

3/13 2:46pm est

PM-Nixon Movie, 1st Ld-Writethru,0359

Stone's Latest Theory: Nixon Responsible for JFK Assassination

Eds: LEADS with 5 grafs to UPDATE with Stone comment.

Pickup 3rd graf pvs; DELETES outdated final graf.

AP Photo NY120

NEW YORK (AP) -- Oliver Stone's planned movie about Richard Nixon could be a conspiracy theorist's dream: One early script reportedly has the former president organizing a hit squad that assassinated John F. Kennedy.

The screenplay is prefaced by a confession that it is based partly on imagined scenes and "incomplete historical findings," according to Time magazine's March 20 issue.

Stone, however, today issued a statement saying the "hit squad" angle is "ridiculous."

"The sensationalized stories on 'Nixon,' based on very early drafts of the script, totally misrepresent the film we are trying to make," said Stone, who was widely criticized by historians for his version of the Kennedy assassination in his movie "JFK,"

"Today's story, that we have Nixon organizing a hit squad that killed J.F.K., is ridiculous. If the media will allow us to finish writing the script, then shoot and edit the movie and present it to the public, I believe that we will be able to offer our audience an exciting and sympathetic portrait of the most controversial president in our history."

Newsweek, which also obtained an early version, says the script portrays Nixon as a "pill-popping, Scotch-swilling, epithet-spewing" victim of forces ranging from the CIA to FBI director J. Edgar Hoover to his own mother.

In the script, then-Vice President Nixon organizes a hit squad of CIA agents, Cubans, mobsters and right-wing businessmen to kill Cuban President Fidel Castro. The mission is never carried out, but the squad remains intact -- and goes renegade, killing Kennedy.

The script then has Hoover threatening to reveal Nixon's role in forming the hit squad, and Nixon himself erasing the infamous 181/2-minutes from the Watergate tapes to cover up references to the assassination team.

"Absolute, total and utter nonsense," historian Herbert Parmet, who wrote "Richard Nixon and His America," told New York Newsday on Sunday. "I guess they waited until he died to come out with this nonsense."

AM-Nixon Movie, 0269**Oliver Stone: Give 'Nixon' A Chance**

LOS ANGELES (AP) -- Director Oliver Stone said media reports about his upcoming ``Nixon'' movie are inaccurate and asked Monday that people not judge his biography until the film is finished.

Newsweek, Time and Weekly Variety published stories about early drafts on the ``Nixon'' script, co-written by Stephen Rivele and Christopher Wilkinson.

Newsweek said the script portrays Nixon as a ``pill-popping, Scotch-swilling, epithet-spewing'' victim of forces ranging from the CIA to FBI director J. Edgar Hoover to his own mother.

Stone rejected as ridiculous a report in Time magazine that the screenplay has a rogue hit squad being organized by Vice President Nixon to assassinate Fidel Castro and going on to kill President Kennedy.

In this version, Hoover threatens to reveal Nixon's role, and Nixon himself erases the infamous 18 1/2-minutes from the Watergate tapes to cover up references to the assassination team.

The screenplay is prefaced by a confession that it is based partly on imagined scenes and ``incomplete historical findings,'' according to Time magazine's March 20 issue.

``The sensationalized stories on 'Nixon,' based on very early drafts of the script, totally misrepresent the film we are trying to make,'' said Stone, who was widely criticized by historians for his version of the Kennedy assassination in his movie ``JFK.''

Stone said that when the movie is done, ``I believe that we will be able to offer our audience an exciting and sympathetic portrait of the most controversial president in our history.''

Anthony Hopkins stars in the title role in the film, due to be released by the Walt Disney Co. next year.