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Kennedy Book Due on Stands

William Manchester's controversial "The Death of a President" should be on Washington book store shelves late Thursday or early Friday, area booksellers report.

The book will apparently be plentiful at least in the beginning. A poll of several stores revealed that book orders are way above normal, and so are the number of copies already reserved.

Woodward & Lothrop, for example, has ordered about 2,500 copies and already has reserved around 1,300 or 1,400 copies. Normally, the store would buy between 500 and 1,000 copies of a book believed to be in the best-seller class.

Brentano's said it also has a "substantial" order and that a "substantial number" already have been reserved, and the Saville and Trover book stores say they are heavily stocking the book. Saville has ordered 1,000 copies, well over double its normal order, and Trover 300 copies.

The Manchester book on the assassination of President John F. Kennedy has an April 7 publication date, but somehow the book reached Pittsburgh, Pa., shelves Monday and the city's three major department stores placed the book on sale at least six days prematurely. They reported that over-the-counter

sales were only moderate.

The Defense Department today denied statements in Manchester's book that President Johnson had not been advised on procedures for ordering nuclear retaliation in the event of an attack following the Kennedy assassination.

Security officials in the Kennedy administration also denied that Johnson had not been briefed. They said that at the late President's insistence Johnson had been familiarized thoroughly on the contents of the football-shaped satchel containing U.S. nuclear attack plans.

Manchester says in the book: "The difficulty was that Johnson had no idea of what was in the bag. He knew that it existed, but he hadn't been briefed about the contents, and if the thunderbolt of all-out war struck that afternoon, the country's retaliatory arsenal could be spiked until he had been led through Jaz Shepard's primers for the first time." (Capt. Tazewell Shepard was a military aide to President Kennedy.)

Manchester also says there was a slowdown in commercial telephone service here because of the great load of calls in the hours immediately following the assassination.

A spokesman for the Chesapeake and Potomac Telephone Co. said that due to the unusually heavy traffic after the assassination, "if you picked up the phone you might have to wait a few seconds to get a dial tone."