On behalf of the Assassination Archives and Research Center, [JFK Lancer](http://www.jfklancer.com/), [Citizens Against Political Assassinations](http://capa-hq.com/), and [JFK Conversations.com](http://www.jfkconversations.com/), Alan Dale speaks with [Dr. John Newman](https://www.amazon.com/John-M.-Newman/e/B001IZT9DK/ref%3Ddp_byline_cont_book_1) on THE NATURE AND SCOPE OF THE JFK ASSASSINATION

*Program transcript courtesy of Mary Constantine*

Name: John Newman

Date: 5 February 2017

Duration: 00:31:25

ALAN DALE: Thank you for joining us; my name is Alan Dale. On behalf of the Assassination Archives and Research Center, [JFK Lancer](http://www.jfklancer.com/), [Citizens Against Political Assassinations](http://capa-hq.com/), and my own JFK Conversations program, I am speaking today with a most distinguished historian, researcher and educator. He's the author of 1992's 'JFK and Vietnam', which as of January 2017 has been republished as an updated and expanded second edition; 1995's 'Oswald and the CIA', which was updated for a 2008 edition; 2011's 'Quest for the Kingdom: The Secret Teachings of Jesus in the Light of Yogic Mysticism'; 2015's 'Where Angels Tread Lightly: The Assassination of President Kennedy Volume I', which has just been revised and republished; and 2017's 'Countdown to Darkness: The Assassination of President Kennedy Volume II', all of which are now available for purchase from Amazon.com.

Our guest is a retired US Army Intelligence officer who served for two years as the Executive Military Assistant to the director, General William Odom, at the National Security Agency. He has testified before various sub-committees of the US House of Representatives, and has worked as a consultant on two major motion pictures, and to various US and foreign media organizations including PBS Frontline, The History Channel, C-SPAN, NBC and other news organizations. For the past quarter-century his work has introduced revelations about America during the Cold War. I have the honor of introducing Dr. John Newman. Thank you for being with us.

JOHN NEWMAN: My pleasure to be with you, Alan.

ALAN DALE: From your perspective, Dr. Newman, what kind of murder case is the JFK assassination? What is the scope and nature of this case?

JOHN NEWMAN: For me, two points stand out immediately about the scope of the case – we'll get to the nature in a second. As far as the scope of the case, it remains a high-profile cold case, and crucially it's not a cold case for lack of investigations and interest, and what this means is that the combination of those factors makes this particular cold case unique. And it requires a unique and very rigorous approach to cover the scope of this kind of investigation.

ALAN DALE: And when you, when you're referring to the "scope" of the investigation, to what are you referring?

JOHN NEWMAN: A high-profile murder case that's gone cold for this long suggests that there must be a significant component missing in official investigations, and in investigative work by private citizens as well. In my view that missing component is not so much the nature of the case as it is the scope of the case. I assume that the President's murder – this will be the nature of the case – was a conspiracy, whether or not Oswald was a lone shooter. But this is my point: spending too much time arguing about whether or not the nature of the case was a conspiracy does very little to help us understand the scope of the case, and therefore the scope of the investigation that's necessary to understand who the real perpetrators were and, just as importantly, how they got away with the crime. For example one continuing significant challenge is understanding the crime scene itself: that's part of the scope of the case.

ALAN DALE: And when you refer to the perpetrators you mean beyond the question of who was pulling a trigger or triggers; who was doing the actual shooting. . . The concept of the perpetrators is greater than merely whoever was actually shooting at President Kennedy?

JOHN NEWMAN: That's right, that's exactly what I mean.

ALAN DALE: And so when we refer to the crime scene, traditionally that would constitute whatever are the forensic elements of the attack and the consequences of the attack. But when you consider – when you talk about the crime scene, what do you believe should be included inside the crime scene tape? What constitutes the crime scene in the JFK case?

JOHN NEWMAN: Well the obvious, of course, should be Parkland Memorial Hospital and Dealey Plaza in Dallas, and the Navy hospital at Bethesda, Maryland. But I've long argued that the crime scene extends into the documentary record, and that is because a great deal of effort went into a dark operation that was designed to create a false image about the crime, using Oswald's records. In this operation people were manipulated: some witting and some not, and false records were created before and after the crime. So the crime scene also contains many true records that provide important clues about how and when the plot was designed and carried out. These records can help us distinguish the difference between potential suspects, probable suspects and innocent witnesses who knew some very important facts.

ALAN DALE: Mmhmm. You referred to, obviously Dealey Plaza; Parkland Memorial Hospital, where the president was declared dead; his military autopsy at Bethesda Naval Hospital, and so much research; so much published material over the past fifty years that focuses on the end of what happened, but not an enormous amount focused on: where did it begin? So a lot of material, a lot of attention, focused on what was going on at the end. How important is it to address the subject of when and where did it begin?

JOHN NEWMAN: I believe it is crucial not just to establish the conspiratorial nature of this case, but also to establish what kind of conspiracy it was. For me the key piece to the end state – that's in Dealey Plaza – suggests where to begin research, and what to look for back in time. Beyond the events in Dealey Plaza – the key piece – is the way the files at CIA, on Oswald, looked at the time of the murder. Those files cover Oswald's movements from Dallas and New Orleans to Mexico City. His movements, and the internal record of them, were designed to make it appear possible the Kennedy brothers' plan to overthrow Castro had been successfully turned around by Fidel, resulting in, and with an assist by the KGB, the assassination of President Kennedy. With such an ending to the story it is necessary to begin with the cast of characters involved in Cuban operations and a wide range of CIA components, and assemble their biographies all the way back, if applicable, to the Office of Strategic Services and even World War II. Just to do that much, and then use it as an overlay for the Agency's role in Castro's rise to power and the plan less than a year later to kill him, easily fills up a book by itself. And that's just the first step.

ALAN DALE: Mmhmm.

JOHN NEWMAN: From the beginning of the investigation, to the extent possible, every cryptonym for people and operations, and every pseudonym and the person to whom it belonged, needs to be recovered, documented and shared with the larger JFK research community. This process must be repeated over and over again, in successive volumes that layer in new events and correct any incorrect identifications. In time, a clear picture of what was taking place emerges, as the investigation reaches the point where motive begins to unfold, and later, the means and opportunity.

ALAN DALE: Mmhmm. "Motive, means and opportunity." You've told me that we're at the beginning of a serious investigation – that'll come as news to certain people who present conclusions to us on a silver platter – we're at the beginning of a serious investigation into the assassination of President Kennedy. Do you have any sense at all of how long this is going to take?

JOHN NEWMAN: The short answer to that question is: As long as it takes. But it appears to me that I'm five years into a project that will probably take ten years – maybe more. Let me point out one more thing. I want this process to be dynamic, and that's going to take time. I do not want to sit on valuable information for decades. By sharing chunks of research with other researchers as early as possible I hope to stimulate discoveries by others that will inform my own work as it progresses. The end result will be to save time.

ALAN DALE: Mmhmm. Our great friend and ultimate scholar, Professor Peter Dale Scott, has referred to 'Countdown to Darkness' as "a definitive study of the disastrous hand-off from Eisenhower to Kennedy on Cuba, Laos and the Congo, by the man superbly qualified to carry it out." Could we talk a little bit about the major headlines that have emerged in 'Countdown to Darkness'?

JOHN NEWMAN: Sure. Let me begin by adding some of the major hypotheses that add to those that I laid out in Volume I, 'Where Angels Tread Lightly'. I mentioned that briefly just now: turning a Kennedy plan to overthrow Castro inside out to make it look like Castro killed Kennedy. So, without going through those original hypotheses one by one, let me just quickly go over what new has been added to the list of hypotheses in Volume II.

ALAN DALE: Okay.

JOHN NEWMAN: So there are five in Volume I. Now the hypothesis six, which is new, holds that the deaths of Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba in the Congo, and dictator Rafael Trujillo in the Dominican Republic, without regard to who actually pulled the triggers, were ultimately the result of President Eisenhower's top-secret plan, according to which their elimination was an indispensible requirement for the success of his covert plan to overthrow Castro.And we’ll add now hypothesis seven: President Kennedy's April 1961 decisions against direct US military intervention in Cuba and Laos spawned the deep hatred, in many circles, that gathered momentum during the Cuban Missile Crisis and later became a critical part of the motivation for his assassination in 1963. And finally we have another one, hypothesis eight: it holds that Lee Harvey Oswald was a witting false defector sent to the USSR as U2 flypaper, part of an elaborate plan to trap a KGB mole in the CIA. Popov's mole: Popov had told us about a mole in the U2 program.

ALAN DALE: Mmhmm.

JOHN NEWMAN: I also have a lot of assumptions in Volume I. I'm not going to go through those here; I just want to quickly go through the newest additional assumptions that are in Volume II.

ALAN DALE: Okay.

JOHN NEWMAN: The first one: how Director of Central Intelligence Allen Dulles was aware, well before Congo's independence, of Belgium's plans for the secession of the mineral-rich Katanga Province. Second assumption: the claims by top advisors to Presidents Eisenhower and Kennedy that an exile invasion would trigger an uprising of the Cuban population against Castro were known to be false by those officials who made them. The next one: the CIA attempt to cobble together a functional government-in-exile from the exile Cuban leaders was doomed to fail from the start. Next assumption: given the level and timing of Soviet bloc military aid to the Castro regime there was not, and could never be, enough time to adequately prepare, train and equip a Cuban exile military force capable of toppling a regime. Another new assumption: Director of Central Intelligence Allen Dulles and the Joint Chiefs of Staff knew that the CIA-planned invasion of Cuba would fail, and deliberately withheld this judgment from the president. Furthermore they assumed that once the exile forces were being slaughtered on the beachhead at the Bay of Pigs Kennedy would reverse his policy of refusing to intervene with US military forces. And we know that they were wrong, and what happened after that.

ALAN DALE: Yeah.

JOHN NEWMAN: And finally – last assumption – Allen Dulles hoped that Deputy Director of Plans Dick Bissell would be fired for the failed landing in Cuba, and that Dulles would remain to be – as the CIA – as DCI – instead of being replaced by Bissell as JFK had originally planned. Those are the new assumptions and hypotheses.

ALAN DALE: You’ve focused in both volumes, and in 'JFK and Vietnam' for that matter, but in Volume I, 'Where Angels Tread Lightly' and Volume II, which is brand new, 'Countdown to Darkness' you've represented some of the – bullets – some of the assumptions and hypotheses, and your very focused and very detailed assessment of particular points during the last year or two of President Eisenhower's administration and the extraordinary range of plans and actions that were set in motion during that time, all of which would have pretty serious consequences for JFK when he comes in on January 20th 1961. Can you talk to me about any big-picture realizations, if there were big-picture realizations that came to you during your research for these works?

JOHN NEWMAN: Sure. These are what we were – you were referring to in your question; so the "headlines" that come out of the book. I just wanted to, to make sure I discussed the new hypotheses and assumptions that underlie not just Volume II, but those assumptions and hypotheses, until I change them, remain in place for the entire project.

So with respect to Volume II, the chapeau over the whole thing is that – surprise! – that President Eisenhower wasn't a sickly guy on the golf course; he was really the wizard in the booth, you know, with the controls, and he was directing, in a very aggressive way, what he wanted to happen. That was a surprise to me, to find out just how active he was behind the plans; shaping them and forcing his subordinates to carry them out. In any event, this all happens, also I should mention, this part of the story in Volume II, which really runs from early – well, late '59 through the Bay of Pigs was a very dangerous quickening of the Cold War going on there. The race, the long-time race for long-range delivery systems for nuclear weapons had come to its final and very unexpected, and very unstable, conclusion. There was a missile gap all right, but it favored the United States, not the Soviet Union.

Against that backdrop, the strategic backdrop, the European colonial powers were collapsing everywhere: in South East Asia, the Middle East and Africa, spawning several Cold War hot spots where Moscow and Washington were rushing in to fill the void. And in particular – getting to Volume II – the inevitable consequence of Castro's revolution now played itself out as communism established itself, armed to the teeth by the Soviet bloc, by early 1961 just a few miles from the American underbelly. Now in this situation Eisenhower tried to marshal his subordinates to overthrow Castro. And he lost patience with DCI Dulles. Eisenhower wanted a very elaborate strategy put in place – I call it a "Cold War triple play": he wanted the elimination of Castro, and in order to ensure support for that plan from Europe and Latin America he wanted the simultaneous elimination of Congolese Prime Minister Lumumba and Dominican Republic dictator Trujillo.

By the fall of 1960 the principal Cuban exile groups in Miami, and their underground components in Cuba, had long since descended into chaos. The principal CIA officer responsible for holding them together, Gerry Droller, was singularly incompetent. But all that didn't matter at all, as the rate at which Soviet bloc weapons were pouring into Cuba rendered the exile leadership problem irrelevant. The exile government would never be put ashore in Cuba. All of this came together in a surprisingly terrible ending, from my standpoint anyway: the covert CIA military plan was unable to keep pace with the consolidation of the regime in Havana, and that plan breathed its last before Kennedy was inaugurated. And everybody knew it; it's there in the meetings of the Special Group and the National Security Council.

But it didn't take long for Allen Dulles and the Pentagon Chiefs to figure out that if they told the new president the truth about Cuba and Laos he would abort in Cuba and negotiate over Laos. So they lied to President Kennedy, over and over again, about their views. They assumed that when the invasion force was being slaughtered Kennedy would have to change his mind and send in the Marines and the airplanes. The lie about Laos almost worked, but when the lies about Cuba; that the Brigade could succeed and the Cuban people would rise up in rebellion didn't work, the countdown to darkness came to its tragic and ignominious end. And that's basically the highlights.

ALAN DALE: You know, you referred to Eisenhower in your – the idea that he was just sickly or ageing. I think I've told you that I used to just casually assert that Eisenhower spent most of his second term having heart attacks and playing golf, and I now understand – I'm still reeling, to tell you the truth – as the result of this work I'm aware that I had seriously underestimated President Eisenhower and how forceful and in control and decisive and authoritative and determined to murder foreign heads of state he certainly appears to be. Were you as surprised? Were you surprised about revelations about how much Eisenhower was really controlling the levers behind the curtain?

JOHN NEWMAN: Yes, of course I was. I had the same idea, and a lot of people do, and a lot of books do too; don't realize how active he was. But he was, he wasn't just swinging a bat and really pushing around his subordinates: he was unhappy, and I dealt with this unhappiness in Volume I, but how things were happening underneath of it. It seemed to be too many people going off and doing things the way they wanted to and not really responding to him, so what he did was he took the structure and fine-tuned it, and made the Special Group this funnel that he controlled through Gordon Gray, his National Security advisor.And that allowed him to isolate Dulles and others; the deputies of Defense and State Department to ram through a program he wanted. And when Dulles would come to him with a sugar sabotage, a plan, Ike would throw him out and say: Give me something substantial. I need something that's going to do more than that; that's not going to work. So several times Ike would send his subordinates back to the drawing board, and they'd have to come back and use this funnel, as I say. The NSC's a much larger structure, but the Special Group only had four people in it and his guy, Gray, who was used to – when Eisenhower couldn't get what he wanted, Gordon Gray would pound on 'em in the Special Group.

And so you had that structure in place, and I mentioned earlier all this, all these assassinations that he wanted, and why he was doing it. He really did have an expansive strategic concept of bringing NATO on board and the Organization of American States. And so it was a very sophisticated plan, not one that I think, that in retrospect that we can say was palatable or right in many ways, to do it morally or… But nevertheless, yeah, he was not out on the golf course; he was clearly in charge, and he did everything that he could think of to get his subordinates to uh… so what emerged in the end wasn't what they – what we saw happen was what Eisenhower created.

ALAN DALE: So if I understand this correctly, and it's always possible that I don't, we're looking at his creation – or his utilization of the National Security Council, and in particular the creation of the Special Group, to consolidate his control and authority. So this represents a moment where he is basically responding to whatever had been going on up until the point where he gets angrier and exercises a more precise control over the things that he wants to exercise control over; he gets – it feels to me like he gets more serious about taking control of things that otherwise had had some loose ends, and were maybe going in places that he didn't even authorize. Is that possible?

JOHN NEWMAN: That's right, he was irate about it…

ALAN DALE: "Irate".

JOHN NEWMAN: …and, you know, that he had been given wrong intelligence by Dulles about Castro…

ALAN DALE: Oh, yeah.

JOHN NEWMAN: …that had been withheld from him. So he called them all onto the carpet…

ALAN DALE: Mmhmm.

JOHN NEWMAN: …and read them the Riot Act, and said: This is how it's going to be from now on…

ALAN DALE: Here's how it's going to be.

JOHN NEWMAN: Yeah.

ALAN DALE: It's going to be my way.

JOHN NEWMAN: You’re going to report to me through the Special Group. Anything that has anything to do with another country or, it's got to come to me. Now in addition to that, we should say that they set up this "plausible deniability" dance, right? So you've got – he's got the structure there, but then what Eisenhower does is actually use it in a way that if he messes up, his subordinates will take the blame, willingly. And they do that in the U2 incident, you know his lie about it being a weather balloon, and you know, right in a NSC meeting he tells ‘em. You've gotta take the blame for this.

And so his interest in plausible deniability was his way of trying to shield himself, and of course he was the president, so people would do it. But it was crazy, because everybody in the world could see what we were doing; there was no way to deny it plausibly. The only plausible denial going on was inside the administration: Ike and his subordinates were implausibly denying all the things that were wrong! You know, Castro's popularity, all the weapons pouring in, the convulsive, just crazy business going on with the exile groups. They were denying all of that. And so, trying to plausibly deny our plans to overthrow Castro didn't fool anybody.

ALAN DALE: Well, this is very informative work that you're – that you've produced. Because I'm aware that it's very easy to simply quote President Eisenhower's January 17th farewell address and refer to his warning against the unwanted, or unwarranted influence, either sought or unsought, of the military-industrial-congressional complex, or whatever he intended to say, but you're helping provide some context for what led up to that. Because as usual, if you start with what's on the surface then you're not going to get very far. But why did he say that? Where did it come from that on January 17th, his last public address to the citizens of the United States as president, he wants to refer to this other potential source of power exercising authority that has no constitutional basis?

JOHN NEWMAN: Well you've already answered your question. He – that – for him, what that meant was lack of control, and he felt that that, you know, he wanted to be in control: he was the Chief Executive.

ALAN DALE: Yeah.

JOHN NEWMAN: And so it's not hard to see that, if you look very carefully at all the minutes of these meetings, about how that was so. And so he felt that way going out of office, and he felt that way when he was in office. It wasn't a ‘Eureka!’ experience he had at the very end.

ALAN DALE: Yeah. Elsewhere you and I have spoken with our friend, the extraordinary Malcolm Blunt – who's extremely thoughtful and knowledgeable – we've talked to Malcolm about our expectations with regard to October 26th of this year, 2017, and the scheduled release of – the planned – the deadline for the declassification of the remaining JFK-related documents. Assuming that this might take place [laughs], and in relation to this ongoing work, where we currently have many miles – and some years – to go before we reach Dallas, what are you anticipating with regard to October 26th?

JOHN NEWMAN: I've thought about that for the last year, since we began to realize this date was approaching us. I've several comments. First of all what I understand of what's up to be released, or not released if the President approves appeals, does not include a lot of stuff that's gone missing. It's walked out of the archives at the NARA under people's shirts and that sort of thing, and also internally there has been manipulation of the digital JFK records index, where RIF numbers remain but the 'to' and the 'from' and the date and all – number of pages – all that stuff is empty now. There's a lot of hanky-panky that's gone on, and so the 2017 release is only half of the problem, or part of the problem. These records don't belong to the Central Intelligence Agency. And the Review Board was set up and they did their job; there are a few things, you know, that should rightly be withheld, with names of, you know, people in other countries that spied for us and… So there are some things, but by and large we need, we need to get this stuff out.

And I have another comment I'd like to make about that, but let me just say, before I make that final comment, that I am all for releasing this material, and I think there could be important stuff in it, but what if it's not released? Then what? Are we not going forward? No, we have to anticipate that we might not get anything, or we might get some things, and that's fine, but I'm not holding my breath. I'm going to go ahead, and move ahead with the worst-case scenario, just in case nothing's released. But the important thing here, I think, that often gets missed in the discussion about releasing these assassination records is that I think that most of the public, certainly the majority of the public, understands that something very bad happened; it wasn't just a lone nut – histrionic lone nut – that was behind the death of President Kennedy.

And so here we sit in 2017, and it's still a cold case in a lot of ways. Yeah, you can talk about: Well, there was more than one shooter, fine, but who was behind the shooters, right? We're still sitting here not knowing a lot of things and that is, that's really bad. And so, as bad as that is, and as bad as what they did to President Kennedy, you know, more than fifty years ago, it's just as bad if it appears to the American public that our current government is still hiding the facts.

ALAN DALE: Mmhmm.

JOHN NEWMAN: We should at least do ourselves a favor and remove that from the situation, right, so that what we have today is a clean slate: that nobody currently in our leadership is trying to withhold the truth about the Kennedy assassination from us. That seems to be lost in the conversation somewhere, I think. We need to come clean now.

ALAN DALE: It's a privilege to speak with you; it's certainly a privilege for me personally that you've allowed me a front-row seat in this ongoing effort, the work in progress. Thank you for allowing us this opportunity. I'd like to conclude by acknowledging that May 29th of this year, 2017, is the 100th anniversary of President Kennedy's birth. I want to take this opportunity to thank you, Dr. Newman, for all of your work, which brings us greater clarity and deeper understanding of the message of his life, the complexity of his time, the context and consequences of his death, so that his legacy may ultimately be properly seen and appreciated.

JOHN NEWMAN: Thank you for all you do, Alan, and all the good researchers out there, without which none of my work would be remotely possible.

ALAN DALE: The new works now available: 'Where Angels Tread Lightly: The Assassination of President Kennedy Volume I'; 'Countdown to Darkness: The Assassination of President Kennedy Volume II'; and 'JFK and Vietnam', second edition. Thank you for being with us.