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## MORE DEAD KENNEDY FILES

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Over 34 years have passed since most the shocking murder in the United States in this century--the assassination of President John F. Kennedy in Dallas, Texas on Nov. 22, 1963. There is now a gigantic amount of information available about the assassination. Vast quantities of previously classified or withheld government documents have been or are being released to the public. Hundreds of books and thousands of articles have been written about nearly every aspect of the assassination.

Despite the fact that serious researchers disagree about many of the facts surrounding JFK's death, and despite the fact that some assassination buffs are zanies touting screwball theories, there is a widespread, growing recognition in both the academic community and among the general public that the Warren Commission was wrong when it concluded that Lee Harvey Oswald, acting alone, killed the president. The Warren Report, almost all responsible scholars agree, was the result of a hasty, incomplete, and biased investigation.

Michael R. Beschloss's <u>Taking Charge: The Johnson White House Tapes, 1963-1964</u> (1997), is an important book that should be examined by persons interested in finding out more about the JFK assassination. In his book, Beschloss, a distinguished historian, has transcribed and annotated a number of presidential conversations secretly recorded by JFK's successor, President Lyndon B. Johnson, including conversations concerning the fatal trip to Texas, the assassination itself, and the official investigation of the assassination.

The transcripts published by Beschloss reveal:

• In conversations in 1966 and 1967, LBJ stated that JFK's journey to Texas in November 1963 was undertaken at JFK's insistence; LBJ had not wanted JFK to go to Texas and had tried to postpone the trip.

- After LBJ was sworn in as president and took off in Air Force One for Washington, D.C., the first telephone call he placed was to the dead president's mother, Rose Kennedy.
- The day after the assassination, FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover told LBJ that CIA surveillance photos and tape recordings of Lee Harvey Oswald's alleged visit to the Soviet Embassy in Mexico City in September 1963 did "not correspond to this man's voice, nor to his appearance. In other words, it appears that there is second person who was at the Soviet embassy down there." (The FBI, the CIA, and the Warren Commission later claimed that these photos and tape recordings did not exist.)
- A week after the assassination, J. Edgar Hoover told LBJ that the assassination bullet recovered at the hospital had come from JFK's stretcher, not the stretcher of Texas Gov. John Connally, who was riding in the presidential limousine and severely wounded. (Because it was essential to their theory that Oswald was the lone assassin, the Warren Commission later claimed that the bullet had come from Connally's stretcher.)
- In 1967, LBJ was informed by aides that New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison, who was conducting his own investigation, was telling people that LBJ had been involved in the assassination.
- In several conversations in 1967, LBJ discussed the possibility that JFK had been assassinated on orders of Castro in retaliation for the CIA-Mafia plots in the early 1960s to murder Castro. (The existence of these CIA-Mafia plots was not made public until 1975.)

Other interesting facts in the book, disclosed in Beschloss's annotations to the transcripts, include:

- A CIA memo written the day after the assassination warned that if Lee Harvey Oswald had been part of a foreign conspiracy he might be killed before he could reveal what he knew. (The day after this memo was prepared Oswald was shot dead while in police custody by gangster Jack Ruby.)
- Less than a week before the assassination, during a trip to Florida, "President Kennedy had told LBJ, 'Get in my plane.' Secret Service agents pleaded with him to reconsider. Laughing, Kennedy asked, 'Don't you fellows want McCormack as President?'" (John McCormack was Speaker of the House of Representatives and would succeed to the presidency if both the president and vice president died.)

Interestingly, the Beschloss book also tends to confirm the critics who have claimed that the protection given Oswald by the Dallas police after his arrest was suspiciously

inadequate. One week after the assassination, J. Edgar Hoover told LBJ: "They [the Dallas police escorting Oswald when he was shot by Jack Ruby] never made any moves, as the picture shows, even when they saw him [Ruby] approaching [Oswald] and got right up to him and pressed his pistol against Oswald's stomach. Neither of the police officers on either side made any move to push him away or grab him. It wasn't until after the gun fired that they then moved ..."

The Beschloss book adds another piece to the puzzle which has obsessed Americans for over a third of a century: what are the unknown facts about the murder of America's 35th president?