

**PLAUSIBLE DENIAL**  
**Was the CIA Involved in the**  
**Assassination of JFK?**

By Mark Lane  
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By Rory Quirk

**W**AS THE CIA involved in the assassination of JFK? Mark Lane, whose bestselling *Rush to Judgment* questioned the findings and conclusions of the Warren Commission's report on the assassination, thinks so. And in *Plausible Denial*, he presents his case.

Lane's thesis: The Warren Commission Report is "false." There was a conspiracy to murder the president. The CIA planned the murder prior to Oct. 1, 1963, framed accused assassin Lee Harvey Oswald and killed President Kennedy. Why? Activists in the CIA leadership believed Kennedy had abandoned efforts to overthrow Fidel Castro, planned to withdraw U.S. personnel from Vietnam, and intended to dismantle the CIA after the 1964 election.

"The CIA had other plans," Lane writes. "John Kennedy would not live to face the voters in 1964. He would have to be assassinated during 1963, in a fashion that would diminish neither the image nor the power of the Agency."

Damning allegations—which Lane believes he has proved in a court of law. *Plausible Denial* is his account of how he is certain this has come to pass. The path is tortuous. In limited summary:

- In 1978, a small newsletter, the *Spotlight*, published an article titled "CIA To Admit Hunt Involvement in Kennedy Slaying," asserting that ex-CIA operative (and convicted Watergate burglar) E. Howard Hunt may have been implicated in the assassination of John F. Kennedy. The article referred to an internal CIA memorandum which "said in essence: Some day we will have to explain Hunt's presence in Dallas on Nov. 22, 1963—the day President Kennedy was killed." Hunt sued the publisher (the ultra-right wing Liberty Lobby) for libel.

- In 1981, the case (*Hunt v. Liberty Lobby*) was tried in federal court in Miami. The newspaper, through counsel, admitted the story was not true, and conceded that Hunt was not in Dallas on the date of the assassination. A jury returned a verdict in favor of Hunt and awarded him \$650,000 in damages.

- The newspaper appealed, on the ground that the judge's instructions to the jury were flawed. The appeals court agreed and sent the case back to the trial court for a new trial.

- In 1985, at the second trial, Lane

served as defense counsel for the newspaper, and took a different tack: "I revealed to opposing counsel during a telephone conversation that I intended to offer evidence both that Hunt was in Dallas at the time of the assassination, and that Hunt, and his employers in the Central Intelligence Agency, had been implicated in the murder." (Or as Lane characterizes it: "I was no longer defending the defamation case; I was prosecuting a murder case within a civil action.")

- At the new trial, Hunt testified that he had been in Washington, not Dallas, on Nov. 22, 1963. Lane introduced, through a stand-in, the deposition testimony of Marita Lorenz (who previously

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Rory Quirk, a Washington lawyer, frequently reviews for Book World.

had appeared before the House Select Committee on Assassinations in 1978) that in November 1963 she transported weapons from Miami to Dallas; that while there, she had observed Hunt pay money to one of her CIA colleagues on Nov. 21, 1963—the evening before the assassination; that after Hunt departed, a man she identified as Jack Ruby [Oswald's killer] appeared at the door; that she left Dallas the evening of Nov. 21 before the assassination; and that the colleague subsequently advised her "We killed the president that day."

- The jury returned a verdict in favor of the publication. The foreperson of the jury, Lane relates, explained her reasoning to reporters: The evidence was clear, she said. "The CIA had killed President Kennedy, Hunt had been part of it, and that evidence, so painstakingly presented, should now be examined by the institutions of the United States government so that those responsible for the assassination might be brought to justice."

Throughout, Lane weaves deposition, courtroom exchanges and personal experience and recollections with his views on law and litigation. The effort is complicated by the fact that the path from Dallas to the

Miami courtroom does not proceed in a linear fashion. Lane is forced to jump forward and back in time to pull the strands of the story together. Generally, he succeeds (though a tougher editor would have excised the likes of "Snyder reacted as if he had been struck across the face with a wet fish").

As to the merits, Lane acknowledges that the transformation he sought to effect in Miami is novel: "There is no legal precedent for *Hunt v. Liberty Lobby*." He maintains: "More than two decades after the murder of John F. Kennedy in Dallas, the case against his killers was finally tried in a civil action suit brought in the federal courthouse in Miami." Lane is critical of the national media for failing to seize upon the Miami verdict and reopen an inquiry into the assassination.

A casual reader, unsteeped in the myriad controversies surrounding the Kennedy assassination (yet possessed of a belief that Oswald was a triggerman, coupled with a skepticism that the Warren Commission Report effectively explains all facts of the events in Dallas nearly 30 years ago) is left with a respect for Lane's decades-long doggedness in pursuit of his theory without necessarily sharing Lane's certitude or concurring in his conclusions based on the record recounted in this book. ■