

THE CONSPIRACY THEORIES

The official version of the murder—lone nut #1 shoots JFK, gets shot by lone nut #2—seems improbable. Competing theories have problems, too.

THE SCENARIO	WHAT'S THE PLOT?	WHAT'S THE HITCH?
1 The Ultimate "Black Op" (The CIA did it.)	The CIA (or a few rogue agents) feared JFK would sell out to the Reds—and dismember the agency itself. And CIA types knew how to do hits on the qt. Oswald, an ex-defector, could have been a CIA recruit. Or perhaps just a "patsy," maneuvered into place to cover for sharpshooters elsewhere in Dealey Plaza.	Oswald was no hit man, and making him a patsy would have taken great logistical legerdemain. Then how to silence the real hit persons? Hit them?
2 The Ultimate Mob Hit (The Mafia did it.)	What would happen to you if you hired the mob to do your murders, shopped a mob-connected gadabout—and cracked down on organized crime? Oswald was a mob guy's nephew; Ruby had scary mob acquaintances. Small-timers, both; but some don might have thought their obscurity meant deniability.	Would truly wiseguys take the suicidal risk of whacking a president? How did they arm-twist Ruby into hitting Oswald? How did they know he wouldn't talk?
3 Cuban Capers I (Anti-Castro exiles did it.)	Anti-Castro exiles felt Kennedy hung them out to dry during the abortive CIA-sponsored Bay of Pigs invasion. The supposedly pro-Castro Oswald used a New Orleans address occupied by anti-Castro activists; odd, yes? And Ruby had been in Cuba, visiting a mob chum who later became an anti-Castroite.	Would Cuban exiles have trusted the Anglo commie Oswald? Or, if he was a patsy, could they have set up this more elaborate plot unhelped and undetected?
4 Cuban Capers II (Castro did it.)	Castro was well aware of American plots to assassinate him; no less a conspiracy theorist than Lyndon Johnson suspected Castro had ordered Kennedy killed in retaliation. Oswald, a self-proclaimed Marxist and Castro supporter, had visited the Cuban Embassy in Mexico City two months before the assassination.	Castro has said ordering the hit would have been stupid. He would say that. But it would have been stupid—even if the traceable Oswald hadn't done it.
5 Mission From Moscow (The KGB did it.)	Oswald also visited the Soviet Embassy in Mexico, where he met with a KGB official known to be involved in "wet affairs"—i.e., sabotage and assassinations. After defecting to the Soviet Union in 1959, Oswald—or, more baroque, an Oswald double—may have come back to the United States a programmed assassin.	Wet Affairs Rule One: Don't meet programmed assassins in the embassy. And why risk nuclear war to replace a young hard-liner with an old one?
6 Coup D'Etat (Lyndon Johnson, the Joint Chiefs, the intelligence community and the military industrial complex did it.)	This is less a theory than filmmaker Oliver Stone's countermyth of recent American history: the establishment bad guys wanted JFK dead so the war machine could run riot in Vietnam and weapons makers could get rich. Well? It all happened, didn't it?	With so many people ready to help—from hit squad to autopsy team to Warren Commission—why a Rube Goldberg scheme in view of a plazaful of witnesses?
7 Honey, I Shot the President I (A Secret Service Agent did it, by accident.)	Maryland ballistics expert Howard Donahue argues that JFK was accidentally shot in the head by a Secret Service agent in the follow-up car; his AR-15 supposedly went off when he picked it up in response to Oswald's shots. In the echo chamber of Dealey Plaza, the agent himself may not have known he'd fired.	None of the nine other passengers ever reported hearing a gun go off in the follow-up car. (The agent in question, understandably, wouldn't talk to Donahue.)
8 Honey, I Shot the President II (Oswald did it, but he was shooting at John Connally.)	Marina Oswald testified that she thought her husband may have been shooting at John Connally, not JFK. Why? Oswald felt Connally, former navy secretary, had brushed off his attempts to upgrade his Marine Corps discharge. And a Dallas lawyer said he overheard Oswald plotting Connally's murder with Jack Ruby.	For someone not shooting at the president, Oswald—or whoever—did a deadly efficient job. Supposedly he wasn't much of a marksman, but was he this bad?

A summary of assassination theories published in Newsweek (22 November 1993).

[Editor's note: Neither the Mafia, pro- or anti-Castro Cubans, or the KGB could have extended their reach into Bethesda Naval Hospital to fabricate X-rays, substituted another brain for that of JFK, or subjected the Zapruder film to extensive alteration.

While evidence suggests that the Mafia and the CIA were indeed involved in the assassination, the only hypothesis that appears to withstand the impact of these new findings is that of a large-scale conspiracy along the lines of Scenario 6. From this perspective, Oliver Stone's film, JFK, appears to have provided the most accurate, complete, and comprehensive portrayal of what actually happened in Dealey Plaza that has ever been presented to the American people through the mass media.]

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