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There was a second gunman that day in Dealey Plaza - a Secret Service agent who accidentally fired his new M-16 prototype rifle and hit president John Kennedy, according to a new book.

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The startling assertion is made in *Mortal Error: The Shot that Killed JFK*, based on the 25-year research of Howard Donahue, one of 11 marksmen used by CBS News in 1967 to try to duplicate assassin Lee Harvey Oswald's three-shot feat on Nov. 22, 1963.

Donahue, now 69, bettered Oswald's purported three shots in both time and accuracy.

But Donahue and author Bonar Menninger now say Oswald fired only twice. His first shot missed Kennedy; the second hit the president in his upper back.

The third shot - the one to Kennedy's head - came from Secret Service agent George Hickey, riding in an open security car behind Kennedy's open limousine, they say.

"There was no conspiracy," says Donahue, a Maryland ballistics expert. "It was a sheer . . . accident."

Hickey could not be reached for comment.

Thomas McCormack, head of St. Martin's Press which is publishing the book this week, said he and the authors made extraordinary attempts to discuss the Press Alt-H for Help or Alt-Q to Quit.

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theory with Hickey, but the former agent would not co-operate.

The book theorizes that as Oswald opened fire from the Texas School Depository to the rear, Hickey turned, reached down for the rifle and flipped

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off the safety. As he tried to stand up on the soft back seat of the car, the book says, he lost his balance - accidentally pulling the trigger of his M-16, then called an AR-15.

Hickey testified to the Warren Commission that he didn't pick up the rifle until Oswald's "last report" - the sound of the last shot - and then only "cocked and loaded (the M-16) and turned to the rear."

But agent Glen Bennett, next to Hickey, said Hickey "already had picked up the AR-15" by the time Bennett heard the second shot.

The 350-page book uses extensive ballistic, trajectory and photographic analysis and studies of Kennedy's mortal wounds to make its case that Oswald fired only twice - and that Hickey's misfire was the third shot.

The Secret Service told Donahue, in writing, several years ago that none of its agents fired any weapon that day. Donahue said it was possible that, with all the commotion, Hickey at the time may not have realized his rifle had  
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discharged.

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