



Lee Harvey Oswald More than a Lone Nut? JFK Reporter Jeff Morley on Shocking CIA Revelations

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Glenn Greenwald (GG): Jefferson Morley is a best-selling author and a veteran Washington journalist known for his investigative books that expose the covert history of American power. His most recent book is *Scorpions' Dance: The President, The Spymaster, and Watergate*, which explores the secret relationship between CIA Director Richard Helms and President Richard Nixon. He is, as well, a leading authority, I believe one of the top two or three journalistic authorities on the JFK assassination. He has spent decades prying loose the CIA's deepest secrets and challenging the official narrative. And he testified earlier today at Congress about what these newly declassified documents from the Trump administration adds to our understanding, not just of the assassination, but the clear cover up that took place as part of the investigation, as well as the potential CIA role in all of this. Some of that is quite demonstrated, not just potential. And we're delighted he took the time to join us. Jeff, it's great to see you. Thanks so much for taking the time and talking to us.

Jefferson Morley (JM): Thanks for having me Glenn, I'm very glad to be here.

GG: Yeah, I'm glad to have you. I recommended the interview that you recently did on Breaking Points, which was about 30 minutes that you did with Saagar Enjeti and Ryan Grim. I found it one of the most illuminating interviews in recent times, especially on these documents. But I want to explore some other things beyond what's in that interview as well. And I want to begin with – you testified earlier today before the House Task Force on Declassification, which is chaired by Congresswoman Anna Paulina Luna, the Republican of Florida. And I know that you and everybody else interested in, not just the JFK assassination, but the role that the CIA has played in our politics and our history was very interested in these documents and more broadly interested in getting to the bottom of this case, whether we really ever learned the truth. What was your sense having testified before the committee about whether that interest and excitement is shared by most members of Congress?

JM: Let me talk about Chairwoman Luna first, because I've gotten to know her over the last couple weeks when she launched this House Task Force on Declassification, and I've been

very impressed with her attitude. She's a can-do person. When I said we need to get these documents from the CIA, she said, you know, give me a memo and I'll call Ratcliffe's office today. So she's very proactive. I think her leadership has been very strong. You know, we had some partisan politics in the hearing today, which I think was unfortunate because it's not really a partisan issue. I mean, I'm a pretty liberal guy. That's why I wanted to be on your show, and so I'm hopeful that the task force is going to do serious work. The most encouraging sign, she says we're going to have another hearing on JFK and we're hoping to get some more first hand witnesses to explicate the new history of JFK's assassination.

GG: So, I want to spend most of my time with you on the substance of these documents and the investigation, but just before I get to that, which will be next, just along the same lines, I don't want to make it a partisan issue either, but there is a palpable shift in how our political spectrum thinks about the US security state, the CIA, the nefarious role they've often played. It used to be – as you said, you're a liberal Democrat – it used be foundational to American liberal and left-wing politics to distrust and view the CIA and the security state as quite sinister, as needing reform, and it was more typical that conservatives would defend them: "no, these are patriotic organizations, we need them, we love them, they have to operate in the dark" – and there's been so much change. I mean, it was Donald Trump who finally declassified these documents as he promised to do. It's Chairwoman Luna, a very right-wing member of Congress who's leading the way, as you say, very proactively. I just want to show you a clip from today that involves Congresswoman Jasmine Crockett of the Democrats in Texas, who has become, in a lot of ways, one of the leading faces of the Democratic Party, the American liberalism. And here's what she had to say about the JFK documents and the hearing itself and the possibility of the CIA involvement.

Jasmine Crockett: Previously classified JFK assassination files are now public and show no evidence of a CIA conspiracy. But what I find funny about this hearing is that the Republicans are here relitigating whether CIA agents lied 60 years ago but aren't doing anything about the CIA director lying to Congress just six days ago. We should be having a hearing on the fact that the unqualified Secretary of Defense and other senior Trump officials were carelessly discussing classified military plans over an unsecure Signal group chat. And instead of providing oversight over the administration's handling of classified information, the Republicans have...

GG: Okay, so, there's more of that, but she's essentially saying, look, these new documents vindicated the CIA and had no role to play in any of this. Anyone who suggests otherwise is a conspiracy theorist. And in any event, it doesn't really even matter. There's no reason for us to know, we should focus on a Signalgate or whatever. As somebody who's been aligned with the Democratic Party for a long time, do you think that's become a more common sentiment?

JM: Absolutely. And it's really unfortunate, I mean, to bring up something totally unrelated about what's going on with the current controversy – the JFK Files is something that there is broad support for across the political spectrum, and there's no need to drag partisan politics into this issue. It's just not an issue. You know, Representative Luna did a good job of leading

this and this kind of reflexive – you know, Jasmine Crockett hadn't even read the documents. She didn't even listen to what I said about the false testimony of three top CIA officials. Facts don't register anymore, which is a problem universally, but it's especially a problem when we're actually making progress on the JFK story. President Trump's order was a breakthrough and it's one of the few things I agree with him about. A very positive measure we obtained last, on March 18th, a lot of important information and we're getting more as we proceed. You know, remember Glenn, they released 80,000 pages of documents on March 19th. I might have seen 1,000 pages of those. I've talked to researchers who've seen a few thousand more, but we're just at the beginning of this process of really getting our hands and our minds around these new records. And so that's the positive thing. Luna's talking about having another hearing. I think that's a good idea to bring more JFK witnesses and educate people about what really happened.

GG: Yeah, I mean, I thought it was bizarre when the day that it was released, everybody ran to their social media accounts or their programs to tell everybody what these documents show. We focused only on one document, which was the unredacted Schlesinger memo. And only to the extent that it revealed things about the CIA in general, not necessarily their role in, if any, in the JFK assassination. And I want to get to that memo in a second because I do think it's of profound importance. But before I do, I think some of this is generational. I mean, I didn't live through the JFK assassination. I wasn't born yet. Other people who were, were not very old. Obviously Congresswoman Crockett wasn't. She was born I think in the 1980s or even 1990s. So I understand why some people might say, oh this is kind of old and ancient history that we don't need to go excavating through. What is your answer to that? Why do you think it matters so much to kind of continue with the investigation?

JM: Well, let me explain. My readership at the JFK Facts newsletter is very diverse, from MAGA, Christian nationalists on the right, libertarians, anti-imperialist liberals on the left. And we don't have a big culture war on the site. People want to talk about this. People want a real debate. And the idea that people are coming reflexively to the defense of the CIA without even acknowledging or incorporating these records – we're going to talk about the Schlesinger memo in a second – why should people care? What we're missing right now in American politics is what President Kennedy talked about in 1963. He's talked about that we need a strategy for peace, not peace in our time, peace for all times. Not a Pax Americana enforced with America as the world's policeman, but a peace for everybody. And that's the vision, really, that died in Dallas.

So when people say, why does it matter now? You don't hear that voice anymore in American politics – not from Democrats and not from Republicans. And that's what's missing. And that is why it's important to understand what died when President Kennedy died. We've lost something very real. And I would say the most aggressive factions in the American security establishment after President Kennedy's assassination – because there was no real accountability, there was no real investigation – that faction has had impunity ever since. And that's led to a much more militarized, aggressive interventionist foreign policy, which

Kennedy was trying to steer the country away from. That's what's important about the Kennedy assassination. We lost something when we lost President Kennedy.

GG: So let me dive into these details now and let's start with the Schlesinger memo because for viewers who might have seen it, I think when it was released I believe two weeks ago, we delved very deeply into what this memo is and what the newly released material demonstrates. For those who don't know, Arthur Schlesinger was a very respected historian, especially among the Kennedy circle. And after the Bay of Pigs debacle and the firing of Alan Dulles, who was sort of the father of the CIA, JFK was very interested in getting a hold of the CIA, asked Arthur Schlesinger to write this memo, and he wrote this long memo detailing all of the abuses and dangers of having this kind of runaway, unaccountable secret agency off on its own, making foreign policy, engineering coups away from the State Department and also offered a lot of plans for how to rein it in. Pretty serious and severe plans. So I wanna hear what your thoughts are in the newly released portion of that, but before you get to that, do we have evidence that the CIA was aware of the conversations taking place in the JFK White House about the need to rein in the CIA?

JM: Absolutely. Dick Helms, Richard Helms, the director of the CIA, said in his memoir that this period after the Bay of Pigs was a stormy interview –

GG: Sorry, he was the director of the CIA when? Dick Helms. Not in the 60s, but later on with Nixon?

JM: No, he was deputy director at the time of the Bay of Pigs and later became director.

GG: Right.

JM: So at the time of Kennedy's assassination, he was deputy director. And Helm said in his memoir, this was a stormy interregnum for the agency, where they understood that their continued existence was in the balance. Ultimately Kennedy decided not to do the reorganization. It was just too big a lift, I think, for him in terms of politics. But the Schlesinger memo shows that he was talking about it very seriously. And the key thing there was what Schlesinger called the encroachment of the CIA on the president's foreign policy-making authority, – and you've talked about this lesson to memo, you recall some of those details – 47% of State Department officers at the time of Kennedy's assassination, were in fact CIA officers. So the CIA is taking over the political reporting function of the State Department and of course, that limited the president's ability to make foreign policy. That's what Kennedy was concerned about and that's the problem Schlesinger was trying to solve.

GG: Yeah, I mean, in that memo he, I think quite famously and quite pointedly and importantly called it a state within a state, which is kind of ironic since now the term "Deep State" has become this source of liberal mockery as though it's some bizarre unhinged conspiracy theory. And you know you had Dwight Eisenhower coming out of the 50s, serving two terms as president, warning about the military industrial complex on his way out. And

then you have Arthur Schlesinger calling it a state within a state when writing to JFK about it. So this memo has been out for a while, I think for a few years or even longer, but what we have now thanks to President Trump's declassification order is the full unredacted memo. So are there things that we have learned that are important in the unredacted parts that we didn't previously know?

JM: Yeah, I mean, there was a whole page that was redacted. So like the statistic that I just quoted to you, the 47% of state department officers were actually CIA officers, that was redacted by the CIA for the past 60 years. You know, the fact that the CIA had 128 people in the Paris embassy – that was redacted. And you know when you look at it, that's not national security information. No American would be threatened or harmed by that information. It's only the reputation of the CIA. And so what you see in these redactions, these redactions are justified in the name of national security, right? You need to protect us from our enemies. Our enemies aren't fooled. The only people that were fooled with the American people. And that's why we need this full declassification because we're the only ones that are in the dark about the way the CIA is operating.

GG: About your argument that the reason the CIA or other parts of the government perceive JFK to be threatening, perhaps threatening enough to want to kill him, is that he was talking about this radical transformation of our foreign policy, of finding a way to get out of endless wars and become a nation of peace. There are people very knowledgeable who are also on the left, one of them is Noam Chomsky, who has said over the years that he finds that unpersuasive because – and I guess it's a very Chomsky way of looking at things – that although there was a little bit of resistance here and there on the part of JFK and his administration to the military industrial complex, the intelligence community, obviously they had an argument after the Bay of Pigs, they fired, as I said earlier, Alan Dulles, that essentially JFK was a militarist and was a good cold warrior. He was the one who oversaw what Chomsky calls the invasion of South Vietnam by the United States and that really if you were a militarist or a cold warrior, you'd have no reason to look at JFK and find him bothersome. What do you think about that?

JM: I mean, none of Kennedy's enemies on the right ever said that at the time. They said that he was a weakling, if not a traitor. The idea that Kennedy was a Cuba-hawk or a Vietnam-hawk, no Cuba-hawk or Vietnam-hawk in 1963 ever said that. So, the problem with Chomsky's argument is he hasn't really familiarized himself with the debates. CIA director Richard Helms was trying to pressure Kennedy into a more aggressive Cuba policy. And four days before the assassination, Richard Helms brought a machine gun into the Oval Office as a way of convincing President Kennedy to take a more aggressive stance. And when you read Kennedy's account of it, it's hard not to believe that he understood that he was being threatened. I mean, think about that. The deputy CIA director is demonstrating to the president your security perimeter is not secure, right? That's four days before President Kennedy was killed. So the idea that there weren't profound conflicts at the top of the US government – I mean, I know Noam Chomsky is a smart guy, but he needs to pay attention to the historical record. There were profound conflicts between Kennedy and the national

security establishment in the fall of 1963. Nobody who pays attention, especially to the new records, would say that that wasn't the case.

GG: Yeah, and obviously Noam Chomsky is not here to defend himself, but he's obviously talked many times about this, so people interested can go to YouTube and find that. I think he has a propensity against what he calls conspiracy theories and just kind of dismissing them out of hand and, you know, nobody's perfect.

JM: Yeah.

GG: But let me ask you this – this is one of the things I learned from your work. I remember growing up in the 70s and 80s and my understanding of the JFK assassination was that Lee Harvey Oswald was just sort of this weird loner, that he had a couple of appearances here and there in some public and political sectors, but that by and large he was kind of a nobody, sort of like what they're depicting the person who did the first assassination attempt against President Trump in Pennsylvania. Like, just a guy, a weirdo, not really connected. And it was only really through following your work and the work of a couple other people that I actually learned things like, no, the CIA had a lot of interest in Oswald prior to the JFK assassination. I thought nobody knew of him before this all happened, and in fact, the CIA had a big, long, large surveillance file on him. What interest did the CIA have in Oswald prior to Oswald's alleged role in the JFK assassination?

JM: They were interested, first of all, in recruiting him as a possible source or contact behind the Iron Curtain. And that was one of the key documents that emerged on March 18th – a document where Angleton talked exactly about who he targeted for that type of recruiting. The second thing that they were interested in was his pro-Cuba activities. And that was something that the CIA denied at the time. They pretended like they didn't know anything about this. You know, when you talk about a big surveillance file, this is what I showed to Representative Luna today. They had 198 pages on him on November 15th when President Kennedy was getting ready to go to Dallas. So Lee Harvey Oswald was not a lone nut in the eyes of the CIA. He was a known quantity who top CIA officials, top counterintelligence officials, knew everything about him as President Kennedy was preparing to go to Dallas.

Of course there's suspicions, you know, and people say, oh, well, that's incompetence or they didn't know, Oswald didn't present a threat – wait a second. Part of the reason you have a counterintelligence staff is to protect you against assassinations. And that clearly didn't happen. Angleton failed to do his job. But nobody knew anything about this. The CIA imposed a cover story – "the lone gunman" – and Angleton, instead of losing his job, kept it for another decade.

GG: Well, let me ask – I know you have to go in just a few minutes, so I want to just respect your time. I just have a couple more questions briefly.

JM: Sure.

GG: This is one of the things that I think that you grow up with and you're kind of bombarded to believe the establishment narrative about everything. That's why it's the establishment narrative, because they have control of the institutions that shape your thinking. And the more you kind of look into these things, the more basis you have for skepticism, including the fact that Alan Dulles – who led the CIA, gave birth to the CIA, directed the CIA, was controlling almost everything in there until Kennedy fired him, and then Kennedy fired him – was put onto the Warren Commission. Where naturally, as being Alan Dulles, he had immense weight on conducting the official investigation. I've always said it's kind of like putting Ben Shapiro in charge of an investigation to find out who's at fault in Gaza. You know what kind of outcome you're gonna get if you put Alan Dulles on the Warren Commission. You're putting a chief suspect on there. So, what are the best reasons we have to distrust both the process and the conclusions of the Warren Commission?

JM: I mean the fact that Alan Dulles was on it, the fact that the Warren Commission was deceived about the surveillance of Oswald – they had no idea that the CIA had 198 pages of material on Oswald. The Warren Commission was told that they had only minimal information about Oswald. So the Warren Commission was fed a false story about Oswald. Glenn, I'm going to have to go soon.

GG: Okay, I know, all right. I have one more question, but I'm gonna let you go.

JM: One more question, yeah.

GG: Okay, well, I'll just ask it briefly. James Angleton, who was the senior CIA official, has been central to your work. You said today in your testimony that he was one of three senior CIA officials to have lied to the Warren Commission about the investigation, that that was sort of a tipping point for you. What did Angleton lie about, and how did he deceive the commission?

JM: Well, actually, what we learned last month was that Angleton lied to the House Select Committee on Assassinations in 1978. He had never had to testify to the Warren Commission. In 1978, he testified, and he was asked, was Oswald ever the subject of a CIA project? And the answer was yes. Angleton had personally put Oswald under mail surveillance. They were intercepting his letters to his mother from the Soviet Union. He was under mail surveillance from 1959 to 1962. When Angleton was asked by the HSCA, was Oswald ever part of a CIA project? He said no, and what we know now is that that was a lie. And that he was lying under oath about what he knew about Oswald before the assassination. So that was the tipping point for me, because until March 18th, we never knew that.

GG: All right, Jeff, thank you for your great work. We're going to definitely have you back on as you work your way through these documents. We'd love to pick your brain more about this. Really appreciate the time. I know you're busy tonight after your testimony, so we're going let you go, but thanks once again.

JM: Thanks a million for having me, Glenn. Take care.

GG: All right, talk to you soon. Bye-bye.

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