

What's Left in the CIA's JFK Files?

A simple test of whether President Biden can enforce his December 2022 deadline for full JFK disclosure?

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One of my purposes at JFK Facts, the Substack edition, is to report on the U.S. government's tortured failure to comply with the 1992 JFK Assassination Records Act. The law set a 25 year deadline for release of all U.S. government files related to the murder of President John F. Kennedy on November 22, 1963.

In October 2017 President Trump caved in to CIA and FBI pressure and [agreed to keep secret](#) portions of some 15,000 assassination related records for four more years. The former president, who often expresses his disdain for the "deep state," gave the CIA exactly what it wanted on JFK: more secrecy.

Last year, the JFK question landed on Biden's desk. The CIA and other federal agencies told the president that COVID prevented them from complying with the law. ["The COVID dog at my homework"](#) excuse, I told the Washington Post, was absurd and insulting. The ever-patient President Biden set a new deadline of December 15, 2022 for full JFK disclosure.

You can read Biden's memorandum [here](#).

JFK Facts will be watching the government's performance carefully. Some people assert that there's nothing important in the withheld material. While it is true that there is lots of trivial information is being concealed by CIA and FBI, that does not mean that *all* of the information that is withheld is trivial.

Four Who Knew

The CIA, for example, is still withholding significant portions of files about four CIA officers who knew far more about Lee Harvey Oswald, the accused assassin, than they ever told investigators. They include:

Birch O'Neal, chief of the super-secret mole unit called the Special Investigations Group in the CIA's Counterintelligence staff. O'Neal, former station chief in Guatemala, opened the Agency's first file on Oswald in November 1959. Of the 224 pages in the [O'Neal's personnel file](#), 177 pages contain redactions, and three pages are redacted in their entirety. (For more on "the CIA's Oswald expert," read [this](#).)

James Walton Moore, chief of the Dallas CIA office. He was informed that Oswald was in Dallas area in 1962 and recommended him to George de Mohrenschildt, a itinerant geologist and CIA source. Moore's role assisting CIA operations in Dallas was not disclosed to JFK investigators. A dozen pages of [Moore's personnel file](#) are still redacted.

David Phillips, chief of Cuban operations in Mexico City, knew about Oswald's contacts with the Cuban and Russian diplomatic offices six weeks before the assassination. When called to testify before Congress, Phillips changed his story about Oswald so often that HSCA counsel Richard Sprague called him "slithery." Phillips played leading role in the CIA's assassination of a Chilean general in 1970s. Many pages of Phillips [358 page personnel file](#) are still redacted.

George Joannides, [chief of psychological warfare operations](#) in Miami, ran the Cuban exile student group (code name AMSPELL) that identified Oswald as a Castro supporter in New Orleans newspapers, radio and TV. The CIA hid Joannides' financial support for Oswald's antagonists from the Warren Commission. In 1978, Joannides himself deceived the House Select Committee on Assassinations about his role in the events of 1963. The CIA retains 44 documents about Joannides' travels, cover, and intelligence methods in 1963 and 1978 that are redacted in their entirety.

Stay Tuned

These files are not the only important JFK records still being withheld but they do provide a good test of whether President Biden can enforce the JFK Records Act or not.

The JFK Records law, passed unanimously by Congress, was signed into law by a Republican, George H. Bush, and it was implemented by a Democrat, Bill Clinton. The JFK Records Act is an unusually strong open government law, giving an independent civilian review board, the Assassination Records Review Board (ARRB) the authority to review and release any government record related to JFK's assassination.

If these files are not released in their entirety in December, it will be plain that the CIA intends to defy the law.

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