

The FBI, the CIA, the KGB, Fidel Castro, Vice President Johnson, the Mafia, UFOs....

Who Killed President Kennedy?

50 Years Since the Assassination—50 Years of Pondering Conspiracies

- Aryeh Cohen

America has just marked 50 years since the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. Yet the circumstances surrounding his death remain as mysterious as ever. The intrigue and unanswered questions have given rise to a host of conspiracy theories, each purporting to offer the only true account of what happened on that day.

In fact, the Kennedy assassination is one of the exceptional cases in which the conspiracy theories occasionally sound more plausible than the official version. The inexplicable behavior and suspicious activities of various government officials and agencies during the weeks and months following the assassination only added fuel to the fire. Surveys show that close to 80% of Americans believe that the Kennedy assassination was the result of a full or partial conspiracy. Read the dramatic account of Kennedy's assassination according to the official version, as well as the unofficial yet tantalizingly plausible chain of events.

It has been 50 years since the day President John Fitzgerald Kennedy was assassinated. The date was November 22, 1963, when a lone gunman (if we are to believe the official account) named Lee Harvey Oswald fired the shots that killed him. Close to 700 volumes and hundreds more articles have since been written about it. Yet the assassination remains as mysterious as ever. It has fueled innumerable conspiracy theories about who really was behind it.

Surveys conducted from 1966 to this day have consistently shown that as much as 80% of Americans suspect that the murder involved a conspiracy by a group, a foreign intelligence agency or the American intelligence community itself. In fact, it turns out that a significant percentage of American officials during that period—including Kennedy's vice president and successor Lyndon B. Johnson (who himself is the subject of a conspiracy theory), Attorney General Robert Kennedy (brother of the murdered president) and Richard Russell, a powerful senator and member of the Warren Commission—were convinced that Lee Harvey Oswald had not acted alone. Far greater powers stood behind the act.

It is important to underscore the fact that most professional journalists and researchers agree that the conspiracy theories are untrue. According to them, Kennedy fell victim to a deranged individual whose Communist leanings led him to act as he did.

The reason the conspiracy theories have gained such wide acceptance is because there are so many questions that plague the official version. Whether intentions were good or bad, there were many attempts to hide important details. Additionally, many original documents related to the Kennedy investigation—including the doctor's autopsy report—were inexplicably destroyed by the men and agencies involved.

In this article we present a dramatic account of the Kennedy assassination based on the official government version of the events—as well as unofficial yet established



Kennedy campaigning for president in 1960.

facts that have been revealed over the years. We weave together the various versions, noting which aspects belong to the official account and which are highlighted by conspiracy theories.



Not Especially Popular

One widely accepted belief is that President John F. Kennedy was such a beloved and popular president at the time of his assassination that he would have easily won reelection.

The truth is that in 1963 many Americans had mixed or negative feelings about Kennedy. To them he appeared too soft in his dealings with the aggressive leaders of the Soviet Union. He was particularly unpopular in the southern states where his civil rights agenda aroused alarm.

At the time that Kennedy made the fateful decision to visit Dallas, Texas, in the winter of 1963, the city was home to a powerful anti-Kennedy movement. Signs appeared all over the city denouncing the president with slogans such as "Wanted for Treason" printed in bold letters beneath mock mug



Demonstrators await Kennedy's arrival at Dallas Love Field airport.

shots of the president. The situation was not very different from the anti-Obama movement that exists in many parts of America today.

Kennedy was elected to the White House by a miniscule margin in a tight race against incumbent Vice President Richard Nixon. During the 34 months and two days that Kennedy served as president the Cold War had only widened in scope. Already during the first year of his term he had to deal with the negative fallout that resulted from the Bay of Pigs fiasco, which was the attempt of a group of Cuban expatriates trained by the CIA to invade Cuba and overthrow its communist leader, Fidel Castro. They were easily quashed by Castro's security forces. The Kennedy administration refused to aid the attackers they had dispatched despite their desperate plea for help. The mishandling of the event created enemies of the president within both the Cuban-American community and the CIA.

One year later, in 1962, the still-green president suddenly found himself plunged into the deepest crisis of the entire Cold War when Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev placed nuclear missiles in Cuba. His purpose was to discourage America from any further attempts at invading Cuba. He also intended to retaliate for the American nuclear missiles



Part of an anti-Kennedy poster that was distributed in Dallas in anticipation of the president's arrival.

stationed in Turkey and pointing at Moscow.

Kennedy responded by ordering the US Navy to blockade Cuba and inspect every Russian military or transport ship that attempted to enter. With Russian ships on their way to deliver nuclear warheads to Cuba, this was as close as the world ever came to a nuclear showdown. Several times over the course of the 14-day crisis the two nations—the US and Russia—were within hours of declaring war, and some shots were



Location of the Bay of Pigs within Cuba.



Cuban exiles trained by the CIA are arrested after the failed Bay of Pigs invasion.