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Appoint a Special Prosecutor in the JFK-Joannides Matter

by Jacob G. Hornberger, August 6, 2009

While we're discussing whether a special prosecutor should be named to investigate and prosecute CIA officials for violations of federal laws against murder, kidnapping, and torture, why not use the occasion to do the same in the matter of George Joannides? For it would be difficult to find a better example of obstruction of justice and fraud on the part of the CIA than the Joannides matter.

During the Kennedy administration, Joannides was serving as the CIA's head of the psychological warfare branch of the CIA's JM/WAVE operation in Miami. As such, he was the CIA contact for a group of anti-Castro Cubans known as the Directorio Revolucionario Estudiantil, or the DRE. Joannides was the conduit for the CIA's funding the sum of \$25,000 per month to the DRE.

A few months before the Kennedy assassination, Lee Harvey Oswald had an encounter with the DRE. While he was handing out pro-Castro literature in New Orleans, he was accosted by the head of the DRE, which resulted in Oswald's being arrested and charged with disorderly conduct. A few days later, Oswald debated the head of the DRE on a New Orleans radio station. Immediately after Kennedy's assassination, the DRE made headlines by publicizing Oswald's pro-Castro activities.

For some reason, the CIA kept Joannides's relationship to the DRE secret not only from the Warren Commission but also from the 1978 House Select Committee on Assassinations, which investigated the Kennedy assassination.

Equally interesting is what the CIA did in the 1978 investigation: It summoned Joannides out of retirement to serve as the CIA's liaison to the House committee, again without disclosing that Joannides had played an important role with the DRE.

In fact, the CIA succeeded in keeping the Joannides information secret for 38 years, when a journalist named Jefferson Morley published a story about him in a Miami newspaper.

A common misconception regarding the law of fraud is that fraud requires an affirmative misrepresentation of a material fact. Not so. Fraud also occurs when there is an intentional failure to disclose a material fact.

The Joannides connection to the DRE was clearly a material fact that warranted exploration, especially given Oswald's encounter with the group

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and the group's publicized attempts to link Oswald to Castro immediately after the assassination. As John Tunheim, the U.S. federal judge who chaired the Assassination Review Records Board in the 1990s, put it, "Had the Review Board known the truth about George Joannides everything bearing his name would have been made public. He was central to the time period, and central to the [Kennedy] story. There is no question we were misled on Joannides for a long time."

G. Robert Blakely, a former federal prosecutor who ran the House committee investigation, stated that the CIA had told him that Joannides would "help facilitate the committee's work." Blakely stated, "I was not told that he had an undercover role with the committee. I would not have dealt with him in any capacity that was not fully open. Had I known that he would not have been a facilitator, he would have been under oath as a material witness."

Why did the CIA select Joannides to serve as liaison to the 1978 congressional investigatory committee? Why call him out of retirement to serve in such a capacity rather than simply appoint an active CIA official? The obvious question arises, Was he chosen to serve as a barrier rather than a facilitator?

Joannides died in 1990, before his role in the Kennedy case became public, which enabled him to avoid ever having to testify under oath about his DRE-related activities in the months prior to the Kennedy assassination.

However, the Joannides controversy is still not over. Forty-five years after the Kennedy assassination, and 15 years after Congress mandated the release of all U.S. government records relating to the Kennedy's assassination, the CIA steadfastly refuses to release all of its files on Joannides's activities in the months leading up to the Kennedy assassination. The CIA's rationale? National security, of course. In other words, according to the CIA, if people were permitted to read the details of Joannides's activities in the months leading up to the assassination some 45 years ago, the security of the nation would be at stake.

That, of course, is palpable nonsense.

Fortunately, however, there are still journalists in the world with steadfast determination to seek the truth. One of those people is Jefferson Morley, a former journalist at the *Washington Post* and the author of the excellent book [Our Man in Mexico: Winston Scott and the Hidden History of the CIA.](#)

In December 2003, Morley filed a Freedom of Information Act lawsuit in federal district court to force the CIA to open up and disclose the Joannides files, which he has pursued despite almost six years of stonewalling by the CIA. That lawsuit is still pending, and the CIA continues to stonewall.

In fact, most of the facts in my article are based on the series of articles that Jefferson Morley has written over the years regarding this matter. I highly recommend reading every one of them, for they make fascinating reading. They are linked below.

Clearly, the CIA knowingly and intentionally refused to reveal a material fact — to wit, Joannides's relationship to the DRE and his activities with the DRE

in the period of time leading up to the assassination — to the Warren Commission and the House Select Committee on Assassinations, thereby preventing them from examining him under oath. Moreover, the CIA's decision to call Joannides back from retirement to serve as liaison to the House committee had to have been designed for him to serve as a barrier rather than a facilitator, as the CIA had falsely represented him to be.

Given the manifest evidence of fraud and obstruction of justice on the part of the CIA with respect to the JFK-Joannides matter and the longtime reluctance of the Justice Department to do anything about it, this is clearly a case for the appointment of a special prosecutor to investigate and seek criminal indictments. Is there any chance of that occurring? Of course not. This is the CIA we're talking about. If the CIA can get away with violating laws against murder, kidnapping, and torture, it will certainly be permitted to get away with violating laws against obstruction of justice and fraud.

Articles by Jefferson Morley:

[Will the CIA Obey the Law?](#) (July 2009), by Jefferson Morley

[Dead Spy's JFK Files Pose a Test for Obama's FOIA Order](#) (May 2009), by Jefferson Morley

[Obama's Openness v. CIA Secrecy](#) (February 2009), by Jefferson Morley

[CIA Still Stonewalls on JFK Mystery Man](#) (April 2008), by Jefferson Morley

[Court Orders CIA to Search for JFK Records](#) (December 2007), by Jefferson Morley

[The Man Who Didn't Talk](#) (November 2007), by Jefferson Morley

[Withheld in Full: Interview with Jefferson Morley](#) (video)

[What Jane Roman Said](#) (2002), by Jefferson Morley. (This is a fascinating account of a interview that Morley had with a retired CIA official who had signed off on a routing slip on a CIA memo regarding Oswald.)

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