E. Howard Hunt and the JFK Plotters

By Eric Hamburg

How much of Howard Hunt's scenario holds up under examination. Surprisingly, much of it does. The people that he names as part of the plot are, for the most part, people whose names have cropped up over and over again in the assassination literature. There is substantial evidence to implicate them in a plot to kill JFK. For this reason, Hunt's revelations are more credible than they might otherwise be. A review of the literature indicates why this is so.

Let's start with William Harvey. He was named by Hunt as the mastermind of the plot, as well as being called an "alcoholic psycho" by Hunt.. There is ample evidence for both of these propositions. Consider the following statements regarding William Harvey, made by author Anthony Summers in his seminal work "Conspiracy". Summers writes, "In the closing stages of the (House) Assassinations Committee mandate, some staff members felt that, while Mafia marksmen may have carried out the assassination, it could only have been orchestrated by someone in America intelligence, someone with special knowledge of Oswald's background. As they pondered this, investigators gave renewed attention to the senior CIA officer who co-coordinated the CIA-Mafia plots against Castro – William Harvey.

Summers goes on to state: "William Harvey died in 1976 ... As far back as 1959, he was one of only three officers privy to plans to send false defectors to the Soviet Union. 1959 was the year of Oswald's suspect defection. Genuine defection or not, Harvey almost certainly knew about it in detail.

"Subsequently, Harvey was the man who conceived and planned the CIA's Executive Action program, the contingency plan for foreign assassinations. He was in close touch with men of the same ilk as Lucien Sarti, and the Corsicans now alleged to have been the gunmen in Dealey Plaza.

"Next, as head of Task Force W, Harvey was in direct charge of anti-Castro operations, in personal touch with the mobsters Santos Trafficante and John Roselli. Inciting them to murder Fidel Castro. He became a close friend to Roselli."

Harvey hated Bobby Kennedy with a "purple passion", and the feeling was mutual. He sent commando teams into Cuba at the height of the missile crisis in 1962, which made Bobby Kennedy furious. As a result, Bobby had Harvey transferred out of Washington and sent to the CIA's station in Rome, Italy.

Summers adds, "Yet Harvey was still meeting with Roselli, in the United States, as late as June 1963, and I have learned that he visited anti-Castro camps in Florida, at a time when he was theoretically already in Rome. According to new, unresearched information, initial approaches to hire assassins in Europe were made in Rome – sometime before the recruitment approaches allegedly made to the Corsican Mafia in Marseilles.

Summers quotes one Assassination Committee staffer as saying this: The feeling of some of the CIA people we talked with was that Harvey was heavily involved with the organized crime figures. The feeling was that he was out of control and may have worked with organized crime figures to murder JFK. He behaved as if he was all-powerful... He may have been the key to accomplishing the assassination."

This staffer was probably Dan Hardway, a member of the professional staff of the House Select Committee on Assassinations, which investigated the Kennedy assassination for the US Congress in the late 1970s. In his book "Flawed Patriot", author Bayard Stockton quotes Hardway as saying this of Harvey: "I had placed him in the middle of a web of intrigue. Harvey was central to

everything that went on... Harvey was a natural suspect. He had the assassination teams. He was in charge of JM/WAVE [the CIA station in Miami]. I was convinced that Bill Harvey was involved in the assassination. I wanted to investigate Harvey vigorously... I was determined to prove his complicity in the assassination, if I could."

Bill Harvey had a history with the Corsican Mafia. In her book "ZR Rifle", Claudia Furiati wrote, "It was learned that during 1961, William Harvey traveled to Marseille in France and recruited another agent (code name QJ/WIN) who worked on the Lumumba case. WIN appears in the House Committee investigations: he was one of the men from the Corse Union, the Marseille organized crime group, which showed the presence of the Mafia in the plans to assassinate foreign leaders. QJ/WIN met the indispensable requirement of being a Mafioso of non-U.S. origin."

Various versions of QJ/WIN's identity have been published, but it is interesting to note his connection to Marseille and the Corsican Mafia. QJ/WIN was recruited by Harvey as a possible assassin or recruiter of assassins for the CIA, alone with another mysterious figure code named WI/ROGUE. Both men were sent to the Congo to take part in an assassination plot against Congolese leader Patrice Lumumba, who was assassinated in January 1961, just before Kennedy took office.

Harvey had an affinity for Corsicans, particularly for use in assassination operations. In his biography of Harvey, entitled "Flawed Patriot", former CIA officer Bayard Stockton wrote that Harvey recommended Corsicans for use in the ZR/RIFLE assassination program. "According to the one set of notes available, Harvey's inquiries during his trip to Europe seemed to center on Trieste... ZR/RIFLE was intended to be carried out by non-American criminal elements."" In his memo, Harvey wrote, "Exclude organized criminals, e.g. Sicilians, criminals, those w/ record of arrests, those w/ instability of purpose as criminals." But he added, "organization criminals, those with record of arrests, those who have engaged in several types of crime. <u>Corsicans</u> <u>recommended. Sicilians could lead to Mafia.</u>"

Stockton also suggests that Harvey may have used his time in Rome to recruit Europeans criminals for the JFK plot. "Once in Rome, Harvey might have contacted European criminals and/or the Union Corse [Corsican Mafia], the Sicilian Mafia (with whom he had loose liaison), and the mainland Italian Camorra [Mafia], on behalf of Roselli. Thus, though it has not been proven, Harvey may have acted as a line of communication between European and American plotters." He adds, "Harvey left behind a hint that he had some knowledge of the JFK killing. After he had testified to the U.S. Senate's Church Committee in 1975, he commented, "They didn't ask the right questions", implying that he might have had some answers to more pointed questions regarding the assassination."

"Corsicans recommended". Harvey gave the same advice to Peter Wright, head of British intelligence, who wrote about this in his memoir "Spy catcher". Bayard Stockton, Harvey's biographer, was an old friend and colleague from Harvey's days in Berlin in the 1950s, ultimately reached the conclusion that Harvey was not involved in the assassination, despite the overwhelming evidence against him. Stockton bases his conclusion on this statement: "No one who knew Harvey at his prime believes, or believed that he possibly could have been involved in the JFK assassination. No one. Not even those who had reason to dislike him."

But that statement is false, inoperative and invalid. It flew out the window when E. Howard Hunt, who knew Harvey and worked with him in the CIA, asserted his strong belief that Harvey was the prime mover behind the assassination. Stockton, who died shortly after his book was published in 2006, could not have known that even as he was writing those words, they were being contradicted by the words of E. Howard Hunt.

In his memoir "American Spy", posthumously published in 2007, E. Howard Hunt wrote this of Bill Harvey: "There has been suggestion in some circles that CIA agent Bill Harvey had something to do with the murder and had recruited several Corsicans, including a crack shot named Lucien Sarti, to back up Oswald and make sure the hit was successful. Supposedly, Sarti was dressed in a Dallas police uniform and fired the fatal bullet from the grassy knoll behind the picket fence... Is is possible that Bill Harvey might have recruited a Mafia criminal to administer the magic bullet? I think it's possible... Harvey could definitely be a person of interest, as he was a strange character hiding a mass of hidden aggression. Allegations have been made that he transported weapons to Dallas. Certainly it is an area that deserves further investigation."

So much for Stockton's assertions about Harvey's innocence. Hunt goes on to say of Harvey's role in the

plot, "If that's the case, Harvey had seniority and would have been the person in charge, with the others taking orders from him... Having been stationed in Rome, he very well might have come into contact with the Corsican Mafia and heroin traffickers whom theorists claim he recruited for the assassination... Harvey, however, is the most likely suspect. If he felt his position was in jeopardy, he was the type of person who would have taken drastic action to remember the situation. It is a big leap, because he was a brain-addled pistol-toting drunk... but there is the slightest possibility that Harvey and LBJ could have formed some kind of thieves' pact between them."

Hunt went on to say, "If LBJ had anything to do with the operation, he would have used Harvey, because he was available and corrupt... Who knows the depth of Harvey's criminal connections? He may easily have known Mafia members who have been named as possible conspirators, such as Johnny Roselli, Santos Trafficante, Sam Giancana, and Carlos Marcello... These are names which have come up in connection with the assassination plot on Castro." All of these quotes incidentally are taken directly from videotaped interviews that I conducted with Howard Hunt in Miami in April 2005, along with his son St. John. Hunt also mentioned another suspicious CIA figure, David Morales, in connection with Bill Harvey. Hunt wrote, "Another CIA person of interest who has been linked to that dreadful day is David Morales. Bill Harvey posted Morales to the CIA's Miami station in 1961, where he became chief of Covert Operations for JM/WAVE, an operation to destabilize Castro after the Bay of Pigs. Morales and Harvey could have been manufactured from the same cloth – both were hard-drinking, tough guys, possibly completely amoral. Morales was rumored to be a cold-blooded killer, the go-to guy in black ops situations where the government needed to have someone neutralized. I tried to cut short any contact with him, as he wore thin very quickly."

Clearly, Bill Harvey is a highly suspicious figure in any scenario. But could Harvey have done all this on his own?

When I met with Fabian Escalante, former head of Cuban intelligence, in Havana in 1994, he expressed skepticism. "Harvey had to have a patron," he said, "and that patron was Richard Helms." Helms was the CIA's Deputy Director for Plans (head of its covert operations division} in 1963, and later became Director of the CIA under President Johnson. Helms was close to Harvey, and also to Howard Hunt. But Helms was a very discreet figure who kept his hands clean.

In "ZR Rifle", Claudia Furiati describes Helms this way: "And who was the author of the entire scheme? Richard Helms, the brain of the CIA. Helms was the ultimate chief of the covert and parallel operations from the beginning of Operation Mongoose [the CIA's plot to kill Castro]. He was the director of the plans which included the [poison] capsules, the special missions, the terrorist commandos, the Mafia, the Banister unit, Pontchartrain, William Harvey, Manuel Artime, Rolando Cubela, Desmond Fitzgerald, Lee Harvey Oswald, Santos Trafficante, David Atlee Phillips, and ZR Rifle. He was the conductor of the invisible

government and the maestro of plausible denial. Finally, he was the link of the Agency with the "hardliners" and the mentor of the provocations during the Kennedy administration. But Helms' involvement was not apparent; he was behind four walls, an invisible man."

Furiati, writing before Helms' death in 2002, described him this way: "Currently he is a business consultant. He is tall, with fine black thinning hair. He is discreet and evasive; the perfect bureaucrat. He is considered the most astute and the coldest of all the directors of the Agency – so cold that he was nicknamed "Mr. Cool.""

Mr. Cool – an invisible man, hidden behind four walls. What an apt description of Richard Helms. Howard Hunt, in "American Spy", put it this way: "But in the end, Helms was an expert in CYA (cover your ass), not CIA. When the time came when he might have been able to help me and come to my defense, Dick said, "Oh, Hunt... Oh, well, I sort of know him. He was a romantic" And that was all he had to say about me. He pretended that he barely knew me when in fact he had known me for years."

Hunt related to me a very interesting anecdote about Helms and LBJ, which he included in his book. He wrote, "During the course of a year, we would have lunch between three and six times. In fact, Helms had made a confidant out of me, once calling me at the office to say, "Meet me downstairs right away. I have something to tell you." What he had to tell me was that he had broken up with his wife and had moved to a country club in anticipation of a divorce. This was, at the time, extremely privileged information. We had lunch about six weeks later. Helms told me that he had just been summoned down to LBJ's ranch and had spent a wild weekend there riding a jeep at top speed through the property. Out of that emerged the confidence that he was going to be announced as the deputy director of the CIA, which, of course, evolved over time to DCI [Director of Central Intelligence, to which he was appointed by Johnson]. So far as I know, I was the first person he told about such important events in his life."

But why did LBJ summon Helms to his ranch, when he could have easily informed Helms of this in Washington. Could it be that at this meeting, LBJ flashed a green light to Helms for a plot against JFK, in the privacy of his own Texas ranch? This can only be speculation, but it is clear that Helms had a good and close relationship with LBJ. This meeting had to have taken place in late 1961 or early 1962, as Helms was appointed Deputy Director in February of 1962. And as Hunt points out in his book, "LBJ appointed him as director, but he wouldn't play ball with Nixon or comply with Nixon's requests to investigate White House leaks, so the president [Nixon] basically fired him, sending him to Iran during Watergate."

In his own posthumous memoir, "A Look over My Shoulder", Richard Helms wrote this of his relationship with Johnson and Nixon. "I was never sure why President Nixon distrusted me, aside from associating me with Allen Dulles and the other East Coast, Ivy League, establishment figures whom he loathed and thought of as dominating the upper brackets of OSS and subsequently CIA. In contrast, I always had an excellent relationship with Lyndon Johnson, who had at least as much claim as Nixon to have been born in a log cabin, and whose views of Ivy Leaguers were, at the best, reserved."

Obviously, Helms and Johnson were close. Likewise, Helms and Hunt were close for many years. Hunt never claimed that he himself had any direct contacts with LBJ. So if Hunt believed that LBJ was involved in the plot to assassinate JFK, which he clearly did, his impression probably came via Richard Helms, who was the missing link between LBJ and Howard Hunt. Helms was also the missing link between LBJ and Bill Harvey.

And what of Richard Nixon? In his interviews with me, Howard Hunt was adamant that Nixon had no role in the JFK assassination. In "American Spy" Hunt wrote, "As far as I'm concerned, as paranoid as he was, Nixon would never have been involved. He would not only have been horrified of the action but would never have trusted anyone to know he was involved." Hunt seemed to me to be

sincere in this belief, although he did not say the same of Lyndon Johnson.

On the famous "smoking gun" Watergate tape of June 23, 1972, Richard Nixon said this to his top aide H.R. Haldeman: "When you get in there with Helms, say, Look the problem here is that this will open the whole Bay of Pigs thing... It would be very bad to have this fellow [E. Howard] Hunt, he knows too damned much.... It would make the CIA look bad, and it's likely to blow the whole Bay of Pigs thing, which we think would be most unfortunate – both for the CIA and for the country.'

H.R. Haldeman, in his memoir "The Ends of Power", offered his interpretation of this statement. He wrote, "It seems that in all of those Nixon references to the Bay of Pigs, he was actually referring to the Kennedy assassination... After Kennedy was killed, the CIA launched a fantastic cover-up... In a chilling parallel to their cover-up at Watergate, the CIA literally erased any connection between Kennedy's assassination and the CIA... And when Nixon said, "It's likely to blow the whole Bay of Pigs thing", he might have been reminding [CIA Director] Helms, not so gently, of the cover-up of the CIA assassination attempts on the hero of the Bay of Pigs, Fidel Castro – a CIA operation that may have triggered the Kennedy tragedy and which Helms desperately wanted to hide."

This is highly suggestive, to say the least. Haldeman in his memoir also quoted former Senator Howard Baker, a member of the Senate Watergate Committee, as saying that "Helms and Nixon have so much on each other that neither one of them can breathe." Perhaps Helms was blackmailing Nixon with his knowledge that Nixon had originated the assassination plots against Castro (with the help of E. Howard Hunt), plots which may have morphed into a; plot against JFK. And Nixon might have been blackmailing Helms with his knowledge of the CIA's role in the JFK plot. In any case, Nixon found it expedient to get rid of Helms at the height of Watergate, removing him from the directorship of the CIA and dispatching him far away as US ambassador to Iran. It is still an open question as to what Nixon meant when he said on the tapes that "This fellow Hunt, he knows too much." It is also unclear what Nixon was referring to when he said that "We protected Helms from one hell of a lot of things."

In his own memoirs, "RN", Nixon wrote that he was never able to get the CIA's complete file on the "Bay of Pigs", despite repeated requests to Helms. Nixon compared the CIA to a locked safe, to which he could never get the combination to unlock it. This might have been an additional factor in his decision to remove Richard Helms as DCI.

Could LBJ have flashed a "green light" to Richard Helms during their private trip to the ranch? The idea is not unprecedented. Historian Arthur Schlesinger has suggested, in his book "Robert Kennedy and His Times", that then-Vice President Richard Nixon may have given a similar signal with regard to the assassination plots against Fidel Castro as far back as 1960. Schlesinger wrote, "Yet

the [assassination] plant was an integral part of the invasion plan. And it is hard to suppose that even the runaway agency mordantly portrayed in the reports of the President's Board of Consultants would have decided entirely on its own to kill the chief of a neighboring country [CIA Director] Dulles must have glimpsed a green light somewhere/ Could it have been flashed by the Vice President of the Untied States? "I have been". Richard Nixon said in 1964 of the invasion project, "the strongest and most persistent advocate for setting up and supporting such a program.""

Similarly, presidential historian Michael Beschloss wrote in this book "The Crisis Years", "We will probably never know for certain whether Vice President Nixon flashed the green light for a CIA-Mafia attempt against Castro. But it is hard to believe that as President he would have made such a heavy-handed demand of Ehrlichman merely to retrieve evidence of his support for invading Cuba in 1960... The demand makes more sense if Nixon was worried about public embarrassment by information showing his involvement in a murder plot against a foreign leader. This concern may have led to Watergate."

These are two highly reputable historians both suggesting that Nixon may have given a "green light" to assassination plots against Castro. Granted, Nixon was not Johnson, and Castro was not JFK. But the same principle applies. And if we assume that there is a straight line connecting the CIA-Mafia plots against Castro to the plot against JFK, then surely there is a similarity in the modus operandi of the two plots. Nixon would naturally not want his connection to the plot exposed, yet his tacit approval may have been necessary for the plot to go forward. Likewise, LBJ's flash of a green light to Helms may have provided him with all the authority necessary to go forward with the plot against JFK. In both cases, we have means, motive and opportunity, but we do not have definitive proof. And such proof may be impossible to find, given the extreme secrecy and sensitivity of these operations. We can only speculate, and wonder.

But E. Howard Hunt clearly believed that LBJ was part of the plot. In "American Spy", Hunt wrote this: "Lyndon Johnson was an opportunist who would not have hesitated to get rid of any obstacles in his way. He could easily have been in touch with [Bill] Harvey or [David] Phillips... Phillips was a man on the way up and became a significant figure that LBJ would have wanted to get to know... In Washington there is a caste system in regard to who will talk to whom. Would LBJ have spoken directly to Harvey? Yes, I think he could have done that, as Harvey's rank and position was such that a vice president could talk to him. Harvey may have had an intense personal dislike for the Kennedy's and even had a severe clash with Bobby Kennedy around the time of the missile crisis."

Hunt went on to add that "the person who had the most to gain from Kennedy's assassination was LBJ. There was nobody with the leverage that LBJ had, no competitor at all. He was the vice president, and if he wanted to get rid of the president, he had the ability to do so by corrupting different people in the CIA. It has also been said by many LBJ biographers, such as Robert Caro in "The Path to Power", that the man idolized money, was corrupt and unprincipled, with unlimited ambition – not the type of individual who was content to end his career as vice president... Many people conjecture that Johnson was set to drop even lower in footnote status, observing that he was set to be cut from the 1964 presidential ticket. He and Kennedy did not get along, and theirs was purely a marriage of convenience..."

Hunt concluded in "American Spy" that "Having Kennedy liquidated, thus elevating himself to the presidency without having to work for it himself, could have been a very tempting and logical move on Johnson's part. It wouldn't have been hard for him to make contact with Harvey, another ruthless man who was not satisfied with his position in the CIA and its government salary. He definitely had dreams of becoming DCI, and LBJ could do that for him if he were president. If LBJ had anything to do with the operation, he would have used Harvey, because he was available and corrupt. LBJ had the money and the

connections to manipulate the scenario in Dallas and is on record as having convinced JFK to make the appearance in the first place." Of course, we know that LBJ did not make Harvey the DCI [head of the CIA], but rather put Richard Helms into this position – perhaps another indication that Helms was a key figure in the plot.

And what do we know about Lucien Sarti, the French Corsican Mafia gunman named by Howard Hunt as the second shooter on the grassy knoll? In a sidebar to the Rolling Stone article entitled "The Last Confession of E. Howard Hunt", writer Rob Sheffield wrote, "A Corsican drug trafficker, Sarti was killed by police in 1972. Conveniently, nothing concrete is known about him." But this is not true. In the book "The Great Heroin Coup" by Heinrik Kruger, published in 1980 before Sarti's name was connected with the JFK assassination, Kruger detailed aspects of Sarti's criminal career. In the preface to the book, by noted JFK researcher Peter Dale Scott, it was noted that "As support for his argument that the traffic once

dominated by Ricord was simply redirected to Cuban exiles in touch with the CIA and with Santos Trafficante, Kruger points to the extraordinary story of Alberto Sicilia Falcon. Somehow Sicilia, a twenty-nine Cuban exile from Miami, was able to emerge as the ringleader of the so-called "Mexican connection" which promptly filled the vacuum created by the destruction of the Ricord network in 1972. Lucien Sarti, a top Ricord lieutenant, was shot and killed by authorities in Mexico on 27 April 1972, after being located there by U.S. agents." This latter fact is quite interesting. Eliminating international drug traffickers was one of the missions of the White House plumbers unit, of which Hunt was a member, and Sarti's murder occurred just before the Watergate break-in in June 1972. Is this a link between the JFK assassination and Watergate – or is it just another coincidence?

Speaking further of the Ricord drug organization in France, Kruger writes this: "The Ricord organization was divided into four teams...Ricord himself ran the main team from Asuncion, Paraguay, and oversaw the entire operation. Chiappe and Michel Nicoli led another team, Dominique Orsini and Louis Bonsignour a third, and Andre Condemine and Lucien Sarti a fourth.... It was Murder Incorporated in French. Nearly all had been sentenced to death in France." It is interesting to note the inclusion of the name Michel Nicoli, who later became one of those who identified Lucien Sarti as the shooter of JFK, while Nicoli was in the federal witness protection program in the US.

Kruger refers again to Sarti in his book, saying that "In 1966 Old Man Ricord enlarged his already immense narcotics network upon discovering how easily he could smuggle heroin into the US via Latin America... The old man surrounded himself with hardcore thugs. By 1970 the Mob's leaders were Ricord, sentenced to death in absentia for treason, torture and murder; Lucien Sarti, wanted for the murder of a Belgian policeman; Christian David,, sentenced to death in absentia...and French gangster and former SAC agent, Michel Nicoli." Nicoli and Christian David, of course, were later the two French criminals who

independently identified Lucien Sarti as the assassin of JFK, in separate confession to author and investigator Steve Rivele.

Kruger further details the capture and death of Lucien Sarti. He says that, "Auguste Ricord's 1971 imprisonment in Paraguay taught Christian David and Lucien Sarti that it was time to move on. Their choice of location was Brazil, in particular Ilha Bella, an island off the coast north of Santos, conveniently only two hours from Sao Paulo and five from Rio de Janeiro. It also provided a small harbor and landing strip. The two holed up in the Bordelao, a small hotel run by Haide Arantez and Claudio Rodriguez, friend's of Sarti's Brazilian mistress, Helena Ferreira. Beau Serge [Christian David] was by then the undisputed boss of the "Brazilian Connection" Its other leaders were Sarti, Michel Nicoli" and several others,.

Kruger describes the event's leading to Sarti's death. "In March Sarti went to Mexico City, where he was joined by his wife Liliane in an attractive residential district apartment. Sarti had no notion that the police had been trailing him ever since his entry from Mexico. Somebody had tipped them off... In the evening of April 17, Sarti and Liliane left their hideout to go to the movies. Before they got to their car, they were surrounded by the police. Sarti was unarmed, but the police shot and killed him, and arrested Liliane."

In their book, "Marseille Mafia", Pierre Galante and Louis Sapin provide further background on Sarti's criminal career. In 1961, Lucien Sarti was involved in the murder of a Belgian police constable named Albert de Leener. The officer was ambushed by a group of French criminals, one of whom was Sarti. De Leener was shot and killed, and his body dumped into the trunk of a car "The body was lifted up; the boot of the car opened. During the operation, a small piece of cardboard fell from the pocket of the man who had fired the final shot. The investigators found it on the pavement, a little later. It was a fake identity card bearing the name Lucien Sabatier. The photo was of a known French criminal, aged about thirty, who had a

record under that name at the Quai des Orvefres. He was called Lucien Sarti."

"The following evening, arriving in Paris, Lucien Sarti read the papers and learned that he had been identified... He was now a hunted man. There was only one thing for him to do: go to South America/" His trail from there led him to Mexico, and from there on to Dallas, according to the findings of author Steve Rivele.

In 1985, Rivele became interested in the Kennedy assassination and in particular the French connection. Rivele was a successful author who later became a prominent screenwriter in Hollywood. Rivele's research led him to a man named Christian David, who had been a prominent member of the French connection, and a leader of the Corsican Mafia. He was then serving time in Leavenworth Penitentiary. Rivele helped David find an attorney, and in return was told a remarkable story by David. As recounted in the book "Conspiracy" by Anthony Summers, "In May or June 1963, according to David, he was asked by Antoine Guerini, the Corsican Mafia boss in Marseille, to accept a contract to kill "a highly placed American politician". Guerini made it obvious whom he meant, calling the politician "le plus grosse legume" – the biggest vegetable. The President was to be killed on US territory. David turned down the contract, on the ground that it was too dangerous."

"The contract, said David, was accepted by Lucien Sarti, a Corsican drug trafficker and killer, and two other members of the Marseille mob, whom he refused to name. They were, he said, "specialists de tir" – "sharpshooters". He learned what happened some time after the assassination, at a 1965 meeting in Buenos Aires. Present were Sarti, Michel Nicoli,, [Christian] David and two others. This is how the assassination was carried out, as David tells it.

Rivele went on to describe the scenario, which he learned independently from both Christian David and Michel Nicoli, to British journalist Anthony Summers. In "Conspiracy", Summers wrote that, "Sarti and the two other assassins flew from Marseilles to Mexico City in the fall of 1963. They stayed there several weeks, and were then driven to the United States border, which they crossed at Brownsville, Texas. They were met at the border by a representative of the Chicago Mafia, who conversed with them in Italian. [Could this have been Johnny Roselli?] He drove them to a house in Dallas."

Summers goes on to add, "On November 22, David told Rivele, three gunmen were in position. Two were in buildings to the rear of the President when he was hit – one of them "almost on the horizontal." The third killer, Sarti, dressed in some sort of uniform as a disguise, was "on the little hill to the front, the one with the fence."... Four shots were fired that day, according to Sarti and another of the assassins. The first shot, from the rear, struck President Kennedy in the back. The second shot missed, and hit "the other man in the car" [Governor John Connally]. The third shot, from Sarti on the hill, struck the President in the head,

killing him. Sarti used "an explosive bullet", the only member of the group to use that type of ammunition. The fourth shot missed the car entirely."

This scenario is remarkable in that its details fit so well with evidence developed by the House Select Committee on Assassinations and other sources. But there is more. "After the assassination, according to David's allegations, the murderers lay low in Dallas for about two weeks. Then – says David – they were then flown out of the country by private aircraft, to Montreal."

This is the story of the assassination, as relayed from Christian David to Steve Rivele to Anthony Summers. When Rivele asked David who could confirm his story, he named Michel Nicoli, a fellow Corsican gangster who was now in the US federal witness protection program as a result of his 1972 testimony against the mob. A DEA official who knew him vouched for his credibility in strong terms. Eventually, Nicoli was located, and he told Rivele the same story that David had told, although the two men had not seen each other for years. To make a long story

short, nothing was done by the FBI to follow up on this remarkable development.

In his account of the conspiracy, E. Howard Hunt named eight central figures. These were Lyndon Johnson, Cord Meyer, David Atlee Phillips, William K. Harvey, Antonio Veciana, Frank Sturgis, David Morales, and Lucien Sarti. Of these, perhaps the most surprising name is that of Cord Meyer. Meyer was a high official of the CIA, who had good reason to hate John F. Kennedy, yet his name has rarely come up in assassination circles.

Cord Meyer was born in 1920 and graduated from Yale in 1942. He joined the US Marines and served in the South Pacific, losing an eye in combat. In 1945, he married Mary Pinchot, who would later have an affair with President Kennedy. In 1947, he was elected president of the United World Federalist, and was a strong left-wing advocate of world government and the United Nations.

However, by 1949, Meyer had joined the CIA at the urging of Allen Dulles, and worked closely with James Angleton among others. Meyer's views gradually moved from left to right, and he became a strong anti-Communist, as well as a heavy drinker. In 1958, he was divorced from Mary Meyer, who was a free-spirited artist. In 1961, Mary began an affair with President Kennedy which lasted until his death (she had known him as far back as prep school in the 1930s). In 1964, after Kennedy's death, Mary was murdered mysteriously during an evening stroll on the banks of the towpath in Georgetown. Officially, the murder was never solved, although rumors had it that the CIA might have been involved. Shortly after her death, James Angleton of the CIA personally broke into her studio and retrieved her personal diary, the contents of which have never been revealed. Cord Meyer left the CIA in 1977, and died in 2001.

In my conversations with Howard Hunt, it was clear that he was fascinated by both Cord and Mary Meyer, in particular her mysterious death, just after the release of the Warren

Commission report. This was also evident in his memoir "American Spy". Among other things, Hunt wrote, "Another name that pops up in JFK conspiracy theories is Cord Meyer. He was a high level CIA operative who wife, journalist Mary Pinchot, was having an affair with John F Kennedy... By the time of the assassination, Cord had been promoted to chief of the CIA's International Organizations Division... The theorists suggest Cord would have had a motive to kill Kennedy because his wife was having an affair with the President.... Then, on October 12, 1964, Mary was tragically gunned down while walking on a towpath in Georgetown. By that time, she and Cord had divorced, and the media did not realize that her former husband was a high ranking CIA official. Neither did they find out about her relationship with the President..."

Hunt went on to describe the suspicious circumstances behind Mary Meyer's death. "Mary had cautioned at least one close friend to grab her diary if anything ever happened to her. Journalist (later editor) [and Kennedy friend] Ben Bradlee happened to be married to Mary's sister, Antoinette, who found the letter and diaries shortly after the death. But there is an interesting fact here. When the Bradlees arrived at Mary's house shortly after the murder, they found James Angleton already there, rummaging around the house, looking for the diary and letters... Bradlee has said that the door was locked when he arrived. So does that mean Angleton broke in?"

It was clear to me from my conversations with Hunt years later that he was bitter about the fact that Angleton had broken in and gotten away scott free, whereas Hunt himself had served 33 months in prison for a similar break-in. Hunt's theory of the break-in went like this: "When Antoinette eventually found the diary, she turned it over to Angleton, who later admitted that the book detailed the affair, talking specifically about how Mary and Kennedy would drop LSD before making love. Mary apparently thought that JFKs murder had taken place because the industrial-military complex couldn't allow his mind to be expanded by the drug. The fact that Angleton was already there in the house when Bradlee got there is mysterious, as

so little time had gone by since the murder." Bear in mind that Angleton was a very high official of the CIA, unlikely to personally take part in a "black bag job" except in the most extreme circumstances. This would be roughly equivalent to J. Edgar Hoover personally breaking into a building on behalf of the FBI.

Hunt concluded his analysis with these suggestive comments: "Journalist Leo Damore wrote in the New York Post that a CIA source told him that Mary's death was probably a professional hit because "She had access to the highest levels. She was involved in illegal drug activity. What do you think it would do to the beatification of Kennedy if this woman said, "It wasn't Camelot – it was Caligula's court'?" So I think it was probably a professional hit be someone trying to protect the Kennedy legacy." Or, perhaps, to cover up her knowledge of the Kennedy assassination.

Renowned historian John H. Davis, author of several books on the Kennedy's and the assassination and himself a

cousin of Jacquelyn Bouvier Kenney, wrote an unpublished manuscript in 1998 entitled "John F. Kennedy and Mary Pinchot Meyer: A Tale of Two Murdered Lovers". Davis wrote, "When, in early October, 1964 Mary Meyer first read the Warren Report on the assassination of President Kennedy she immediately recognized it as a cover-up. Among its many omissions Mary noted there was no mention in the Report of the CIA-Mafia plots to assassinate Castro." She told a friend that the document was full of lies and that "they had covered up everything.""

Davis added, "We may picture this slim blonde woman of 44 in her small coach house studio in Georgetown... leafing through this report on the murder of a man she had seen regularly during the last 20 months of her life, then tossing the book aside in disgust... and phoning up a few of her closest friends to tell them she thought the Report was worthless, that it was full of glaring omissions and was essentially a "pack of lies."... If it became known among those who perpetrated the cover-up that some woman who had been close to President Kennedy was going around

blabbing her mouth off about some of the most sensitive, and potentially explosive, omissions in the Report, that person was taking an enormous risk."

Davis concludes: "It was a tribute to the perspicacity of Mary Meyer to recognize at first reading what almost no one recognized at the time: that the Warren Commission's investigation of the JFK assassination was deeply flawed and that the Warren Commission was essentially a fraudulent cover=up... We must inevitably conclude that Mary Meyer's rejection of the Warren Commission's conclusions when an entire nations was accepting them indicated that she knew things that very few people knew and that for that reason told Anne Truitt she feared for her safety and told her that if anything happened to her she should consign her diary to the CIA's James Jesus Angleton. The burning question, then, is what did Mary know? And the only answer we can give is that she knew too much."

In the book "The Georgetown Ladies' Social Club" by C. David Heymann, Leo Damore was quoted as saying this, "Mary Meyer was killed by a well-trained professional hit man, very likely somebody connected to the CIA. After the assassination of John Kennedy, Mary had become an inconvenient woman, the former mistress of one of the world's most powerful political leaders and the ex-wife of a CIA honcho. The feeling in the agency was that here's somebody who knows too much for her own good. She knows where all the bodies are buried. She knows the Warren Commission report, released shortly before her death, is nothing but a grandiose cover-up. She knows about the Mafia, the Cubans and the Agency, and how any one of them could have conspired to eliminate Kennedy." What she didn't know, according to Damore, is that a month after the President's murder, the Agency placed her under twenty-four hour surveillance, tapping her phone, wiring her house, intercepting her mail, and initiating several break-ins in search of notes and letters to and from JFK and others of equal interest."

Interviewed by author David Heymann shortly before his death in 2001, Cord Meyer was asked about the death of his wife Mary. "It was a bad time", he said. "And what could he say about Mary Meyer? Who had committed such a heinous crime?" His answer to Heymann was revealing. "The same sons of bitches", he hissed, "that killed John F. Kennedy.""

Another key figure in the plot, according to Hunt, was David Atlee Phillips. Phillips was a Latin American specialist who worked with Hunt on the CIA coup in Guatemala as far back as 1954. He also collaborated with Hunt on the plans for the Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961. The two men were close friends and collaborators over many years in the CIA. Author Gaeton Fonzi, who investigated Phillips in depth for the House Select Committee on Assassinations, came to some firm conclusions about David Phillips, who had allegedly met with co-conspirator Antonio Veciana, a Cuban exile leader, under the pseudonym "Maurice Bishop: in the summer of 1963 in Dallas in the presence of Lee Harvey Oswald. The ostensible purpose was to put Oswald, who was about to travel to Mexico, in touch with Veciana's cousin Guillermo Ruiz, who worked in the Cuban embassy in Mexico City.

In his book "The Last Investigation, Gaeton Fonzi wrote this: ""Maurice Bishop" was David Atlee Phillips. I state that unequivocally...In addition to the abundance of evidence detailed in this book which unerringly points to Phillips being Bishop, believe me, I know that he was. And Bob Blakey [staff director of the committee] and the House Select Committee knew that he was, although its report did not admit that."

Fonzi goes on to add, "David Atlee Phillips played a key role in the conspiracy to assassinate President Kennedy. I don't embrace the assumption that Phillips' relationship to Oswald may have been extraneous to any conspiratorial role." It should be noted here that Howard Hunt insisted to me and in his book that Phillips met with Oswald not just in Dallas, but also in Mexico City, where Phillips was stationed. Fonzi continues, "That Phillips rose to the top echelon of the Agency as Chief of the Western Hemisphere division is, I think, significant when we talk about "elements" of the CIA being involved in the Kennedy assassination. (Can those who control the ideological soul and operational body of the Agency be considered simply "elements" within it?)" It should be noted, though, that Richard Helms admitted that he kept CIA Director John McCone in the dark about all assassination activities, so the plot probably did not go to the very top of the CIA hierarchy.

Gaeton Fonzi went on to add, "Nor is Phillips tight working association with the Agency's most lethal operatives insignificant. His was a cabal of associates whose careers were entwined with the history of CIA assassination plots, that ranged from Richard Helms to E. Howard Hunt and from Ted Shackley to the Agency's Mob liaison William Harvey. And then, or course, there was David Phillips' faithful operative, the CIA's action legend, David Sanchez Morales, whose inebriated admission of involvement in the Kennedy assassination – "We took care of that son of a bitch, didn't we? – closed the circle.

Fonzi concludes, "I believe that David Atlee Phillips' key role was affirmed when he lied under oath. The very fact that he had to lie – both about his manipulation of Oswald in Mexico City and his covert operations as Maurice Bishop – was the definitive statement of his guilt." It is very significant that Hunt admitted that Phillips had met with Oswald in Mexico City shortly before the assassination, presumable to frame him as a Cuban sympathizer, as well as in Dallas before his Mexico trip. It has also been reported by author Tad Szulc, in his book "Compulsive Spy", that Howard Hunt was in Mexico City at the very time Oswald was visiting there. This raises the possibility that both Phillips and Hunt may have met with Oswald there. How else would Hunt know of the meeting with Phillips? In his interviews with me, Hunt did not deny that he was there when Oswald was there, but said that he would have to check his CIA records.

And what of Antonio Veciana? He was a Cuban exile, leader of the militant anti-Castro group Alpha 66, and apparently met with Lee Harvey Oswald and David Phillips prior to the assassination. In E. Howard Hunt's handwritten memo prior to his death, given to his son St. John, Hunt wrote this: 1962 - LBJ recruits Cord Meyer. 1963 – Cord Meyer discusses a plot with Phillips, who brings in William Harvey and Antonio Veciana. He [Phillips] meets with Oswald in Mexico City that summer. Veciana meets with Frank Sturgis in Miami and enlists David Morales in anticipation of killing JFK there. But LBJ changed the itinerary to Dallas, citing personal reasons." There is much more to Hunt's memo, but this is the passage that pertains to Veciana. It is clear from Hunt's account that Veciana was a key figure in the plot.

British author Anthony Summers, writing in "Conspiracy', said this about Veciana: "Antonio Veciana was the victim of a murder attempt in late 1979 –an ambush while he was on his way home from work. Four shots were fired, and a fragment of one bullet lodged in Veciana's head. He

recovered – in what police and doctors consider a freak escape. Publicly the veteran anti-Castro fighter has blamed the attack on Castro agents, but privately he has also expressed concern that it may have been linked to his allegations about CIA case officer "Maurice Bishop", who - says Veciana -met Oswald shortly before the Kennedy assassination and later urged the fabrication of a false story about Oswald and Cuban diplomats in Mexico City." Veciana, who later took part in a failed assassination attempt with David Phillips in 1971 against Fidel Castro in Chile, is clearly a very suspicious character. He is also the only one of the plotters named by Hunt who is still living. In a recent interview, Veciana told David Talbot, author of "Brothers", that he believed that the CIA was involved in Kennedy's murder. However, Veciana predictably denied that he had any part in the plot.

Another key figure in the plot was David Morales. In his handwritten memo, Howard Hunt wrote, "In Miami, Sturgis tells Hunt that he's buying guns for some friends (who could be Mafia or Cuban activists). Sturgis brings Morales to a meeting he has with NADA [Howard Hunt] where the "Big Event" is referred to. After Morales leaves, Sturgis says "Are you with us?" Hunt replies that he can't make a decision without knowing what the "Big Event" is. When Sturgis says killing JFK, NADA [Hunt] is incredulous. Doesn't have a lot of faith in Sturgis and says "You guys have got everything you need – why do you need me? Sturgis replies that NADA [Hunt] could help covering up. NADA [Hunt] says he won't get involved in anything involving Bill Harvey, who is an alcoholic psycho. That ends NADA's [Hunt's} part. He resumes his normal life and does not see Sturgis again until [Bernard] Barker brings him into the Watergate break-in."

This passage contains many interesting elements. First, it is clear that Morales had prior knowledge of the "Big Event", having been brought into the plot by Veciana. Second, it is evident that Morales had direct dealings with Veciana, David Phillips, Frank Sturgis, Howard Hunt, and possibly Cord Meyer as well. Morales had worked with Hunt and Phillips in the CIA coup in Guatemala as far back

as 1954, as well as in the Bay of Pigs operation and the plots against Castro in the early 1960s. Morales was known as a stone killer and a hands-on operative who was not afraid to get blood on his hands. He was reported to have been in the Presidential Palace in Chile when President Salvador Allende was assassinated in 1973, and also took part in the CIA Phoenix program on assassinations in Vietnam in the 1970s,

In Fonzi's book, he describes as incident that took place during a late night drinking bout with Morales and a friend named Bob Walton. "At the mention of Kennedy's name, he recalls, Morales literally almost hit the ceiling. He flew off the bed on that one", says Walton... He jumped up screaming, "That no good son of a bitch motherfucker! He started yelling about what a wimp Kennedy was and talking about how he had worked on the Bay of Pigs and how he had to watch all the men he had recruited and trained get wiped out because of Kennedy." "Walton says Morales' tirade about Kennedy, fueled by righteous anger and high-proof booze went on for several minutes while he stomped around the room. Suddenly he stopped, sat back down on the bed and remained silent for a moment. Then, as if saying it only to himself, he added: "Well, we took care of that son of a bitch, didn't we?""

And then we come to Frank Sturgis. Sturgis was a mercenary and soldier of fortune, with ties to both the CIA and the Mafia. Sturgis had fought briefly on the side of Fidel Castro in the mountains during the revolution, although he later switched sides and became violently anti-Castro. Fidel installed Sturgis for a short time as the Minister of Gaming [gambling] when he took power, but Sturgis was quickly removed when Castro closed the Mafia casinos and outlawed gambling in Cuba.

Sturgis was associated with Howard Hunt for many years, starting with a novel Hunt wrote in 1949 called "Bimini Run", which featured a soldier of fortune type named Hank Sturgis. (Hunt later maintained that this was just a coincidence). Hunt and Sturgis worked closely together during the Bay of Pigs period, and of course was later arrested with Hunt during the Watergate brteak-in during 1972. Hunt claimed under oath that he had met Sturgis for the first time shortly before Watergate, but this was clearly not true, by his own later admission.

In her book ZR Rifle, Claudia Furiati points out some pertinent facts about Sturgis (nee Frank Fiorini). She writes: 'The counterintelligence – Frank Sturgis and Orlando Bosch were two of the principal agents of Operation 40, the "parallel" counter-intelligence structure before, during, and after the Bay of Pigs invasion. David Atlee Phillips represented the CIA in these operations."

"The Commandos - Sturgis was on of the initiators of the International Anti-Communist Brigade... David Atlee Phillips was the mentor of these terrorist groups. Sturgis and his partner Gerry Hemming opened the training camp at Lake Pontchartrain in New Orleans in the same era as the creation of Alpha 66 [headed by Antonio Veciana]...Pontchartrain, spared by the police authorities, became the center of the illegal counterrevolutionary operations. Frank Sturgis, Orlando Bosch, Guy Banister, David Ferrie, Clay Shaw, and Lee Harvey Oswald all participated directly in these."

In her book, Claudia Furiati interviewed Fabian Escalante of Cuban intelligence, who in turn cited the book "Double Cross" by Sam and Chuck Giancana. Escalante commented, 'It is interesting to observe, following the details given in "Double Cross", that the assassination of Kennedy was carried out by two groups: one under the control of Jack Ruby, who later killed Oswald; and the other by Frank Sturgis, who later became the chief of the Watergate "plumbers". It is now possible to appreciate why Richard Nixon didn't want the famous phone tapes about the Bay of Pigs to become known."

The "Bay of Pigs thing" raises its ugly head again. But why was Nixon so concerned about the Bay of Pigs thing, and what it might reveal. After all, the invasion took place under JFK, who took full responsibility for the fiasco. Why then would this cause such embarrassment to Nixon and to the CIA? Perhaps because of the events leading up to the Bay of Pigs, the planning of which took place under Nixon and Eisenhower. And perhaps due to the aftermath of the Bay of Pigs, which caused hatred toward Kennedy on the part of the CIA, the Cuban exiles, and the Mafia. Perhaps these three groups joined forces to plot the murder of JFK. And perhaps Nixon realized that the whole chain of events could be traced back to him starting in 1960 with the plots against Castro. And who suggested such a plot? One of the first was none other than E. Howard Hunt.

As the planning for the Bay of Pigs progressed, Hunt became increasingly dissatisfied with the program being proposed. He felt that "his" Cubans were being pushed out in favor of more moderate to leftist Cuban exiles – in effect Fidelismo without Fidel. Shortly before the actual invasion, Hunt in effect resigned his position in the operation. In his book "Oswald and the CIA", historian John Newman writes that, "After a detour of several days in Spain, Hunt delivered his recommendations to the Cuban task force [headed by Nixon] in April. He listed four:

"1. Assassinate Castro before or coincident with the invasion (a task for Cuban patriots.

- 2. Destroy the Cuban radio and television transmitters...
- 3. Destroy the island's microwave relay system...
- Discard any thought of a popular uprising against Castro until the issue has already been militarily decided.

"Hunt believed that, without Castro, the Cuban army would "collapse in leaderless confusion." [Tracy] Barnes and [Dick] Bissell read Hunt's report and told him it "would weigh in the final planning.""

Subsequently, in July 1960, Hunt was invited to lunch with Nixon's National Security Adviser and Chief of

Staff, Robert E. Cushman. Newman describes what transpired, quoting Hunt himself. "Hunt described what transpired: "I reviewed for Cushman my impressions of Cuba under Castro and my principal operational recommendations... Cushman's reaction was to tell me that the Vice President [Nixon] was the project's action officer within the White House, and that Nixon wanted nothing to go wrong."" Of course, Nixon and Cushman were gone, and Kennedy was President, by the time the operation took place in April 1961. Why, then, Nixon's great concern, a decade later, about the "Bay of Pigs thing", and the fact that E. Howard Hunt "knew too much." Nixon told Ehrlichman that "if you open that scab [Hunt], there's one hell of a lot of things." What they were has never been revealed.

Clearly, though, Hunt knew and was familiar with many of the key plotters, as well as the plot himself. Hunt claimed in his memo that he turned down the plot, although he certainly did not alert the police, the FBI, the CIA, or the Secret Service of this knowledge. On an audio tape given by Hunt to St. John in his latter years, Hunt described himself as a "benchwarmer" in the plot to kill JFK. While this does not describe an active participant, it does describe a full member of the team who was ready to take the field and enter the game as a player at any moment if need be. Of course, Hunt could also have been minimizing his role in the plot, as might be expected.

In his handwritten memo to St. John, Hunt added this: "Like the rest of the country, NADA [Hunt] is stunned by JFKs death and realizes how lucky he is not to have had a direct role. In Danbury federal prison [after Watergate], Epsilon [Sturgis] and NADA [Hunt] reflect on the "Big Event". Oswald is dead so the feds have nobody to prosecute. Epsilon [Sturgis] speculates that Jack Ruby was selected to kill Oswald by the mob. Epsilon [Sturgis] reveals that one of the Dallas shooters was a foreigner." Hunt later informed St. John and me that the foreigner was a French Corsican gunman named

Sarti. This could only have been Lucien Sarti, as Hunt suggests in his book "American Spy".

Clearly, Hunt was up to his eyeballs in assassination plots. One additional note is provided by Bayard Stockton in "Flawed Patriot". He notes that, "In March 1961, well before [Bill] Harvey was involved in Caribbean matters, [Johnny] Roselli went to the Dominican Republic, accompanied by Howard Hunt of the CIA. Rafael Trujillo, the Republic's dictator, was ambushed and killed on May 30, 1961, but the CIA was cleared of involvement in the assassination." Cleared by the CIA, that is, just as it was "cleared" of the assassination of Lumumba in the Congo in 1960, even though the Agency had sent killers to eliminate him.

It is most interesting to note that in 1961, two years before the Kennedy assassination, Howard Hunt and Johnny Roselli were joining forces in an assassination plot in the Caribbean. Roselli, of course, was the Mafia's liaison to the CIA, and the representative of the Chicago Mafia in Las Vegas, Los Angeles and points east. He was also a close friend and drinking buddy of Bill Harvey and of David Morales as well.

When we put all these facts together, from various sources, it becomes clear that Howard Hunt's assassination scenario is at least very possible, if not highly probably. If Hunt had wanted to create a fictional scenario, he probably would have implicated Fidel Castro in the plot, instead of his own close friends and colleagues. This adds to the credibility of Hunt's story.