

Copy to J. W. Miller

S.F. CHRONICLE 10/6/99

LBJ Tied Castro to JFK Slaying, Book Says

Johnson's secret tape recordings

Associated Press

Washington

President Lyndon Johnson thought Cuban President Fidel Castro played a role in the 1963 assassination of President Kennedy, but he worried that a retaliatory strike on Cuba could lead to nuclear war, according to a new book.

Johnson said publicly blaming Castro would generate a public outcry for an attack on Cuba or the Soviet Union that could "check us into a war that can kill 40 million Americans in an hour."

According to the book, "The Johnson White House Tapes, 1963-



Author says Johnson was worried that retaliating against Cuba could lead to nuclear war

1964," by historian Michael R. Beschloss. Johnson also told the late Senator Richard Russell in 1964 that he did not believe the conclusion drawn by the Warren Commission, of which Russell was a member, that Kennedy was killed by a lone gunman.

The book casts Russell, D-Ga., as a reluctant member of the commission who was pressured into

signing the report against his will.

"I'm just worn out, fighting over that damned report," Russell is quoted as saying on one tape. "Well, I don't believe it."

"I don't either," Johnson said.

Newsweek magazine, in its edition on newsstands today, carries excerpts of the book, which details conversations from the secret tape recordings Johnson kept running during his years in the White House. The book, published by Simon & Schuster, is scheduled to appear in bookstores this week.

In another conversation, with former Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield in May 1964, Johnson suggests that he might use the FBI to investigate Republican campaign contributions to get back at

them for investigating his family finances.

"They've been down inspecting Miz Johnson's property in Texas, and they've harassed and harranged her every day since we've been here," he said. "The FBI can look into their contributions and it won't look very good."

The tapes reveal that Johnson had strong reservations about involvement in Vietnam. "I stayed awake last night thinking of this thing," he tells his national security adviser McGeorge Bundy in May 1964. "It looks to me like we're getting into another Korea.... I don't think we can fight them 10,000 miles away from home.... I don't think it's worth fighting for.... It's just the biggest damned mess that I ever saw."