Deputy White House counsel Vince Foster was found dead in Fort Marcy Park off the George Washington Parkway in Virginia, outside Washington, D.C., on July 20, 1993. His death was ruled a suicide by multiple official investigations, but remains a subject of conspiracy theories.

1 State of mind

A suicide note of sorts, actually a draft of a resignation letter, was found torn into 27 pieces in Foster’s briefcase after his death. The full text of Foster’s note was as follows:

I made mistakes from ignorance, inexperience and overwork
I did not knowingly violate any law or standard of conduct
No one in The White House, to my knowledge, violated any law or standard of conduct, including any action in the travel office. There was no intent to benefit any individual or specific group
The FBI lied in their report to the AG
The press is covering up the illegal benefits they received from the travel staff
The GOP has lied and misrepresented its knowledge and role and covered up a prior investigation
The Ushers Office plotted to have excessive costs incurred, taking advantage of Kaki and HRC
The public will never believe the innocence of the Clintons and their loyal staff
The WSJ editors lie without consequence
I was not meant for the job or the spotlight of public life in Washington. Here ruining people is considered sport.

2 Official findings

Foster’s death was concluded to have been a suicide by inquiries/investigations conducted by the United States Park Police, the Department of Justice, the FBI, the United States Congress, Independent Counsel Robert B. Fiske, and Independent Counsel Kenneth Starr. The FBI “was requested by the United States Park Police (USPP), Washington, DC to assist them in their current investigation” of the death of Vincent Foster.[3] The FBI also participated in the investigation by Independent Counsel Robert Fiske where, with Fiske’s attorneys “agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) questioned 188 persons and reviewed and analyzed thousands of documents.”[4] Independent Counsel Kenneth Starr relied on “experienced investigators with extensive service in the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).”[5] By using the FBI, the Office of Independent Counsel employed “the very agency it [was] designed to be independent from, the Justice Department.”[6] The final Report states “The investigation under the auspices of...Mr. Fiske was little more than an FBI investigation. Publicly available official federal government records indicate that throughout the 16 day U.S. Park Police investigation into the case, FBI participation was significant.”[7] The official final Report on the death of Vincent W. Foster consists of two volumes and is 137 pages. The report states, “The publicly available federal government record upon which the Fiske Report is based is replete with evidence that the FBI concealed the true facts surrounding Mr. Foster’s death.”[8] United States Congressional hearings did not investigate the circumstances of Vincent Foster’s death and specifically confined the Foster death inquiry to whether the White House was guilty of “improper conduct” during the course of “the Park Service Police investigation into the death.”[9] After a three-year investigation, Starr concluded that Foster’s death was a suicide. CNN stated on February 28, 1997, “The Starr report refutes claims by conservative political organizations that Foster was the victim of a murder plot and coverup,” but “despite those findings, right-wing political groups have continued to allege that there was more to the death and that the president and first lady [Bill and Hillary Clinton] tried to cover it up.”[10]

3 Unofficial findings

3.1 The Arkansas Project

On May 2, 1999, the Washington Post published new details on the pursuit of a Vincent Foster conspiracy in an article by David Brock, a key figure in the Troopergate and Whitewater scandals whose disillusionment with the political corruption motivating what would come to be
known as the Arkansas Project ended his lifelong commitment to the Conservative movement and facilitated public dissemination of insider details on G.O.P. machinations. The article explains how Brock was "summoned" to a meeting with Rex Armistead in Miami, Florida at an airport hotel. Brock claims that Armistead laid out for him an elaborate "Vince Foster murder scenario" – a scenario that he found implausible.\[11\]

In an interview for Salon.com in 2000, Brock also revealed that he and Armistead received funding throughout Clinton’s two terms in office from Richard Scaife for the initiative known as the Arkansas Project.\[12\] The Project aimed to discredit the sitting President and First Lady through investigations into a range of issues that could potentially prove problematic for the couple, from rehashed drug smuggling allegations to their longstanding relationship with Foster and other professionals/officials in Arkansas.

Another prominent reporter to have received funds from Scaife was Christopher W. Ruddy\[13\] – a former writer for the Scaife-owned Pittsburgh Tribune-Review (and later founder of NewsMax). Eventually, Scaife became the third-largest stockholder of Ruddy’s Newsmax,\[14\] and both NewsMax and the WorldNetDaily continued to publish materials that showed the Clintons in a negative light.\[15\]

Rudy also enjoyed the backing of Joseph Farah and Farah’s organization, the Western Journalism Center. This group supplied him with “additional expense money, funding for Freedom of Information Act requests, legal support and publicity” around his book deal & the requisite research into a conspiracy surrounding Foster’s death.\[16\] He published his findings in 1997 under the title The Strange Death of Vincent Foster (pub. Simon & Schuster).\[17\] Inside, he discusses mistakes & transgressions that occurred in the original investigations – in particular, alleged obstruction of justice by White House Counsel Bernard Nussbaum – but stops short of positing an original theory on the circumstances surrounding Foster’s death. Interviews revealed his personal belief that some sort of cover-up took place, which involved moving Foster’s body from the (unknown) site of his death to the park where it was discovered.

Despite Ruddy’s incorrect assertions,\[18\] the Western Journalism Center “placed some 50 ads reprinting Ruddy’s [previous] Tribune-Review stories in the Washington Times in 1999, and then refashioned the Times articles into a $12 packet called simply The Ruddy Investigation.”\[19\] Shortly thereafter, the Center “circulated a video featuring Ruddy’s claims, Unanswered: The Death of Vincent Foster, that was produced by James Davidson, chairman of the National Taxpayers Union (NTU) and co-editor of the Strategic Investment newsletter.”\[20\]

3.2 The Clinton Chronicles: A Political Firestorm

This reintroduction of Ruddy’s ideas followed the publication of another book, penned by veteran crime reporter Dan Moldea, titled A Washington Tragedy: How the Death of Vincent Foster Ignited a Political Firestorm. Moldea was approached in 1997 by Regnery Publishing House, a famously conservative group whose leadership was nevertheless impressed by Moldea’s published works, including an exhaustive critique of LAPD Detective Mark Fuhrman, another Regnery author. In researching the debacle created by and surrounding Foster’s death, Moldea found that the most oft-used conspiracy scenario could be traced back to Park Police Major Robert Hines, who shared the idea with Reed Irvine of (Accuracy in Media), and Christopher Ruddy, who was then at the New York Post.\[20\] Moldea concludes, and Maj. Hines publicly maintains, that Hines incorrectly told Irvine and Ruddy "...that there is no exit wound in Foster’s head.” Moldea professes further: “I don’t think there was anything nefarious here; he was being approached by reporters and he wanted something to say.”\[20\] Still, the “missing” exit wound claim continued to surface, propagated mainly by Christopher Ruddy and Joseph Farah.

Moldea’s research sought, among other things, to discover the origins of this line of investigation into the Clintons’ credibility. In an interview for Salon.com, he suggests that “Foster had some blond hair and carpet fibers on his suit jacket, and he had semen in his underwear. So, the Jerry Falwells and the right-wing crowd get a hold of this information, and...they start making movies alleging that the Clintons were involved in this murder.”\[20\] In 1994, Falwell subsidized the creation of a film called The Clinton Chronicles that featured Christopher Ruddy’s claims that the gun that killed Foster was placed in his hand after the fact, and that Foster’s body was laid out to give the appearance of suicide, among others.\[20\] Funding for the film was provided by Citizens for Honest Government, an organization to which Falwell gave $200,000 in 1994 and 1995.\[21\] “Citizens for Honest Government covertly paid individuals who had provided information to media outlets such as the Wall Street Journal editorial page and the American Spectator magazine;”\[21\] and in 1995, made discretionary payments to two Arkansas state troopers who had spoken out in support of the idea of a conspiracy surrounding Foster’s death.\[21\] The two troopers – Roger Perry and Larry Patteson – had also previously given testimony supporting Paula Jones’ claims of sexual misconduct and misuse of government resources against Bill Clinton (See: Troopergate).\[21\] Patrick Magrisiana, president of Citizens for Honest Government, produced The Clinton Chronicles video and appeared in its commercials as an “investigative reporter” where he & Rev. Falwell engaged in the following exchange:\[21\]

Falwell: ‘Could you please tell me and the American people why you think that your life
and the lives of the others on this video are in danger?"

Matrisciana: “Jerry, two weeks ago we had an interview with a man who was an insider; his plane crashed and he was killed an hour before the interview. You may say this is just a coincidence, but there was another fellow that we were also going to interview, and he was killed in a plane crash. Jerry, are these coincidences? I don’t think so.”

When asked about the spot, Matrisciana admitted he was not a reporter and replied “I doubt our lives were actually ever in any real danger. That was Jerry’s idea to do that ... He thought that would be dramatic.”

3.3 Conspiracy theories

Investigators Hugh Sprunt and Hugh Turley conclude that the government’s own forensic evidence suggests Foster died from a shot from a small-caliber pistol to the neck and that his body was dumped in the park. A book by Christopher Andersen entitled Bill and Hillary: The Marriage claims that Foster and Hillary Clinton were involved in an affair that led to Foster’s death.[22] James Norman, former senior editor at Forbes Magazine, discussed[23] and wrote about Vince Foster having a Swiss bank account and possible espionage.[24] An FBI interview report by agent Russell Bransford and a handwritten note from the Office of Independent Counsel found at the National Archives refer to Vincent Foster’s Swiss bank account.[25] Judge John D. Butzner wrote to Judges Peter Fay and David Sentelle that they could “be charged as conspirators in the cover-up”[26] and recommended they include the comments of Patrick Knowlton as part of the final Report on the Death of Vincent W. Foster. Judge Peter Fay wrote that Knowlton contradicted “specific factual matters and takes issue with the very basics of the report” filed by Kenneth Starr.[27] Knowlton’s comments were ordered[28] included as part of the official report on September 26, 1997. Two days later, Kenneth Starr filed a 9-page motion[29] to appeal that the comments by Knowlton not be included in the report. The next day, Starr’s motion was denied[30] and Knowlton’s comments were included as part of the final official Report on the Death of Vincent W. Foster.[31]

4 See also

- Arkansas Project
- The Clinton Chronicles
- Whitewater (controversy)

5 References

5.1 Notes


[9] S.Res.229-103rd Congress Section 1. Scope of the hearings, (1), (B)


[16] The ConWebWatch Primer

[17] Christopher Ruddy.”Strange Death of Vincent Foster”

[18] Christopher Ruddy


[20] Why Vincent Foster can’t rest in peace Lori Leibovich Salon.com

[21] The Falwell connection by Murray Waas Salon.com

[22] Book reveals Hillary’s ‘passionate affair’ BBC News August 4, 1999
5.2 Books


6 External links

- Report on the Death of Vincent W. Foster, Jr.by
the Office of Independent Counsel in Re Madison Guaranty Savings and Loan Association HATI Trust Digital Library, Universities of Michigan and Purdue, the complete 137 page, 2 vol. report with app., footnotes, and exhibits.

- Once Upon a Time in Arkansas: Vince Foster’s journal from Frontline

- Foster Report posted by the Washington Post This file does not contain the report’s footnotes or appendix
7 Text and image sources, contributors, and licenses

7.1 Text

- Suicide of Vince Foster  

7.2 Images

- File:Alcatel_9109HA.png  
  Source: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/a/ae/Alcatel_9109HA.png  
  License: CC-BY-SA-3.0  
  Contributors: ?  
  Original artist: ?

7.3 Content license

- Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0