The sole purpose of this paper is to disclose the facts on Exercise Big Lift. The facts have been assembled as result of the occasional accusation, including the one included in Oliver Stone's <u>JFK</u>, that military troops were circling Washington, D.C. at the time of the assassination of John F. Kennedy. The accusers claim the troops were in the area for riot control should problems occur from the government overthrow they claim was part of the conspiracy to assassinate President Kennedy. The facts have been disclosed in an objective manner and do not reflect opinions of the author.

In October and November of 1963, the United States performed a military exercise named Exercise Big Lift. The purpose was to show how quickly the U.S. could send troops to Europe as reinforcement. Approximately 15,000 troops going to Germany were from the 2d Armored Division from Fort Hood, Texas. About 1600 other men from miscellaneous bases supported them. Once in Germany, the division played a war game with commanders from the 4th Infantry Division who had made the trip.

The first military message found on Exercise Big Lift was prepared on September 26, 1963 and then sent on September 30. At this point, the troops were told when they should be ready for departure and given a background of what they would be doing in Germany.

The plans for the exercise first became public in very early October. Both the <u>Army Times</u> and the <u>Air Force Times</u> reported in their October 2 editions that plans for Exercise Big Lift had been announced. Although specific dates had not been set, most of the other facts regarding the exercise were released and completely open to the public.

On October 16, the <u>Army Times</u> reported that all plans regarding Exercise Big Lift had been finalized. Regarding the end of the exercise, it reported that the troops in Germany would have equipment turn-in from November 9-19 and that they would return to the United States by administrative air craft throughout the period of November 12-22.

Shortly after these plans had been finalized, the civilian newspapers began carrying stories about Exercise Big Lift. On October 20, the <u>New York Times</u> gave its first report on the exercise. The article explained that the 2d Armored Division would fly to Germany and there participate in a war game. This game, played with representatives of the 4th Infantry Division and German panzer elements, was fighting off an imaginary Soviet invasion from East Germany.

The procedure started on *************** when the 2d Armored Division advance team was sent over to Germany. Its job was to make sure that everything in Germany was ready for the troops to start arriving, part of which included checking the equipment that the Division was going to use during its subsequent war games exercise. The 2d Armored Division did not take any of its heavy equipment with it. Instead, once it landed in Germany it used stockpiled equipment that had been sitting around Germ

On October 24, the first of the troops from the 2d Armored Division reached their destination in Germany. Upon arrival, troops were greeted with a hot meal and time to change clothes and rest. Many of the critics of Exercise Big Lift charged that this was too unrepresentative of what would really be possible if an actual invasion were to take place. First of all, the troops would not have nearly as much time to prepare for departure since they would be rushing to get to Germany. Second, all equipment would have to be taken with the troops. Instead of using the stockpiled older equipment, the soldiers would have to bring everything with them. This would add to the total travel time since all of the equipment would have to make the

trip.

        As of November 22, nearly all of the combat troops from Exercise Big Lift had returned to Fort Hood.   Most of those left in Germany or on their way back were officers and those who closed out the bases in Germany.   The flow of troops back to the United States had declined in the days leading up to November 22, as the accompanying bar graph shows.