

Secret JFK files to be released by U.S. government

Is America about to find out the truth about the assassination of President John F. Kennedy?

On Thursday, the government is due release its final batch of secret files relating to the assassination, the majority of which will come from the FBI and CIA. The files are being released in keeping with a 1992 law that was passed in part due to Oliver Stone's "JFK," which explored the efforts of New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison to investigate Kennedy's death.

Stone's film was popular but widely criticized by experts who saw the film as a disservice to history. Scholars of the assassination are nearly unanimous in their belief that Kennedy was shot and killed by Lee Harvey Oswald, while Garrison argued that elements of the U.S. government were actually responsible. Other conspiracy theorists point to the Mafia or foreign governments, such as Fidel Castro's Cuba or the Soviet Union, as the hidden actors behind the assassination. Meanwhile, former Trump adviser Roger Stone, who says he had been pushing the president to release the files in full, has written a book claiming President Johnson was the real culprit.

President Trump is the only person allowed by law to halt the release of the files, although he's said that he will release all of them "subject to the receipt of further information."

There are numerous questions surrounding the assassination, which shocked the nation on November 22, 1963. For example, it is difficult to discern a clear motive for why Oswald, a 24-year-old former Marine who had briefly defected to the Soviet Union, would shoot Kennedy. Oswald also denied shooting Kennedy and famously claimed to be a "patsy" moments before nightclub owner Jack Ruby shot and killed him on November 24.

The Warren Commission, which was put appointed by Johnson to investigate the assassination and lead by Supreme Court Chief Justice Earl Warren, determined in 1964 that Oswald had acted alone. Still, a CBS News poll from 2013 found that 61 percent of Americans believed that more than one man was responsible for the

assassination. Other polls have routinely found that majorities of Americans likewise believe in some sort of conspiracy surrounding Kennedy's death. The same CBS poll found that 56 percent believed there was a cover-up.

It's unclear whether Thursday's big reveal will change anyone's mind. But here's what we do know: the new collection includes over 3,100 documents, and some of them are related to Oswald's trip to Mexico City right before the assassination. But most experts are of the opinion that the new documents are unlikely to reveal all that much about what happened that day in Dallas, because the government was legally required to release anything particularly relevant to the case years ago.

On the other hand, it's impossible to know if there's a bombshell hidden in this new tranche of documents.

"It's always possible that a really good researcher will find new information that they think is significant and will add to their version of the story, or perhaps even lead them in other directions," Judge John Tunheim, who chaired the Assassination Records Review Board, told Time Magazine earlier this week.

"There's a lot of still unanswered questions about the assassination. For example, did Oswald, when he lived in Minsk, have any connection with Cuban intelligence agents who were being trained in Minsk by the Soviets? There are issues like that that aren't fully resolved anywhere, and going through these documents might give good researchers an opportunity to come up with more than what we know today in the official story."

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