

Ford Book on JFK Assassination

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PRESIDENT FORD
... disagrees with LBJ

WASHINGTON — President Ford's version of John F. Kennedy's assassination will become a TV documentary if and when current legal negotiations are completed.

Ford and his old friend, Jack Stiles, are in the process of selling MGM studios the film rights to their 1965 book, "Portrait of the Assassin."

The lengthy production MGM plans for network release and showings abroad would plunge Ford into the newly revived controversy about the assassination.

It would put him at odds with the late President Johnson's recently revealed theory that Cuban President

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Fidel Castro was instrumental in the murder.

A sensitive question — which has disturbed Ford, Stiles and their attorney in Los Angeles — is the impact such a film might have if Sen. Edward Kennedy becomes the 1976 Democratic nominee.

For obvious reasons, the Kennedys are jumpy about reviving talk of assassination, which already has taken two brothers.

Stiles, a Grand Rapids real estate man who managed Ford's first political campaign, is now a part-time

White House consultant. He and Ford wrote the book after Rep. Ford served on the Warren Commission investigating JFK's death.

It delved deeply into Oswald's ties with Cuba and notes that Castro had no love for John Kennedy, but supports the Commission's findings that Lee Harvey Oswald acted alone.

Simon & Schuster, the publishers, are expected to reissue "Portrait of the Assassin" if the TV deal goes through, Stiles said.

Showing the film in a campaign year could involve sticky problems of "equal time," and MGM has suggested that it be released after November 1976, accord-

May Be Filmed

ing to Los Angeles attorney, Volney P. Morin, Jr.

Morin spoke in the absence of his father, who represents Ford and Stiles. Morin, Jr. said, "No contract has been signed, but we are negotiating."

For the reasons mentioned, and others, White House Counsel Philip Buchan vetoed the film last fall when producer Sheldon Davis originally approached him.

But co-author Stiles revived it, and recently flew to California at MGM's quest for three days of discussions.

With Oswald's role again in dispute, and controversy raging over alleged CIA assassination plots and counterplots, the documentary is "a

dynamite idea," Davis said, when reached in California.

"It can be shown not only on TV, but in France, Germany, and Italy, where the Kennedy legend lingers. People will pay hard money to see it," Davis said.