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March 8, 1974

*Assisted by  
President's Commission*

The Honorable Clarence Kelly  
Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation  
Department of Justice  
Washington, D. C. 20530

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FBI PROC.

Dear Mr. Kelly:

For sometime, I have been studying certain details of the assassination of President Kennedy. In 1972, I was one of the few persons outside the federal government to be granted permission to examine the photographs and X-rays from the President's autopsy.

What I learned from examining the autopsy materials has deepened my long-standing belief that the Warren Commission's attempted reconstruction of the shooting could not have been correct, particularly with respect to their hypothesis that Governor Connally had been wounded by the same bullet which had previously inflicted the non-fatal wounds on the President. I am aware that the FBI, at least for some period of time, had also entertained a view which disagreed with the Commission in that regard.

I have since learned that the FBI Laboratory conducted neutron activation analyses on the bullet fragments recovered during the investigation of the case. As you undoubtedly know, such analyses are capable of producing extraordinarily detailed information about the composition of metallic substances, sufficient in some cases to

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determine whether two or more specimens can or cannot be said to have different origins. Lead or copper fragments originating from separate bullets, for example, can sometimes be distinguished, even though the parent bullets have a common manufacturer.

The data compiled by the FBI Laboratory from its neutron activation analyses of the bullet fragments in the Kennedy assassination could well be dispositive of certain unanswered questions about the details of the shooting. Specifically, and by way of illustration, a finding that the lead in the fragment recovered from Governor Connally's wrist was significantly different in composition from the lead in the nearly whole bullet designated as Commission Exhibit 399 would eliminate the possibility that the Governor's wrist wound had been inflicted by this bullet. Similarly, a finding that the composition of the copper in Commission Exhibits 567 and 569 (the two larger fragments found in the front of the Presidential car) differed significantly from each other would establish that these two fragments could not have originated from the same bullet. Either of these illustrative findings would indicate that the Commission's reconstruction of the shooting should be reassessed, while negation of such speculative findings would tend to confirm the Commission's conclusions.

There are several other comparisons between the compositions of various pairs of bullet fragments which would be extremely valuable in clearing up certain ballistic questions left unresolved by the Warren Commission. I understand that some slight differences in composition were, in fact, observed in the analyses conducted by the FBI Laboratory but that the Commission did not request the actual data, and thus, did not follow up on the leads that might have been provided.

Would it be possible for me to have access to these data? I realize that there may be objections to disclosure of material from the investigative files of the FBI, as a matter of general policy. However, the historical and scientific importance of these data in resolving public doubts about the assassination would seem to justify a discretionary release in this exceptional case and would surely be in the public interest.

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Alternatively, in the event that the Bureau finds reason not to release the actual data, would it be possible to obtain verbal answers to certain questions about the data? Specifically, I believe it is of critical importance to know the following:

(1) Does the composition of Commission Exhibit 842 (the lead fragment recovered from Connally's wrist) differ significantly, i.e., more than can be attributed to experimental error, from that of the core of Commission Exhibit 399 (the nearly whole bullet found at Parkland Hospital)?

(2) Does the composition of Commission Exhibit 842 differ significantly from that of the lead portion of Commission Exhibit 567 (the large bullet fragment found in the front of the car)?

(3) Does the composition of the lead portion of Commission Exhibit 567 differ significantly from that of any of the following:

- (a) Commission Exhibit 840 (fragments found on floor of car);
- (b) Commission Exhibit 841 (lead scraped from wind shield);
- (c) Commission Exhibit 843 (fragments from President's brain);
- (d) FBI Item C321 (lead smear found on curb in Dealey Plaza)?

(4) Does the composition of the copper portion of Commission Exhibit 567 differ significantly from that of the copper in Commission Exhibit 569 (the other large fragment found in the front of the car)?

In each of the above questions, the term "differ significantly" is meant to refer to numerical differences in composition which are larger than the estimated experimental error of the technique. Where such differences are present, it would be helpful to know if they are substantial or slight, even if the precise numerical data cannot be disclosed.

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I should like to add that in addition to my own qualifications as a forensic pathologist, I am in regular professional contact with several professional criminalists and scientific experts in the field of neutron activation analysis. Their consultation and advice will be available to me to ensure a competent and objective review of any data which are disclosed.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Very truly yours,

  
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