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STAT The Plot To Kill the President AN EXPERIMENTAL THEORY

by G. Robert Blakey
and Richard N. Billings

Seventeen years after John F. Kennedy was gunned down in Dallas, his murder still has not been solved. The accused assassin, Lee Harvey Oswald, apparently didn't act alone. Acoustical experts have detected a fourth shot, fired, they believe, by another assailant waiting in ambush behind a grassy knoll.

Did the late mobster John Roselli know who fired the mysterious fourth bullet? Did he later confide the terrible secret to me before his own violent death? G. Robert Blakey—Chief Counsel of the House Select Committee on Assassinations—believes so. He suspects that two of the Mafia's most sinister godfathers, Carlos Marcello and Santo Trafficante, were behind the plot to kill America's 35th President.

Roselli had agreed to knock off Cuban Premier Fidel Castro for the Central Intelligence Agency in hope that a grateful U.S. government would overlook his occasional transgressions. He cleared the project with his superior in the mob, Sam Giancana, and recruited the killers from Santo Trafficante's organization.

I learned about this Mission Impossible not long after it failed, and my pursuit of the story led me to Roselli. In time, he came to trust me and to confide in me. He suggested that Trafficante's assassins had been captured by Castro, who had turned them around under torture and had directed them to kill John F. Kennedy. Roselli indicated that the plotters had recruited Oswald, a sharpshooter who couldn't be traced to them. But to make sure the President died, one of Trafficante's trusted triggermen fired the fatal shot from behind the grassy knoll. After Oswald was arrested, he had to be eliminated to keep him from implicating the mob. This contract was given to a local punk, Jack Ruby, who had ties to Trafficante.

Roselli's version of the Kennedy killing, which I made public, intrigued the House Assassinations Committee. Chief Counsel Blakey—a veteran of underworld investigations and a recognized expert on organized crime—had expected to debunk all the conspiracy theories, but the deeper he dug, the more he became convinced that elements of the mob had plotted Kennedy's death.

Blakey's book, written with Richard Billings and excerpted here, makes a strong, if circumstantial, case for the mob-did-it theory. The authors depend heavily upon recorded gunfire picked up by an open police mike at the assassination scene as acoustical evidence of a fourth smoking gun. Who else fired that critical fourth shot if it wasn't a hit man for the mob? The evidence is far less conclusive of a conspiracy by any other possible plotters. And there is the haunting testimony of Roselli.

—JACK ANDERSON

In our investigation, we had an abundance of information to evaluate. There was the evidence gathered by our Committee and by government bodies that had gone before us—the FBI and the Warren Commission principally, but also the Kefauver Committee, the McClellan Committee, and the Church Committee, to name only some of them. We also assessed the assassination literature (our bibliography consisted of 1021 titles). But the known facts needed the mucilage of a theory; they had to be held together by a coherent view of what happened in Dallas.