

JFK vs LBJ

During the debates between Richard Nixon and JFK in the 1960 presidential election, JFK was high. Thanks to Dr Max Jacobson (aka Dr Feelgood), JFK had a steady supply of methamphetamines and steroids, which were injected into his body regularly. He was high during the Cuban Missile Crisis, the Bay of Pigs Invasion, and, probably, during his myriad extra-marital pelvic encounters. Jacqueline also was on the receiving end of Dr Feelgood's syringe.

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In 1963, JFK sent his civil rights bill to Congress. He gets a lot of credit for that. However, his civil rights record was nothing to brag about. JFK had opportunities early on to confront the obstructionist Southern bloc in Congress, negotiate a national consensus on racial issues, and get real racial reforms enacted. He chose, instead, to focus on symbolic gestures. He had understood the racial issues with their attending political opportunities and pitfalls from his earliest congressional campaigns, but he chose to remain a bystander until 1963. By then, white supremacists had become emboldened by his inertia, black activists had adopted militant tactics, and civil rights battles had erupted on the streets of America.

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As a presidential candidate, JFK had been briefed by the CIA concerning Eisenhower's plan to invade Cuba. With this knowledge in mind, JFK attacked Republicans for not being aggressive enough with Castro. This presented a serious problem for Nixon, who was not allowed to discuss the secret plan, leaving him with no effective defense against JFK's criticism. The plan had been approved in March 1960, and it was progressing during the 1960 campaign, with Nixon leading the charge. But he couldn't tell the American voters that. All Nixon could do was charge that JFK's approach was reckless. The military-industrial complex, which Eisenhower warned the nation about as he left office, understood JFK's rhetoric to mean that he could be counted on to spend the money they hoped for. When that turned out

not to be the case, defense contractors felt betrayed. They would have plenty of company, including military generals and the CIA.

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It is common knowledge that JFK's father, Joseph Kennedy, had strong ties to the mafia. Frank Sinatra, friend of the Kennedy family, brokered an understanding with "Mooney" Giancana, head of the Chicago mafia. The kingpin received assurances that he would be pardoned if he were ever to be convicted of any crimes. In return, Giancana and other top mafia figures had a meeting with Joe Kennedy at a Manhattan restaurant. John Rosseli and Carlos Marcello were among the dinner guests.

Both John and Robert Kennedy knew about their father's mob connections. JFK got a kick out of his mob associations, apparently oblivious to the dangers, or maybe indifferent to them. In 1957, JFK eagerly accepted the invitation of Santo Trafficante Jr's private sex party at his Commodoro hotel in Havana. While John was enjoying the company of three women, Trafficante, head of the mob in Tampa, watched through a two-way mirror. John also began an affair with Judith Exner Campbell, who also bedded Sinatra and Sam Giancana.

While John and Joe were busy consorting with mob figures, enjoying the perks of their friendship and using them to help finance JFK's 1960 presidential bid, Robert was determined to put an end to organized crime. He had learned a lot about the mafia during his tenure from 1957 to 1959 as chief counsel to the Senate Committee investigating labor rackets. Bobby believed that, left to its own devices, organized crime would destroy the nation. When he became attorney general, RFK increased the number of indictments from 19 to over 600 by November, 1963.

How did Bobby expect to get away with relentlessly pursuing the very men who had helped Joe in many ways? RFK seemed oblivious to the danger. However, his father most certainly was not. On Christmas, 1956, father and son quarreled bitterly over the issue. But Joe was unable to persuade Bobby. The elder probably figured he could rein in the rambunctious Robert later, but any hopes of that ended on December 19, 1961 when a stroke left Joe paralyzed and

unable to speak. Sinatra understood that the stroke left the Kennedys mortally weakened. Joe was the only man who could have settled the debt he owed to the mafia for, among other things, helping get John elected in 1960.

RFK continued his quest to end organized crime, especially in pursuit of Carlos Marcello (New Orleans) and Santo Trafficante (Tampa). That guaranteed mafia participation, along with LBJ, key CIA agents, and Texas oilmen, in a conspiracy to murder John F Kennedy. Although Sinatra was a liberal democrat, he turned on the Kennedys, endorsing Ronald Reagan and then Richard Nixon. Sinatra had no choice but to side with the mafia after Joe's stroke, and the mafia had no choice but to go after the Kennedy brothers. All they had to do was find the best way to go about it. In the process, they had no trouble finding allies in the form of enemies of the Kennedys.

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RFK and LBJ despised each other, as is no secret. It started in 1955. Joe Kennedy devised a plan to make LBJ the Democrat presidential nominee in 1956. Joe knew Eisenhower was going to win, but his scheme was to have LBJ choose JFK as his running mate. That would give John national exposure and recognition, positioning him for a more serious bid for the White House in 1960. But LBJ wouldn't play along. He refused what RFK considered a very generous Kennedy offer. Bobby was furious.

Late in 1959, John sent brother Bobby to find out about LBJ's intentions for the 1960 election. The two went deer hunting, and when RFK fired his rifle, it sent him flying backwards and onto the ground. That's exactly what LBJ wanted to happen, providing the 6'4" Texan a golden opportunity to question the manhood of his diminutive nemesis. LBJ assured the young Kennedy that Johnson did not intend to run for president in 1960. It was a lie.

RFK assessed LBJ's characteristic bluster as bullshit. RFK also understood that Johnson was a chronic liar. *[He] lies all the time. I'm telling you, he just lies continually about everything. . . . He lies even when he doesn't have to.* (As it turns out, that was not just a Johnson trait. It was a Democrat trait that continues today.)

Bobby was one to hold a grudge, and anyone who did not fully support his brother was on Bobby's shit list or *kill list*. His opinion of LBJ got even worse over time. 1960 offered copious opportunities for the mutual hatred to intensify.

It eventually became clear that JFK would win the 1960 Democrat nomination. Neither Kennedy brother seriously considered LBJ as a potential running mate. However, someone in the campaign realized that LBJ could deliver the South for them in the general election. They decided to offer the VP slot to Johnson, but they did not expect him to accept. As Senate Majority Leader, LBJ was a very powerful man in Congress, and the Kennedys were certain LBJ would run for reelection to the Senate instead of considering the number two spot on the Kennedy ticket.

When LBJ did, in fact, accept their offer, the brothers panicked. They frantically searched for a diplomatic way to convince Johnson to change his mind. They went back and forth numerous times before finally deciding that Bobby had to tell LBJ that he would not be VP after all. All of RFK's attempts to persuade LBJ to withdraw failed. John eventually accepted the fact that LBJ was not going to back down, and the Kennedy brothers had no choice but to make him part of the team. Kennedy called Johnson. LBJ: Do you really want me? JFK: Yes. LBJ: Well, if you really want me, I'll do it. But RFK hadn't yet given up. It isn't clear whether John was aware of it, but Bobby once again went to Lyndon's room to try to convince him to withdraw. Not a chance.

Behind the scenes, LBJ was working with FBI Director J Edgar Hoover to pressure JFK into making Johnson his running mate. They were both aware of JFK's extramarital affairs, and Hoover had all the proof he needed to destroy the Kennedys. The man JFK really wanted was Senator Stuart Symington of Missouri. Kennedy had courted him, and they had reached an agreement. It was a done deal. Then, JFK was forced to back out.

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JFK's close friend and aide, Kenny O'Donnell, was flabbergasted to learn that it would be LBJ on the ticket. He pointed out to John that it would be seen as a betrayal to civil rights groups and labor unions. JFK's response was: **Get one thing clear, Kenny, I'm 43 years old, and I'm the**

healthiest candidate for president in the country, and I'm not going to die in office. There may have been a time when LBJ did not want JFK dead. He may have been thinking that as VP he would be able to be a very visible and active part of the team, especially given his close relationship to the Senate. In four or eight years, he would be well-positioned to move up to the top slot.

However, those thoughts, if they ever existed, were soon crushed. Kennedy kept LBJ as far away from any important role as possible. It became clear that Bobby was playing the role LBJ had craved for himself, and that it would be Bobby, not Lyndon, at the top in four or eight years. Furthermore, by JFK's third year, LBJ understood that he wouldn't even be VP much longer. LBJ's hatred for the Kennedy's intensified even more.

As Senate Majority Leader, LBJ had expanded his digs from one office to a seven-room suite of offices, lavishly furnished, costing taxpayers \$100K. Going from that to the confinement and isolation of his new position was a crushing blow to Johnson's massive ego and blind ambition. Dejection was compounded by Kennedy mocking, ridicule, and badmouthing of the Texan. The Kennedys didn't seem to bother trying to hide it. John and wife Ethel, for example, referred to Lyndon and Lady Bird as **Uncle Cornpone** and **Mrs Pork Chop**.

JFK knew LBJ would not take it well, so he ordered O'Donnell to **kiss his ass from one end of Washington to the other**. John also devised another tactic to help assuage LBJ's rage and resentment. Whenever LBJ complained about something, John would call O'Donnell into his office and pretend to chew him out in the presence of Johnson. It usually worked. LBJ was assigned a few jobs, but nothing he wanted.

All that, plus the looming exposure of his corruption in the Senate, meant LBJ did not have much time to make his move. RFK himself was investigating LBJ and preparing the evidence needed to destroy his career and possibly send him to prison. In response, LBJ had no trouble finding men who also wanted John dead and were prepared to accomplish it. That meant that there were plenty of people to plan and execute the assassination itself, leaving LBJ free to focus on the cover-up. That didn't mean, however, that LBJ

wasn't part of everything that happened. It wasn't in his nature to trust that others would do the (any) job well without his strong influence, intimidation, and meddling. LBJ had too much to lose. His life was hanging by a thread, and the Kennedys had their scissors poised. Killing JFK was the only way out.

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After the Bay of Pigs disaster, JFK was determined to be his own man. He would never again be duped by the CIA or bullied by his military advisors to do something JFK did not believe was in the best interest of the nation. Neither the CIA nor the military liked that much. They came to resent and distrust the new president as much as he distrusted and disliked them. That placed JFK in the precarious position of presiding over an administration that he could not control. Surprisingly, he soon realized that Nikita Krushchev was in a similar predicament.

Their first meeting in Vienna in June, 1961, did not go well. Krushchev wasn't impressed with the young American upstart. JFK had been in office only five months, and it was only two months after the Bay of Pigs. Krushchev was understandably frigid and indignant about recent events in Cuba. Kennedy left the meeting knowing that his performance had been weak and that he had to quickly become the leader he needed to be. Yet, in spite of all that, both men soon began to sense that there was the potential to find some common ground and begin to understand each other's point of view. Krushchev took the initiative in September 1961 by secretly sending a letter to Kennedy. It was delivered to Pierre Salinger, JFK's press secretary, with instruction that only JFK himself could read it. John replied in October, and so began an exchange that went on for a year, forging a working relationship based on mutual respect and hope for a safer world.

That relationship is what allowed JFK to diffuse the October, 1962, Cuban Missile Crisis and avoid a nuclear war. US spy planes had discovered that Russia and Cuba were in the process of building missile-launching sites on the island. In response, JFK had ordered a naval blockade. Military advisers pushed hard for another invasion of Cuba, led by Gen Curtis LeMay, who happened to be close friends with two of LBJ's close friends, H L Hunt (Dallas oilman) and Col

D H Byrd (founder of the Civil Air Patrol). LBJ seemed to go back and forth in his opinion of what to do, finally settling on the side of the hawks and urging his boss to **do something**. The VP was no longer in the loop after that.

Two letters were sent, with Krushchev's signature, on October 26 and 27. In the first letter, the Russian leader explained that the missiles were there for defensive purposes only. Russia did not intend to use them offensively. It said that military and economic aid from Russia to Cuba was for humanitarian purposes, in an effort to help the island nation achieve stability. Nikita assured John that peace was still his goal, and the Russian people did not want war with the US. Krushchev reminded Kennedy that any war between their two countries would quickly become a world war, and that the two of them were obligated to do everything in their power to prevent that.

JFK recognized the writing style and sincerity of Krushchev. It must have occurred to JFK that it was reasonable to understand and accept Krushchev's explanation, given the recent invasion of Cuba by the US. Wouldn't the US have done something similar if the roles had been reversed? Would JFK have not responded if Russian had invaded Poland?

The second letter was clearly not written by Krushchev, even though it bore his name. JFK, therefore, ignored the second letter and responded only to the October 26 letter. JFK suggested that Russia remove the missiles, and the US would promise not to invade Cuba. With the crisis behind them, the leaders continued their secret correspondence, leading to the Limited Test Ban Treaty in August, 1963. Peace with Russia was a very real possibility. That ended on November 22, 1963.

However, the CIA and military did not see things that way. They had pressured JFK throughout the missile crisis to take decisive military action. Those groups were not happy with JFK, even though he had just diffused the crisis successfully. This provided LBJ with the opportunity to recruit key CIA operatives for the plot to kill Kennedy.

Perhaps no one was more devastated by the assassination than Nikita Krushchev. He was also alarmed at the very real possibility that Russia would be framed for the murder. The

KGB conducted the first investigation into the assassination, therefore, primarily in self-defense. They were convinced that LBJ was behind the conspiracy. (So was Arizona Senator Barry Goldwater).

Castro was also devastated by the murder. He was also afraid of being blamed, and with good reason. LBJ had been working behind the scenes spreading the word that Castro killed Kennedy. Two days before the murder, Jean Daniel (journalist) was secretly dispatched by JFK to Cuba to try to establish a line of communication between the two leaders. Castro, like the KGB, quickly (the day after the murder) assessed the situation, accurately concluding that groups within the American government, specifically those responsible for foreign policy, had been a key part of the conspiracy.

We now know that John, at one point, lamented that he had not placed his brother as head of the CIA instead of the Justice Department. Bobby could have reigned in the agents who did not want peace and did not like Kennedy. That would have prevented the CIA / mafia / LBJ alliance and saved John's life.