



Q&A

JFK & CIA Spymaster James Jesus Angleton

WITH JFK EXPERT JEFFERSON MORLEY

BY AVA ROOSEVELT

Since the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, 10 presidents, Lyndon B. Johnson, Richard Nixon, Gerald Ford, Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, George H. W. Bush, Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, Barack Obama and Donald J. Trump, all with a vast array of intelligence resources available to them, have not succeeded in resolving the most scrutinized and investigated cold case in American history: The Assassination of President John F. Kennedy.

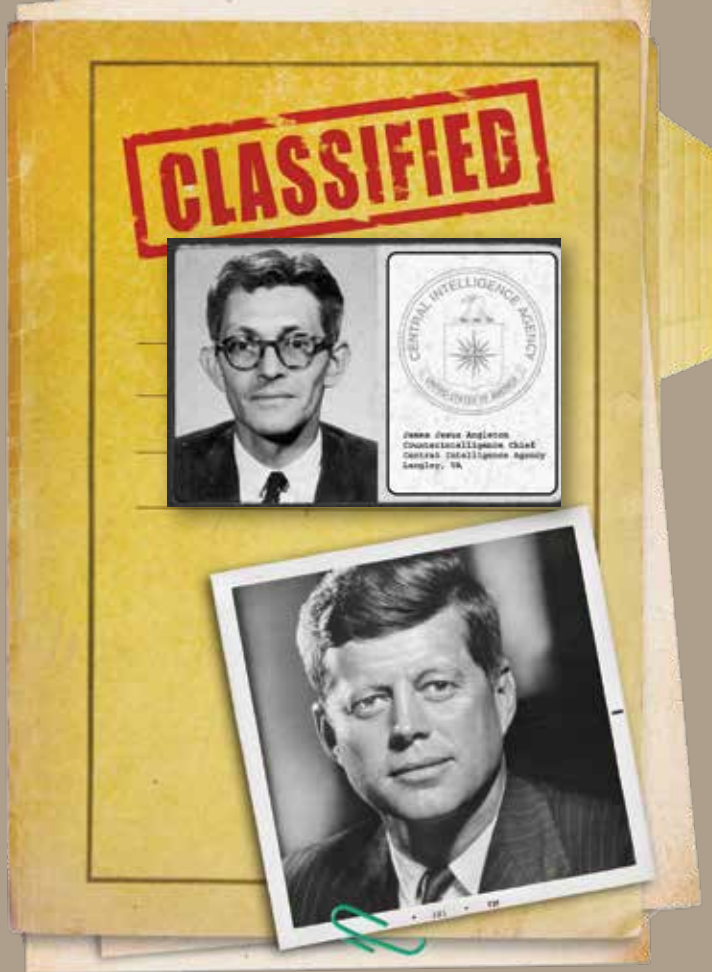
"I am ordering today that the veil finally be lifted," said President Trump while commissioning the release of the JFK files on the 54th anniversary of the assassination on November 22, 2017. Under a 1992 law, the National Archives was supposed to have released all of the remaining records by midnight — unless the President objected on national security grounds. In the end, the release of 2,891 of at least 3,140 documents was allowed, with the remainder subject to a 180-day review for redactions from objecting agencies. The White House said later that the remaining records would be released "on a rolling basis in the coming weeks."

I sat down for a follow-up interview with Jefferson Morley, a journalist and former *Washington Post* reporter, who specializes in 'stories of untold American history' and has intensely researched the JFK controversy. Morley also tells us about his latest book, *The Ghost: The Secret Life of CIA Spymaster James Jesus Angleton*.

Ava: What is the legal basis for thwarting the deadline set by Congress to release the JFK assassination documents?

Jefferson Morley: The 1992 JFK Records Act mandated that all assassination-related records in possession of U.S. government agencies had to be made public 25 years from the date of enactment. This did not happen. About 90 percent of the records that were supposed to become open to the people remain secret.

A 1961 pastel portrait of John F. Kennedy by Shirley Seltzer Cooper, on display at the National Portrait Gallery.



There is a clause in the National Archives Act that says if there are current or future national security concerns, the documents don't have to be released. The theory, as Morley pointed out two years ago in *Opulence*, is that the records will show mishandling of the Oswald surveillance and the records are being held back to avoid embarrassment.

Ava: Does this still hold true? What have we learned so far? What are they hiding, if anything?

Jefferson Morley: The JFK Records Act gives agencies the right to postpone release of specific documents after 10/2017, if the agency can show "identifiable harm" that would be done by release and that the harm is greater than the public interest in disclosure.

The most important record in the new files was a memo from FBI director J. Edgar Hoover, dated November 24, 1963, two days after JFK was killed. In the memo, Hoover tells subordinates that the government had to convince the public that Oswald was "the real assassin." Portions of this memo had been made public before but we had never seen the whole thing. The investigation of the murder of the president had just begun, Oswald had denied he shot Kennedy, and the nation's top law enforcement officer had already decided Oswald had acted alone. And the FBI and Warren Commission obeyed Hoover's command. The fix was in.

Ava: In your opinion, who made the decision to release only 10 percent of the JFK assassination documents?

Jefferson Morley: Only President Trump had the power to make that decision.

Ava: Do you believe President Trump was privy to the entire set of documents or was he merely told why only 10 percent could be released?

Jefferson Morley: Trump acceded to the CIA's request to keep 18,000 records secret. He could have looked at any document he wanted. I doubt he read many of them.

Ava: What do you suspect are the real reasons the agencies want the JFK assassination documents withheld?

Jefferson Morley: What remains hidden in the JFK files are probably the details of the CIA's pre-assassination surveillance and manipulation of Oswald before JFK was killed. These officers, all of them now deceased, included James Angleton, William Harvey, David Phillips, George Joannides, and Howard Hunt. These men had some significant role in the JFK story. All of their files are still secret.

Ava: What do you think will happen in 180 days when President Trump makes his final decision about releasing the remaining documents that the agencies want withheld? Will we see yet another President kick-the-can down the road?

Jefferson Morley: It depends on how much public, political and social media attention is paid to the story for the JFK files and to the story of the CIA men who knew the most about Oswald while JFK was still alive.

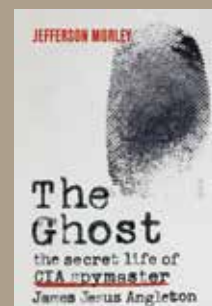
Ava: Have you spoken with any of the Kennedys to get their input?

Jefferson Morley: No. The Kennedy family doesn't want to be involved in the disposition of these files. I respect that.

Ava: What are the key highlights of your new book *The Ghost*? Who was James Angleton and why do you say he was the keeper of more national security secrets than Herbert Hoover?

Jefferson Morley: One of the most important features in *The Ghost* is the story of how Angleton targeted Oswald for counterintelligence attention in November 1959 and used him for intelligence purposes over the next four years. If Oswald was a "lone nut" as cliché holds, he was an isolated sociopath whose movements were carefully monitored by a top CIA official right up until JFK went to Dallas.

That said, *The Ghost* is not a JFK book nor does it have any conspiracy theory. It's the biography of a brilliant but dangerous spymaster who used secrecy and secret intelligence to build an intelligence empire. Angleton collaborated with J. Edgar Hoover in spying on Americans and infiltrating the civil rights and antiwar movements. He was a ghost of American power. ●



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