mistress.



Jimmy Hoffa

Whatever a doubter's mob conspiracy theory of choice, Oswald served as a Mafia foil, and Jack Ruby, the Dallas nightclub owner who was on friendly terms with organized crime, was the wing man in the cover-up.



J. Edgar Hoover
The FBI

J. Edgar Hoover had been kept informed of the whereabouts and activities of Lee Oswald. The agency knew he had subscribed to Commie publications, was active in the pro-Castro Fair Play for Cuba

Committee and had traveled to Mexico in a failed attempt to gain access to Cuba. An FBI agent spoke with an Oswald acquaintance just two weeks before the assassination, and Oswald had written to the Soviet Embassy in Washington to complain of FBI harassment.

Why such interest in a small fry Red, doubters ask. Believers reply that the FBI had a remarkable ability to track a wide breadth of suspected "enemies" during the Cold War era, and Hoover took a personal interest in a mind-boggling number of those cases.

The Garrison/Stone Theory

Jim Garrison's wildcat theory of the JFK assassination was a mishmash of international and political intrigue. He fingered virulent anti-Communist, anti-Castro zealots in the Central Intelligence Agency for plotting the murder because the president was soft on Reds—as witnessed by his appeasement of Khrushchev during the Cuban missile crisis. The same zealots were soured that Kennedy was mulling a retreat from Vietnam.

Garrison, who enjoyed the limelight, asserted that Oswald had never fired a shot. He condemned the Warren Commission's lone-gunman conclusion as "totally false." He appeared on the "Tonight" show to discuss with Johnny Carson his allegations about an assassination team, shadowy figures on the Grassy Knoll, photographic evidence, and connivances involving Dallas police, the FBI, CIA, Secret Service and wealthy Texans.

But his showcase, the 1969 conspiracy trial of New Orleans businessman Clay Shaw, was a laughter, with bizarre testimony from oddball witnesses. A jury acquitted Shaw in less than an hour.

Nonetheless, some credit Garrison and the film "J.F.K." for prompting Congress in 1992 to release nearly a million previously secret Government documents regarding Kennedy's death.

The Government Super-Conspiracy

In this variation on Garrison/Stone, elements within the CIA wanted Kennedy punished for ordering a series of firings after the CIA's Bay of Pigs debacle. The CIA crew recruited trained assassins (Cubans, Mafia, Soviet spies, et al), then propped up Oswald to take the fall. The Secret Service and Dallas police were in on the planning, and the local cops helped trick Ruby into shooting Oswald. The killers were later killed, chopped to bits and buried in Mexico.

The truth was either (a) hidden from the law enforcement agency bosses or (b) revealed to the bosses, who hid the information from investigators to save a collapse of the entire American military-industrial complex.

Oswald and Other Undetermined Assassins

After a two-year investigation, the House Select Committee on Assassinations in 1979 concluded that a second gunman also fired at Kennedy, based upon "acoustical scientific evidence." The members wrote, "The committee believes, on the basis of the evidence available to it, that President John F. Kennedy was probably assassinated as a result of a conspiracy. The committee is unable to identify the other gunman or the extent of the conspiracy."

However, it rejected as suspects "on the basis of the evidence available" the Soviet government, the Cuban government and anti-Castro Cuban exiles. It added that it could not preclude "individual members" of anti-Castro groups or the mob from involvement. And it flatly exonerated the Secret Service, the FBI and CIA.