

'Frontline': Did the Mafia

By MIKE HUGHES
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Of all the Kennedy-assassination theories floating through the air, this might be the one to stick.

It was a Mafia hit, PBS' "Frontline" suggests tonight. It may have been launched by New Orleans boss Carlos Marcello.

That's been said before, with violent aftershocks.

Mobster Johnny Roselli implicated the Mafia in an interview with Jack Anderson ... then was murdered in 1976. FBI informant Jose Aleman made the charge ... then committed suicide in '83.

Still, it persists. Last year, a British documentary fingered the mob; now "Frontline" has Mar-

IF YOU WATCH

Show: Frontline: JFK, Hoffa & the Mob

When: 9 tonight on MPT (28/67); 10 tonight on WHYY-TV (12/64)

cello associate Ed Becker recalling a talk: "He said, 'Don't worry. You get a nut to do this thing.'"

Marcello knew how to "get a nut." Indirectly, his contacts included Lee Harvey Oswald and Jack Ruby.

This is reported by Jack Newfield, a tough newsman.

"I have never been a conspiracy thinker or an assassination buff," Newfield says. "I was with Robert

Kennedy, writing a biography, when he was killed in 1968, and I've had an aversion to the subject ever since."

Now he's more convinced. His central source is Frank Ragano, 69, the lawyer for Teamsters boss Jimmy Hoffa and the late mobster Santo Trafficante.

At times, Ragano repeats stories that have been told before:

The mob and Hoffa thought they had a friend in John Kennedy. They were infuriated by attacks from his brother, Attorney General Robert Kennedy.

Soon, the president was killed and his brother was out. Investigations of the mob decreased.

Hoffa was eventually jailed, but was freed by President Richard

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kill JFK?

Nixon. Ragano says there was a direct payment to Nixon.

Hoffa tried to regain Teamster power, then disappeared.

What was Hoffa's role in the Kennedy assassination? Robert Blakey, chief counsel of the House Assassination Committee in 1978, told Newfield that he doubts any direct involvement.

The rest of it, Blakey says, rings true. Ragano's story of a mob hit "is a confirmation of what a substantial number of people have for some time believed."

Then what about the theories of the late Jim Garrison, pushed in the movie "JFK"?

They agree with this account in some ways, including the New Orleans link between Oswald, Ruby,



PBS photo

Lawyer Frank Ragano (right) with his friend, Teamsters boss Jimmy Hoffa.

Castro-haters and more.

The difference is that "JFK" saw a military conspiracy.

Marcello, now 82, liked Garri-

son, Ragano says. Garrison served up an "anything-but-Carlos" theory, avoiding the chilling possibility of a mob hit.