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Stone doubts Bush's faith in Warren Report

BY DAVID ROBB

Oliver Stone says he doesn't believe President Bush's comments to reporters last week that Bush had no interest in reviewing the CIA's files on the John Kennedy assassination while he was head of the CIA in 1976. "I don't believe him, especially in light of the memos he wrote while at the CIA," Stone said in a sharply worded statement released in response to Bush's comments about Stone's "JFK."

Those memos, obtained by *Daily*

Variety, suggest that Bush did have at least a passing interest in the Kennedy assassination while head of the CIA.

Stone also accused Bush of stonewalling the public on the facts surrounding the Kennedy assassination and urged the president to make public all government files on the assassination.

Stone's statement, released to *Daily Variety*, was in response to comments Bush made about Stone's "JFK" last Thursday while visiting Canberra, Australia.

At a press conference there,

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NBC News correspondent John Cochran asked Bush: "As a former CIA director, did you ever go back and read the CIA's findings during that period and satisfy any of your curiosity?"

"No curiosity"

Bush responded: "No, I didn't have any curiosity, because I believed ... the Warren Commission ... I saw no reason to question it. Still see no reason to question it."

Bush, who said he hadn't seen Stone's movie, went on to compare Kennedy assassination conspiracy theories to rumors that Elvis Presley is still alive.

"I don't know much about the movie," Bush said. "I haven't seen it, and there's all kinds of conspiratorial theories floating around on everything. Elvis Presley is rumored to be alive and well someplace, and I can't say that somebody won't go out and make a movie about that." Stone, whose office was contacted by *Daily Variety* Friday, fired back in a statement released over the weekend.

"I don't believe him, especially in light of the memos he wrote while at the CIA."

Oliver Stone

"For a man who one month ago denied there was a recession," Stone said, "I am not surprised he did not have more curiosity when he was head of the CIA about Lee Harvey Oswald, Jack Ruby and JFK—but, as with the recession, I do not believe him, especially in light of the memos he wrote while at the CIA.

"Mr. Bush is very much a part of the problem in this country, in that he has been a member of the execu-

tive branch establishment for 30 years, in which time he has had ample opportunity to stonewall the American people.

"I suggest first he see the film and second that he trust the American people with the truth of their history by allowing them to see the files of the government investigations of the JFK case."

Despite Bush's claim last week that he "didn't have any curiosity" about the JFK assassination while head of the CIA in 1976, CIA documents obtained through the Freedom of Information Act by the Washington, D.C.-based Assassination Archives & Research Center appear to paint a different picture of Bush's interest in the matter.

Telltale memos

In one such memo, dated Sept. 15, 1976, CIA director Bush asked his deputy director of central intelligence to look into news accounts linking Oswald assailant Jack Ruby to mobster Santos Trafficante.

In that memo, Bush wrote: "A recent Jack Anderson story referred to a November 1963 CIA cable, the subject matter of which had some U.K. journalist observing Jack Ruby visiting Trafficante in jail (in Cuba). Is there such a cable? If so, I would like to see it."

CIA documents show that Bush was also curious about another 1976 Jack Anderson column, which stated that newly released documents allegedly revealed that "the CIA withheld data in JFK probe."

Evidence withheld

One of the assertions in that article was that shortly after the assassination of Kennedy, then-CIA Director James McCone had briefed the new president, Lyndon Johnson, about a cable from the U.S. Embassy in Mexico City that suggested that "the Cubans may

have been behind the assassination."

CIA documents show that Bush wrote "is this true?" in the margin of Anderson's newspaper account of the Johnson briefing.

A few days later, Bush received a five-page CIA memorandum that disputed the allegations contained in Anderson's column.

Still another CIA document shows that Bush asked Seymour Bolten, a high-ranking CIA official, whether another news article, allegedly connecting Lee Harvey Oswald to the CIA, would hurt former CIA director Richard Helms, who had sworn before the Warren Commission that the CIA had never "even contemplated" any contacts with Oswald.

I believed ... the Warren Commission ... I saw no reason to question it. Still see no reason to question it."

George Bush

"Will this cause problems for Helms?" Bush asked Bolten, in a memo dated Oct. 4, 1976.

What Bush was referring to was an article that appeared Oct. 1, 1976, in the now-defunct Washington Star, which stated that contrary to Helms' sworn testimony, a newly released CIA document indicated that a low-level CIA official had once considered using Oswald as a source of intelligence information about the Soviet Union. Oswald, who had defected to the Soviet Union in 1959, returned to the U.S. in 1962.

Bolten, responding to Bush's memo, wrote that "this article will further smear Dick Helms' reputation and probably cause him some anxious moments, but I do not see

how it can result in any additional legal problems for him, as it is a gross distortion of the facts."

Several other CIA memos, from then-CIA Inspector General John Walker and other top CIA officials to CIA director Bush, addressed a wide range of other questions surrounding the Kennedy assassination—including such topics as whether or not Jack Ruby had met with Fidel Castro only a few weeks before the assassination and allegations that the CIA was somehow involved in the plot to kill the president.

Altogether, the CIA released two documents "in full" that dealt with then-CIA director Bush and the Kennedy assassination investigation, while 16 other documents were released "in part." The CIA noted that "a number of other documents are being withheld in their entirety."

Apparently, then, CIA Director Bush was "curious" about the assassination, which was back in the news in 1976 due to an investigation by Senators Gary Hart (D-Col.) and Richard Schweiker (R-Penn.), who had been appointed by the Senate Intelligence Committee to conduct a special study of CIA and FBI responses to the Kennedy assassination.