

JFK Book Says U.S.

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Was in Great Peril

Compiled from Dispatches

NEW YORK — President Kennedy's assassination precipitated a two-hour telephone blackout in Washington that could have meant defeat in nuclear war, William Manchester's "The Death of a President" discloses.

The book, which will be published April 6 after months of controversy, says that the Army Signal Corps still has not been given the go-ahead to link the homes of all vital government officials to an emergency telephone system, even though it has the equipment and expertise. The lesson of Nov. 22, 1963 has yet to be learned, Manchester writes.

"A study of that afternoon suggests that in any disaster on a workday, commercial telephones would become highly unreliable," according to Manchester.

(IN Washington, a spokesman for the Chesapeake and Potomac Telephone Co. rejected Manchester's contention that there was a phone blackout.

"There was unusually heavy volume," the spokesman said, "but actually the only effect was that the dial tone was a little slow. In other words, if you picked up the phone you might have to wait a few seconds to get a dial tone.")

The 710-page account of the assassination and its aftermath—published by Harper & Row—will go on sale for \$10 a copy a month after the final installment of a four-part series in Look magazine. The Look series skimmed the cream off the highly detailed, minute-by-minute history but slighted Manchester's thesis that the United States was vulnerable to a government coup or an attack by a foreign power during the tragedy in Dallas.

Fears of an international plot

to overthrow the United States government prompted secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara to alert every American military base around the world the minute he heard that Kennedy had been shot, Manchester writes.

THE much-disputed book contains 350,000 words of text plus diagrams, appendices and a list of sources.

McNamara "kept his head and made all the right moves," Manchester says.

"By every readable signal, the situation was very red," Manchester writes, noting that both the President and vice president were out of Washington and six members of the cabinet were airborne over the

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Pacific on a secret mission involving the Vietnam situation.

Most incredible of all, Manchester says, Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson did not know the cabinet's whereabouts when he became President and had never been informed about procedure to follow in the case of nuclear attack, instructions for which were contained in a football shaped case aboard the presidential jet. If war had materialized "the country's retaliatory arsenal could be spiked" until Johnson was briefed.

"HAD Russia attacked across the DEW line, the greatest military establishment in the history of the world might easily have been musclebound during the 15 fateful minutes of warning time and perhaps even afterward, when second-strike capacity became a factor," the book asserts.

The author says the most sin-

ister development was the gradual blackout of Chesapeake and Potomac Telephone Co. service in the Washington area, suggesting massive sabotage. Actually it was due to an unprecedented load of calls between 2 p.m. EST when Kennedy was pronounced dead and 4 p.m. when government workers began going home.

Phones in the Senate and House offices, the various department headquarters, the White House and even the Signal Corps were temporarily paralyzed. Sen. Edward Kennedy roamed the streets of his neighborhood, trying the phone of strangers, until he got through to Atty. Gen. Robert F. Kennedy to learn if their brother was dead.

Authorities from the President and the Joint Chiefs of Staff down to lowest-echelon secretaries feared a Russian plot and one cabinet member over the Pacific assumed that a nuclear bomb had been dropped on an American city. The joint chiefs ordered every U.S. military base in the world on alert.

THE book says Gen. Maxwell Taylor issued a special warning to troops in the Washington area. John McCone, director of the Central Intelligence Agency, ordered his extraordinary "watch committee" to focus its activities on Moscow and Peking.

The CIA got an "absolutely reliable" report from agents in Geneva "who had positively verified an elaborate plot to murder General de Gaulle on the stretch of pavement outside the cathedral (St. Matthews) in Washington where de Gaulle was attending Kennedy's funeral," Manchester reveals.

The book backs the "lone killer" — Oswald—and the "two-shot" theories of Kennedy's assassination. It draws a sympathetic portrait of Johnson and his close relationship with Mrs. Kennedy, whose dignity of character and sense of purpose dominated the book.

"At a time when we showed the world our seamy, ugly side, she revealed and symbolized our nobler side," Johnson is quoted as saying. "We should always be grateful to her."

One of the first things John-

son did on his return to Washington was to write "Dear John" and "Dear Caroline" letters to the Kennedy children, telling them "always be proud of what he (their father) did for his country."

AMONG previously unpublished material in the book are these disclosures:

- Manchester believes — but states as fact — that Oswald went insane the night before Kennedy was assassinated. He says Oswald's reason crumbled as the result of a quarrel with his Russian wife, Marina, from whom he was semiestranged.

- Speaker of the House John W. McCormack, second to Johnson in the line of presidential succession for 14 months, refused Secret Service protection as an "intolerable intrusion into my private life."

- Oswald was deprived of any chance of surviving his wound by clumsy artificial res-

piration applied by a Dallas detective, probably causing worst hemorrhaging.

- Ted Kennedy wore his dead brother's striped pants, hastily altered by a White House aide, to the funeral because a rental agency sent him an incomplete full dress suit.

- Kennedy was buried in a middle-price \$1,400 casket because the presidential assistants who selected it were influenced by Jessica Mitford's critical book, "The American Way of Death."

- Mrs. Kennedy vetoed Catholic hierarchy's suggestion of holding the funeral at Arlington Shrine of the Immaculate Conception and Cardinal Cooke's idea for a tomb in the middle of Boston Common.

- President Johnson said "What the hell am I doing here?" when Secret Service agents pushed him in among the Supreme Court justices for protection at the Arlington graveside service.

- Mrs. Kennedy used the post-funeral reception as an opportunity to tell De Gaulle that everybody had become bitter over this "France, England, America thing."