

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

# Memorandum

TO : Mr. Conrad *J.C.*

DATE: 3/31/64

FROM : Mr. Jevons *J.J.*

SUBJECT: ASSASSINATION OF PRESIDENT  
JOHN FITZGERALD KENNEDY  
NOVEMBER 22, 1963,  
DALLAS, TEXAS

- Tolson \_\_\_\_\_
- Belmont \_\_\_\_\_
- Mohr \_\_\_\_\_
- Casper \_\_\_\_\_
- Callahan \_\_\_\_\_
- Conrad \_\_\_\_\_
- DeLoach \_\_\_\_\_
- Evens \_\_\_\_\_
- Gale \_\_\_\_\_
- Rosen \_\_\_\_\_
- Sullivan \_\_\_\_\_
- Tavel \_\_\_\_\_
- Trotter \_\_\_\_\_
- Tele. Room \_\_\_\_\_
- Holmes \_\_\_\_\_
- Gandy \_\_\_\_\_

*J.C.*  
*J.J.*

On 3/30/64, Mr. Melvin Eisenberg, staff member of the President's Commission, asked the Laboratory to conduct paraffin tests with the Cl-4 assassination rifle as set forth in my memorandum of 3/30/64. The paraffin test consists of pouring warm paraffin over the hand or cheek, peeling it off and testing the inner surface of the paraffin for the presence of any gunpowder residues. The reagents used in this test, however, are not specific for only gunpowder residues and will react positively with most oxidizing agents. Some people have used this technique to determine if a person had recently fired a gun. The Laboratory experimented with the procedure many years ago and found to be extremely unreliable as to whether a person had recently fired a gun, since in some instances casts taken of a person who had not recently fired a gun gave positive reaction. Further, even the presence of gunpowder residues on a person's hand did not positively determine if he had in fact fired the weapon, since the residues could be on his hands from the mere handling of the weapon. It is to be noted that oxidizing agents that will react positively to this are also present in such common substances as urine, fertilizer, tobacco and others. Although Mr. Eisenberg recognizes the unreliability of such tests, he requested the testing for record purposes in view of the publicity concerning use of this technique by the Dallas Police Department in the assassination case.

The tests requested by Mr. Eisenberg have been conducted and the results are set forth below. REC 29

Control paraffin tests of the right cheek and both hands were conducted on a Laboratory examiner who had thoroughly washed his face and hands and who had not recently fired a weapon. The paraffin casts were then treated with diphenylbenzidine, a sensitive reagent for the detection of most oxidizing agents. Numerous positive reactions were noted on the casts of both hands although no reactions were noted on

- 1 - Mr. Belmont
- 1 - Mr. Rosen
- 1 - Mr. Sullivan
- 1 - Mr. Malley

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CC: bsm (10)

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the cheek cast. It is pointed out that warm paraffin can remove the foreign matter that is present on the skin or in the pores.

The C14 assassination rifle was then rapid fired three times. Paraffin tests of the examiner's right cheek and both hands were then conducted. These casts were also treated with diphenylbenzidine with negative results.

The results of these tests once again confirm the unreliability of the paraffin test as a means of determining whether or not a person had fired a gun, since the above tests gave a positive reaction on a cast prior to the firing of a weapon and no reaction when in fact a weapon had been fired.

The results of the above tests are being furnished to the President's Commission by letter.

**ACTION:**

For information.

*J*

*G*

*JWS*

*V*