

**Jefferson Morley**

**Statement for the Record**

**Hearing, House Task Force on Declassification of Federal Secrets: the JFK Files**

**1 April 2025**

Thank you to all the members of the House Task Force on Declassification.

I am honored to testify before you. It is a solemn responsibility to report on the new revelations emerging from the newest JFK files. It is a grave matter to assert CIA officers were complicit in the death of a U.S. president, so I want fact checkers to know the evidence for my claims.

I speak with the benefit of 30 years of reporting on the Kennedy assassination story. I published my first JFK story in the Washington Post thirty years ago this week. I practiced the Post's tried and true techniques: Follow the money. Knock on doors. Read the docket. Get two sources. Start with the cover-up. Work your way to the crime.

When it came to JFK I didn't start with a conspiracy theory and I wasn't looking for a smoking gun. I started with an open mind. I was looking for a fact pattern.

As I interviewed, researched, and reported on the JFK story over the next three decades, I consistently avoided judgment on who responsible for JFK's death. My research did not give me a definitive answer.

What I did see was a fact pattern. In the spring of 2023, the CIA fully declassified its pre-assassination file on Lee Harvey Oswald, the accused assassin who said he was a "patsy" for others who committed the crime.

*I have a copy of the CIA's complete pre-assassination Oswald file here and I will submit it for the record.*

The CIA's complete pre-assassination Oswald file runs to 185 pages. In the fall of 1963, all this information was held in one place: the office of CIA

counterintelligence chief James Angleton at CIA headquarters in Langley, Virginia, not five miles away from the Kennedy White House.

To be sure, the fully declassified Oswald file is NOT a smoking gun. When I showed the Oswald file to fellow journalists whose judgment I trust, they shrugged. The Oswald file, they said, is only evidence of CIA CYA, cover your ass incompetence. I doubted that but I couldn't definitively refute it. Until March 18

That's when fully declassified versions of nine long secret documents about Angleton's covert operations first became public. ancient JFK files were posted on the National Archives site. My mind began to change as I read.

A January 1958 FBI memo reported the Bureau had "[flushed out a most secret operation](#)" of the CIA. It was a massive mail intercept program run out of a New York post office facility, which opened, read, and copied the mail of thousands of Americans. Angleton ran it for two decades.

As the Washington Post [reported](#) on March 21, the memo shows that Angleton admitted to the FBI his mail intercept program was one of the Agency's "biggest and most secret operations," costing \$1 million (about \$11 million in today's dollars) and involving several hundred people.

In the morally neutral language of the agency this illicit spying (which had not been approved the Congress, the courts or the president) was known as "mail coverage." The director of the mail coverage program was a multilingual operations officer named Reuben Efron.

Another newly declassified document showed that Angleton lied under oath about what he knew about the mail surveillance of Oswald. He was responding to rapid fire questions from Michael Goldsmith, counsel for the HSCA.

Mr. Goldsmith. To your knowledge, was Oswald ever the subject of any CIA project?

Mr. Angleton. No.

Mr. Goldsmith. Do you know Reuben Efron?

Mr. Angleton. Yes.

Mr. Goldsmith. Do you know what responsibilities he had?

Mr. Angleton. Yes, mail intercept.

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Angleton lied in answering because his answers to the second and third questions was truthful. The newly declassified memos show that

- 1) created the "mail coverage" program.
- 2) he ran it from 1953 on.
- 3) he hired Reuben Efron for the job of deputy director of the project.
- 4) he ordered mail surveillance of Oswald in November 1959.
- 5) In July 1962, Efron reported to his superiors on Oswald's latest correspondence.

The combination of the newly declassified documents makes the conclusion unavoidable: Angleton lied under oath about the mail coverage of Oswald

That was the tipping point me. The transcript-- which the CIA withheld from the public view for 47 years-- confirmed that Angleton is the third senior CIA officer known to have lied under oath about what they knew of the alleged assassin Oswald before JFK was killed.

Three top CIA officers lied under oath about JFK's assassination.

The first was deputy director Richard Helms. He lied to the Warren Commission in May 1964 when said, under oath, the CIA had only quote “minimal” unquote knowledge of Oswald before JFK was killed.

Helms was testifying behind closed doors to his good friend and former boss Allen Dulles, a member of the Warren Commission. His current boss, CIA director John McCone, was also part of the conversation.

**Dulles:** Looking back now that you have the full record do you feel that you received from the State Department adequate information at the time that they were aware of Oswald’s defection and later activities in the Soviet Union did you get at the time full information on those particular subjects?

**McCone:** Well, I am not sure we got full information Mr. Dulles. The fact is, we had very little information in our files.

**Helms:** It was probably minimal.

The record now shows that the FBI had sent 12 reports on Oswald to the CIA between 1960 and 1963, two of which landed on Angleton’s desk in mid-November 1963. Angleton’s aide, Jane Roman, initialed routing slips on November 14 and 15 1963, indicating the reports had been delivered to the counterintelligence chief.

See pp. 254 and 275 of THE OSWALD FILE for Roman’s initials (JAR) on the routing slips of the FBI reports on Oswald.

At the time, the President and First Lady landed at Love Field in Dallas on Nov. 22, Angleton had a 180-plus page dossier on the man who was about to be arrested for gunning down JFK.

Helms clearly deceived the Warren Commission. One hundred and eighty pages of information cannot be truthfully described as “minimal.”

Helms’ deception echoed on Capitol Hill 15 years later when Congress reopened the JFK investigation. In the spring of 1978, a career undercover officer was called out of retirement to serve as liaison to the House Select Committee on

Assassinations (HSCA). George Joannides was assigned to help investigators get access to CIA records and personnel.

Joannides knew the subject at hand. As chief of covert operations at the Agency's Miami station in 1963, he ran a Cuban student group (known by the Spanish acronym DRE) that was funded by the CIA under a covert action program code named AMSPELL. His agents in New Orleans and Miami engaged in political action against Oswald's pro-Castro activism, and generated propaganda about him both before and after Kennedy was killed.

In response to a direct request from HSCA investigator [Dan Hardway](#), Joannides denied knowing who ran the AMSPELL program in 1963 — when, in fact, he himself had run it.

When this deception was revealed in 2001, HSCA chief counsel G. Robert Blakey told the PBS series "Frontline" that Joannides had [obstructed Congress](#), a felony.

I was not told of Joannides' background with the DRE, a focal point of the investigation. Had I known who he was, he would have been a witness who would have been interrogated under oath by the staff or by the committee. He would never have been acceptable as a point of contact with us to retrieve documents. In fact, I have now learned, as I note above, that Joannides was the point of contact between the Agency and DRE during the period Oswald was in contact with DRE.

That the Agency would put a "material witness" in as a "filter" between the committee and its quests for documents was a flat-out breach of the understanding the committee had with the Agency that it would cooperate with the investigation.

And now we have the CIA concealing that Angleton testified falsely under oath. One false statement might be incompetence. A second false statement could be construed as CYA for the first. But three false statements by top CIA officers about Kennedy's killer?

Three makes a pattern, a pattern of malfeasance of institutional misconduct. If three police officers lie about the defendant in a homicide case, who would call

that exculpatory evidence? Such prevarication indicates guilty knowledge and legal culpability, individually and institutionally.

The new JFK fact pattern leads to a new conclusion: Helms, Angleton, and Joannides were responsible for, or complicit in, JFK's death, either by criminal negligence or covert action.

My recommendations for the Task Force: secure and release the personnel file of George Joannides, and ask Director Ratcliffe to provide a public statement answering the question: Why did these three top CIA officers lie to JFK investigators?

The answers will help fulfill the Task Force's goal of "full and complete" JFK disclosure.

Thank you.