

The assassination of John F. Kennedy, 1963

Introduction

On November 22, 1963, President John F. Kennedy was assassinated by Lee Harvey Oswald in Dallas, Texas. This Dow Jones News Service ticker tape tells the story of that day as it happened. The fifteen sheets span the entire day of the assassination. The tape starts out mundanely enough, noting Kennedy's morning speech in Fort Worth and his plans to appear in Dallas later in the day.

The reports turn grim, however, reporting the panic, confusion, and tragedy of Kennedy's murder. An initial report of the shooting describes the scene: "PRESIDENT KENNEDY WAS SHOT TODAY JUST AS HIS MOTORCADE LEFT DOWNTOWN DALLASS — MRS KENNEDY JUMPED UP AND GRABBED MR KENNEDY — SHE CRIED OH NO— THE MOTORCADE SPED ON." Another notes that the President has been taken to a hospital, but "TWO PRIESTS WHO WERE WITH KENNEDY SAY HE IS DEAD OF BULLET WOUNDS." An update soon confirms the report of the President's death: "KENNEDY DIED OF A GUNSHOT WOUND IN THE BRAIN AT APPROXIMATELY 1 P M."

Further updates try to make sense of the events, reporting on the search for an assassin and Oswald's capture. The tape also reports Vice President Lyndon Johnson's swearing in aboard *Air Force One* that afternoon: "MR JOHNSON BECAME THE 36TH PRESIDENT OF THE U S AT 2 39 CENTRAL STANDARD TIME — THE PLANE MARKED AIR FORCE 1 WAS STILL PARKED WHERE IT HAD LANDED TO BRING PRESIDENT KENNEDY TO DALLAS THIS MORNING."

Questions for Discussion

Read the document introduction, the excerpt, and the images of the ticker tape. Then apply your knowledge of American history in order to answer the questions that follow.

1. Explain how ticker tape reports differed from methods used today to transmit fast-breaking news.
2. How can we account for the often confused and contradictory description of events as described by reporters for the Dow Jones news service.
3. Identify and describe segments of the ticker tape that demonstrate how Constitutional provisions regarding emergency transfer of power were enacted on November 22, 1963.

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Image

20 CTS KELLOGG CO DIV

BATTLE CREEK MICH -DJ- KELLOGG CO DECLARED
 QUAR DIV OF 20 CENTS ON NEW COMMON PLUS EXTRA
 OF 10 CENTS BOTH PAY DEC 16 RECORD DEC 2
 THE STOCK WAS SPLIT TWO-FOR-ONE IN
 SEPTEMBER - THE QUARTERLY RATE ON THE OLD
 SHARES HAD BEEN RAISED TO 40 CENTS FROM 35
 CENTS WITH THE SEPTEMBER PAYMENT
 THE COMPANY PAID A YEAR-END DIVIDEND OF
 30 CENTS IN DECEMBER 1962
 -V-

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- POLICE HOLDING -PRIME SUSPECT-
 IN KENNEDY ASSASSINATION

DALLAS -UPI- POLICE TODAY SAID LEE H OSWALD
 IDENTIFIED AS CHAIRMAN OF A -FAIR PLAY FOR
 CUBA COMMITTEE- WAS THE PRIME SUSPECT IN THE
 ASSASSINATION OF PRESIDENT KENNEDY
 POLICE SAID OSWALD 24 WAS ACCUSED IN THE
 SLAYING OF A DALLAS POLICEMAN SHORTLY AFTER
 THE SHOOTING OF THE PRESIDENT
 POLICE CAPT PAT GANNAWAY SAID THE SUSPECT
 WAS AN EMPLOYE IN THE BUILDING WHERE A RIFLE
 WAS FOUND
 GANNAWAY SAID THE SUSPECT HAD VISITED RUSSIA
 AND WAS MARRIED TO A RUSSIAN - THIS WAS NOT
 IMMEDIATELY CONFIRMED
 THE SUSPECT WAS THE MAN CORNERED AND SEIZED
 IN A MOVIE THEATER IN THE OAK CLIFF SECTION
 SOON AFTER THE ASSASSINATION - HE HAD KILLED
 A POLICE OFFICER BEFORE HE WAS SUBDUED

/

- ADD- KENNEDY

WASHN -AP- PRESIDENT KENNEDY-S BODY WILL
 LIE IN STATE AT THE WHITE HOUSE TOMORROW
 HOUSE SPEAKER MCCORMACK ANNOUNCED
 MCCORMACK SAID HE THINKS THE BODY WILL BE
 TAKEN TO THE CAPITOL SUNDAY TO REMAIN IN THE
 GREAT ROTUNDA UNTIL ABOUT NOON MONDAY
 FURTHER PLANS ARE INDEFINITE BUT IS IS
 UNDERSTOOD THE ACTUAL FUNERAL SERVICES WILL BE
 HELD IN BOSTON
 PENTAGON OFFICIALS EXPECT THE FUNERAL TO BE
 A FULL DRESS STATE CEREMONY AND PREPARATIONS
 ARE GOING AHEAD ON THAT ASSUMPTION
 -V-

"

HARVARD-YALE GAME POSTPONED

NEW HAVEN CONN -DJ- THE HARVARD-YALE FOOTBALL
 GAME SCHEDULED FOR TOMORROW HAS BEEN POSTPONED
 -V-

DOW JONES NEWS SERVICE
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NEW YORK N Y FRIDAY NOVEMBER 22 1963 4 59 PM

[Dow Jones News Service ticker tape from the day John F. Kennedy was assassinated], November 22, 1963. (Gilder Lehrman Collection, GLC05629)

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Transcript

[Dow Jones News Service ticker tape from the day John F. Kennedy was assassinated], November 22, 1963. (Gilder Lehrman Collection, GLC05629)

[*excerpts*]

[1]

Kennedy praises TFX plane

Fort Worth Tex –AP– President Kennedy praised the controversial TFX warplane today as he told Texans their state ranks fifth in prime military contract spending

The President scheduled major speeches also in Dallas and Austin during a busy day – he and his wife will spend tonight at the ranch of Vice President Johnson near Austin

Kennedy avoided direct comment on the Senate investigation subcommittee–s inquiry into the TFX – tactical fighter experimental – contract award to General Dynamics Corp–s Fort Worth division in a speech prepared for a bi–partisan breakfast arranged by the Fort Worth Chamber of Commerce

He said that once the TFX is in operation it will give the free world an aircraft that no other on earth can match...

[4]

Kennedy– Space Race

Fort Worth –UPI– President Kennedy said the United States early next year will test a rocket booster so powerful it will put the nation far ahead of Russia in the space race – He was referring to the Saturn Rocket Booster

The president campaigning as though it were election time in Texas told a rain-soaked crowd outside his hotel that the rocket booster will be the most powerful in history.

The crowd was estimated by police at 5 000 It was the first of four speeches the president scheduled today on a swing through Fort Worth Dallas and Austin the state capital The integrated audience cheered his call for –concerted effort– to win in space

–V–

“... ”

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[8]

Add- Kennedy

Dallas –UPI– President Kennedy arrived at Dallas Love Field by plane at 12 38 PM EST

-V-

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[9]

Kennedy warns ignorance in foreign

policy handicaps nation-s security

Dallas –AP– President Kennedy lashed out at Sen Barry Goldwater R–Ariz and other republicans who he said –confuse rhetoric with reality–

Visiting an area where supporters are booming Goldwater–s chances for the 1964 Republican nomination Kennedy in his prepared speech said that ignorance and misinformation –if allowed to prevail in foreign policy handicaps this country–s security–

Kennedy did not specifically mention Goldwater by name – but there was not doubt he was talking about the Republican senator when he said–

–In a world of complex and continuing problems in a world full of frustrations and irritations America–s leadership must be guided by the lights of learning and reason – – or else those who confuse rhetoric with reality and the plausible with the possible will gain the ascendancy with their seemingly swift and simple solutions to every world problem–

“

Add- Kennedy

Dallas –AP– Kennedy also took a swipe at Sen Harry F Byrd D–VA and others who have criticized his economic and financial policies

–At a time when the national debt is steadily being reduced in terms of its burden on our economy– he said –they see that debt as the greatest single threat to our security –at a time when we are steadily reducing the number of federal employes [*sic*] serving every thousand citizens they fear those supposed hordes of civil servants more than the actual hordes of opposing armies–

–We cannot expect that every one to use the phrase of a decade ago will –talk sense to the

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American people— but we can hope that fewer people will listen to nonsense — and the notion that this nation is headed for defeat through deficit or that strength is but a matter of slogans is nothing but just plaine [sic] nonsense—

—V— “

[10]

President Kennedy Shot

Dallas —AP— President Kennedy was shot today just as his motorcade left downtown Dallas — Mrs Kennedy jumped up and grabbed Mr Kennedy — she cried oh no— the motorcade spedb [sic] on

AP photographer James W Altgens said he saw blood on the president—s head

Altgens said he heard two shots but thought someone was shooting fireworks until he saw the blood on the president

Altgens said he saw no one with a gun

AP reporter Jack Bell asked Kenneth O—Donnell presidential assistant if Kennedy was dead — O—Donnell gave no answer

Kennedy was reported taken to Parland [sic] hospital near the Dallas trade mart where he was to have made a speech

Bell said Kennedy was transferred to an ambulance

He lay on a seat of the car

Bell reported three shots were fired as the motorcade entered the triple underpass which leads to the Stemmons Freeway route to Parkland Hospital

Pandemonium broke loose around the scene

The scret [sic] service waved the motorcade on at top speed to the hospital

Even at high speed it took nearly five minutes to get the car to the ambulance entrance of the hopittal [sic]

—V—

Gov John B Connally of Texas also was cutdown by bullets

The president was slumped over in the backseat of the car face down — Connally lay on hte [sic] floor of the rear seat

It was impossible to tell at once where Kennedy was hit but bullet wounds in Connally—s chest were plainly visible In—R

Dicating [strikeout]

— — were plainly visible indicating the gunfire might have come from an automatic weapon

It was difficult [sic] to determine immediately whether the first lady and Mrs Connally were injured

Vice President Johnson was in a car behind the president—s

There was no immediate sign that he was hurt — in fact there was no evidence at all at

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what might have happened to Johnson since only the president's car and its secret service follow-up car went to the hospital

At 1 50 p m eastern standard time acting white secretary Malcom Kilduff was asked whether the president was dead

– I have no word now– Kilduff replied...

Add- Kennedy shot

Dallas –AP– When the President was taken into the emergency room a call was sent out immediately for some of the top surgical specialists in Dallas

A call was also sent for a Roman Catholic priest

Congressman Jim Wright of Fort Worth said both Kennedy and Connally were seriously wounded but were alive

[11]

N Y Stock Exchange closes

for rest of the day

N Y –DJ– The Board of Governors of the New York Stock Exchange has ordered the market closed for the rest of the day

Lyndon Johnson not hurt

Dallas Tex –AP– Mrs Lyndon Johnson said after a visit to the emergency operating room today the vice president –is fine–

She was taken back into another first floor room where Johnson originally had gone

Asked if her husband also had been wounded she shook her head negatively

Secret service men pushed reporters away and permitted no more questions

–V– “

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FBI presses investigation of assassination attempt

Wash –AP– director J Edgar Hoover of the FBI telephoned the Dallas FBI office and ordered an all–out investigation of the attempt today on the lives of President Kennedy and Gov John Connally of Texas
–V–“

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Add– Kennedy

Dallas –AP– there still was no immediate word on the extent of the wounds suffered by the 46–year–old chief executive and the governor

A Father Huber of Holy Trinity Church in Dallas administered the last sacrament of the church to the president shortly before 1 P M –CST–...

Add– Kennedy

Dallas –AP– police immediately spread a dragnet around the city searching for the would–be assassin

Priests say Kennedy dead

Dallas –AP– two priests who were with Kennedy say he is dead of bullet wounds

[12]

Add– Kennedy dead

–Washn –AP– government sources said today that President Kennedy is dead

Add– Kennedy dragnet

Dallas –AP– the F B I began a search for a white man about 30 years of age of slender build and weighing about 165 pounds – he is believed to be the gunman

Police believed he had fired on the presidential party with a 30–30 rifle...

SEC asks halt in over–counter trade

Washn –DJ– the SEC issued this statement–in view of the present emergency and voluntary closing of the principal stock exchanges the commission requests that all broker–dealers cease over–the–counter trading...

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Add-Kennedy

Dallas –AP– Kennedy 46 livednabout [sic] an hour after a sniper cut him down as his limousine left downtown Dallas

Automatically the mantle of the presidency fell to the Vice President Lyndon B Johnson who had been riding two cars behind the chief executive

There was no immediate word on when Johnson would take the oath of office

Gov Connally of Texas was cut down by the same fusillade

Connally and his wife had been riding with the President and Mrs Kennedy

Johnson was whisked away by secret service men - his whereabouts were being kept secret

The president was shot once in the head

Connally was struck in the head and wrist

Police found a foreign-made rifle –

sheriff-s officers were questioning a young man picked up at the scene

[13]

Add– Kennedy

Dallas –AP– Lt Erich Kaminski of the secret service bureau said the assassin–s weapon appears to have been a –high–powered army of Japanese rifle of about 25 caliber– – the rifle had a scope on it he said

The entire building where the sniper was located was evacuated – people were working in the building at the time of the shooting allas [sic] police inspector J H Sawyer said –police found the remains of fried chicken and paper on the fifth floor – apparently the person had been there quite awhile–

After Kennedy was shot the president–s secret service driver raced away from the scene heading for the nearest hospital and trying to get the presidential party out of range of further gunfire

The transparent plastic roof of the vehicle had been removed for the motorcade

Secret service agents riding with the president and in a second convertible [sic] following close behind immediately drew pistols and automatic weapons – but they were unable to get a shot at the gunman...

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Add- Senate Adjourns

Washn -AP- The White House flag was lowered to half-staff within moments after the news arrived

Telephone service in the nation-s capital collapsed temporarily - the sudden load of telephone calls swamped central stations and it was impossible to get a dial tone to make calls

Add- Kennedy

Dallas -AP- Kennedy-s body was removed from Parkland Hospital at 2 05 p m -EST- in a cream colored ambulance with curtains tightly drawn

Mrs Kennedy rode in a passenger seat in the ambulance -- a type of vehicle with two seats for passengers

She and the body were escorted from the emergency entrance of Parkland by two motorcycle officers

Mrs Kennedy walked out the back door of the emergency entrance as the body was taken out

Those who saw her enter the hospital an hour and a half earlier said she had not been hysterical

White House aide Kilduff said tthe president-s body would be flown to Washington this afternoon...

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Add- Kennedy

Dallas -AP- The Dallas sheriff-s department said a rifle had been found in a staircase on the fifth floor of a building near the scene of the assassination - it was a 7 65 Mauser - the German-made army rifle had a telescopic sight with one shell left in the chamber

Three spent shells were found nearby

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[14] -

Johnson sworn in as president

Dallas -AP- Lyndon B Johnson was sworn in as President of the United States at about 1 38 PM -CST-

The oats [*sic*] was administered by U S District Judge Sarah T Hughes

Johnson took the oats [*sic*] aboard the presidential plane at Dallas Love Field

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He was preparing to fly to Washington to take over the government...

Canada pays tribute to Kennedy

Ottawa –DJ– Prime Minister Pearson in the Canadian House of Commons expressed the sympathy of the commons and all Canada on the –heart– breaking tragedy– of the presidents assassination

He was joined by all leaders of opposition parties

Mr Pearson paid high tribute to the U S president...

Add– Johnson Sworn In

Dallas –AP– Present at the swearing-in were Mrs Kennedy and Mrs Johnson several staff members and several congressman

Johnson asked as many of the White House people as possible to crown into the executive suite of the plane to witness the ceremony

The presidential plane took off immediate for Washington with Johnson Mrs Johnson and Mrs Kennedy and some white house aides aboard...

Add– Kennedy

Dallas Tex –AP– The Dallas police department today arrested a 24–year–old man Lee H Oswald in connection with the slaying of a Dallas policeman shortly after President Kennedy was assassinated

He was also being interrogated to see if he had any connection with the slaying of the president

Oswald was pulled screaming and yelling from the Texas theater in the Oak Cliff section of Dallas – he brandished a pistol which officers took away from him after a scuffle

Police had to hold back crowds that quickly congregated because many apparently connected the arrested man with the slaying of the president...

[15] –

Police holding –prime suspect– in Kennedy assassination

Dallas –UPI– police today said Lee H Oswald identified as chairman of a –Fair Play for Cuba Committee– was the prime suspect in the assassination of President Kennedy

Police said Oswald 24 was accused in the slaying of a Dallas policeman shortly after the

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shooting of the president

Police Capt Pat Gannaway said the suspect was an employe [*sic*] in the building where a rifle was found

Gannaway said the suspect had visited Russia and was married to a Russian – this was not immediately confirmed

The suspectt [*sic*] was the man cornered and siezed [*sic*] in a movie theater in the Oak Cliff section soon after the assassination – he had killed a police officer before he was subdued
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Add– Kennedy

Washn –AP– President Kennedy–s body will lie in state at the White House tomorrow house Speaker McCormack announced

McCormack said he thinks the body will be taken to the capitol Sunday to remain in the great rotunda until about noon Monday

Further plans are indefinite but is is understood the actual funeral services will be held in Boston

Pentagon officials expect the funeral to be a full dress state ceremony and preparations are going ahead on that assumption...

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