

Inadmissible Evidence: Itek & the CIA

By Sid Blumenthal

In a recent examination of the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, *CBS Reports* declared it had finally refuted the Warren Commission's critics. On the basis of its own investigation, CBS said, it believed that Lee Harvey Oswald, acting alone, had indeed pulled the trigger. The key evidence it introduced was the same evidence Warren Commission critics are showing wherever an audience can be gathered — Abraham Zapruder's home movie of the 1963 murder. CBS turned the original film over to Itek Corporation, a Massachusetts-based company, which subjected it to sophisticated image-enhancement and computer techniques.

Itek's analysis disclosed that in the grisly fatal sequence of the Zapruder film — in which Kennedy appears to be hit in the head and slammed backward, giving the impression that the shot came from in front of the President — Kennedy is actually moving forward before the backward motion, indicating a shot from behind. CBS asserted that Jacqueline Kennedy may have shoved her husband back in his seat, an explanation that further discredits the critics.

What CBS failed to tell viewers of its special program, however, was that the company making these judgments has a long history of intimate relations with the CIA. In fact, Itek's chairman of the board, Franklin T. Lindsay, is a former CIA operative who, according to an intelligence source, was "one of the principal architects of the Special Forces," known for their exploits in Vietnam. Kim Philby, the Soviet agent who worked for British intelligence until he defected to Russia, revealed that Lindsay, a CIA agent from 1949 to 1953, headed a clandestine invasion of Albania in 1951. The CIA planned to land an anti-communist army in the Albanian mountains, but prior to D-day checked the operation out with Philby, head of British intelligence's Eastern European desk. Needless to say, the Albanian government was forewarned and Lindsay's invasion was not successful.

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However, the Albanian operation was part of a larger creation of Lindsay's that has enjoyed more success. Lindsay had served in Yugoslavia during World War II with the OSS, predecessor to the CIA; it was there he learned the techniques of guerrilla warfare. A former CIA operative outlined for the *Phoenix* Lindsay's role in the formation of the Special Forces: "The idea of irregular warfare started in World War II in the OSS. But after the war, this was abandoned. When the Korean War broke out in 1950 the question arose of reassembling the experienced men from World War II. Under the general blanket of the CIA a force of 800 to 1000 men were trained. Half were from the military services and the rest were recruited from the colleges. The man behind it was Franklin Lindsay."

The history of Lindsay's army reflects the vicissitudes of the Cold War. According to the intelligence source, "In 1952 or '53, the Lodge Act was passed by Congress. Hundreds, if not thousands, of Eastern European refugees were living in refugee camps. The Lodge Act, in effect, created a French Foreign Legion for the US. We admitted these refugees, bypassing immigration quotas (which were stringent at the time), if they served in the US military for five years. Many of these guys drifted into the Special Forces. By the end of the Korean War the program was

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too big to maintain under cover. So the army took on this group under the guise of the Special Forces, a branch of the armed forces that was on the outs until Kennedy came in. Lindsay later emerged as head of Itek."

Lindsay retired to civilian life, or did he? In 1955, he was a consultant in the White House; in 1956, a member of the Rockefeller Special Studies Panel on Economic Policy; in 1957, a member of a special government Commission on National Security Policy; and, in 1960, a member of President-elect Kennedy's Task Force on Disarmament.

In 1961, Lindsay became president of Itek, joined by Howard Sprague, another former CIA operative, as vice president. Originally funded largely by Rockefeller Foundation money (according to a source once closely associated with the firm), the company's largest stockholder today, according to the *Wall Street Journal*, is Laurance Rockefeller. Sprague's wife, says our informant, is related to the Rockefellers. (Sprague retired a few years ago.)

Itek specializes in photographic analysis but, as the Itek-affiliated source told the *Phoenix*, "Let's face it, they're not making Polaroid Land cameras out there." This informant claims to have firsthand knowledge of Itek's work on the CIA's super-secret U-2 spy flights. Itek, he says, did much of the photo analysis of the sensitive film. "The analysis they have done of long-distance photo reconnaissance is incredible. The clarity is precise. They're probably photographing every inch of the earth."

George O'Toole, former chief of the Problems Analysis Branch of the CIA and a major critic of the Warren Commission, states that while he worked for the Agency he learned that Itek cleared all its corporate officers with the CIA before appointing them. This would be understandable if Itek received many CIA contracts.

Franklin T. Lindsay, currently a director of the First National Bank of Boston, makes no secret of his attachment to the CIA. On January 27, 1975, identifying himself as a former Agency officer, he wrote an article in the *Boston Globe* entitled "Is the CIA Necessary?" His answer was predictable: "From time to time, very important things may need to be done privately . . . There is a continuing place for both covert activities and secret intelligence activities, but they must be used carefully and only after the risks of exposure, especially of covert operations, are fully weighed . . . In light of the Watergate scandals, restoration of public confidence in the CIA is essential." The main problem, as Lindsay saw it, was the uncovering of CIA dirty tricks and the like; if only further revelations could be halted, the CIA could continue as it had in the past. Basically, he argued for the public's right not to know.

Leslie Midgley, the CBS producer for the assassination program, was not perturbed by Itek's connections. Asked about its CIA ties, Midgley told the *Phoenix*, "I've heard it many, many times. Itek undoubtedly does a great deal of work with the government. The company's connections are not secret. But they're perfectly OK people, the best-equipped to deal with the film. They are the best scientists in the country, maybe the world." When queried about the credibility of such a firm, working on a matter that might conceivably involve the CIA, Midgley said, "People who believe that the CIA is masterminding a vast conspiracy would believe that. We don't."

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based Assassination Information Bureau does believe in CIA conspiracies. The AIB was identified in the CBS program as the major group advocating the view that the JFK slaying was a conspiracy. Katz says, "Itek serves as the hit man for CBS, providing points for CBS that it couldn't make on its own without abandoning its objective stance. The points Itek makes are essential to support the lone assassin theory." Katz disagreed with Itek's analysis of the Zapruder film. "The acceleration of Kennedy's head backwards after he is shot is a consistent motion. The slight movement forward, by about six inches, lasts only one Zapruder frame; the movement backwards lasts at least four to five frames. Jackie Kennedy certainly didn't push her husband backwards. Itek and CBS are saying that you shouldn't believe your own eyes. If you can get people to disbelieve themselves, that is a critical step on the way to 1984." CBS's evidence is by no means as convincing as the network claims, and

the source of its evidence is suspect.

Itek's look at the Zapruder film was not the first time it had taken part in the assassination controversy. In 1967 Itek analyzed a film taken by Orville Nix of the murky grassy knoll at the moment of Kennedy's death. Some assassination researchers contend that a man is visible there. Maurice Schönfeld, an executive with UPI, showed the film to Itek, which said that the purported man was probably a shadow. After Schönfeld discovered Itek's links to the CIA, he took the Nix film to the California Institute of Technology, whose researchers decided, "The data . . . was so poor as to leave open questions concerning the disposition and existence of real or hypothetical assassins in the deep shadow, behind the picket fence." The matter was unresolved, but Schönfeld was disillusioned by his brush with Itek. He wrote in the July/August, 1975 issue of the *Columbia Journalism Review*, "I love to tell the story on myself, and maybe on all of us, of how, in the end, the only people I could get to investigate a picture that might (by a stretch of conspiratorial imagination) involve the CIA were people who worked for the CIA."