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The *New York Times* Shines a Light into the JFK-CIA-Joannides Scandal **by Jacob G. Hornberger**

Last Friday, October 16, the *New York Times*, for the first time, shined a light onto the JFK-CIA-Joannides scandal with a story entitled “[C.I.A. Is Still Cagety About Oswald Mystery](#).” The story soon began appearing in other mainstream newspapers and on Internet websites.

Never mind that the scandal has been brewing since 1998, when it was discovered that the CIA had intentionally covered up a key role that a CIA agent named George Joannides had played in the months leading up to the JFK assassination and, later, in the investigation of the assassination itself.

Better late than never, I suppose.

The documents had been released pursuant to the 1992 John F. Kennedy Assassination Records Collection Act, which had been enacted in response to Oliver Stone’s movie *JFK* and which mandated the release of all government documents relating to Kennedy’s murder.

The documents revealed that Joannides had served as a CIA liaison to an anti-Castro student group known as the DRE and had supervised the funneling of large sums of CIA money into the organization. As I pointed out last week in an [article dated October 14](#), when he was living in New Orleans in the months before the assassination Lee Harvey Oswald had had an encounter with a leader of the New Orleans branch of the DRE, a man named Carlos Bringuier.

Later, in the 1970s when the House Select Committee on Assassinations investigated the Kennedy assassination, the CIA called Joannides back from retirement to serve as a liaison between the CIA and the House committee. Ostensibly his job was to facilitate CIA cooperation with the House investigation.

But there was one big problem in all this. No one but Joannides and the CIA knew about Joannides’ prior relationship with the DRE. Not the Warren Commission. Not the House Committee. For some reason known only to the CIA and Joannides, the information was kept secret from the people whose task was to conduct a full and complete investigation into the Kennedy assassination.

Even worse, the CIA had the audacity to select as liaison the person who was the subject of the secret, raising the obvious question: Was Joannides called back from retirement to serve as a barrier rather than a facilitator? Or as the *Times* put it, “That concealment has fueled suspicion that Mr. Joannides’s real assignment was to limit what the House Committee could learn about C.I.A. activities.”

Discovering Joannides’ role in the documents released in the late 1990s, a relentless journalist named Jefferson Morley, who used to work at the *Washington Post*, requested the CIA to produce all its files on Joannides, a request the CIA steadfastly refused to grant.

In 2003 Morley filed suit against the CIA under the Freedom of Information Act. Despite a favorable ruling from a federal Court of Appeals, the CIA has engaged in years of stonewalling, absolutely refusing to this day to divulge the Joannides files to Morley and the public.

Last August I published an article entitled “[Appoint a Special Prosecutor in the JFK-Joannides Matter](#),” in which I argued that President Obama should appoint a special prosecutor to investigate and possibly prosecute people in the CIA for fraud and obstruction of justice. (At the end of that article is a list of links to all of Jefferson Morley’s articles on the subject, which I highly recommend, as they make for a fascinating read.)

Federal Judge John R. Tunheim, who was chairman of the Assassination Records Review Board stated, as quoted in the *New York Times* article, “I think we were probably misled by the agency. This material should be released.”

The *Times* also quoted G. Robert Blakey, the House Committee’s staff director: “If I’d known his role in 1963, I would have put Joannides under oath — he would have been a witness, not a facilitator. How do we know what he didn’t give us?”

What the CIA’s position? Not surprisingly, it resorts to the old standard bromide for keeping things secret, even when the information is half-a-century old — “national security.”

Or perhaps there are other reasons. As the opening sentence in the *New York Times* articles asks, “Is the Central Intelligence Agency covering up some dark secret about the assassination of John F. Kennedy?”

Gerald Posner, whose book *Case Closed* argued against a conspiracy theory, is a bit more cynical, stating: “Most conspiracy theorists don’t understand this. But if there really were a C.I.A. plot, no documents would exist.”

Presumably, Posner is suggesting that if the CIA really was involved in the plot to kill Kennedy, the agency would have cleaned up and doctored its files a long time ago to ensure that no such evidence ever surfaced in a CIA document.

Nonetheless, the public is entitled to see the Joannides records and to see precisely what role Joannides played with the DRE.

Equally important, people have a right to know why the CIA knowingly and intentionally misled the Warren Commission, the House Select Committee, and the American people by deliberately failing to disclose these material facts.

Forty-five years of misleading the public with secrecy, fraud, and deception in a matter as important as the Kennedy assassination are enough. It's time for the CIA to stop the stonewalling and immediately release the Joannides documents.

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