

INVESTIGATION OF THE ASSASSINATION
OF PRESIDENT JOHN F. KENNEDY

APPENDIX TO
HEARINGS

BY THE

SELECT COMMITTEE ON ASSASSINATIONS

OF THE

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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autopsy report. Humes, Roswell, and Finck, the three prosecutors, signed the autopsy report in the office of Admiral Galloway. (I had suggested several corrections in the autopsy report. While we were checking the autopsy report in the admiral's office, the television announced the murder of Oswald by Ruby.)

In my discussion with Commander Humes, I stated that we should not check the block "complete autopsy" in the autopsy report form. In compliance with the wishes of the Kennedy family, the prosecutors had confined their examination to the head and chest. Humes declared that the block "complete autopsy" should be checked: (119)

(530) Lieutenant Colonel Finck also indicated:

I was denied the opportunity to examine the clothing of Kennedy. One officer who outranked me told me that my request was only of academic interest. The same officer did not agree to state within the autopsy report that the autopsy was not complete, as I had suggested to indicate. I saw the clothing of Kennedy, for the first time on March 16, 1964, at the Warren Commission, before my testimony, more than 11 months after the autopsy. (120)

(531) Commander Humes indicated to the panel that during the autopsy Admiral Galloway ordered that the procedure be a complete examination. As indicated in section III of the panel's report, the autopsy report acknowledged removal and description of thoracic and abdominal organs, but not of neck organs. Likewise, the forensic pathologist on the team, Dr. Finck, the individual who might have observed changes on the clothing which would characterize entrance and exit wounds, did not have access to this evidence, apparently because the senior pathologist, Dr. Humes, did not have the experience or education to be aware of the value of such an examination. (532) - As indicated elsewhere in this report, the panel members also took note of the failure to include the description of certain organs including the adrenal glands, within the body of the autopsy report. The panel members are divided in their opinion as to the propriety of this omission in a public report, but all agree with the need to maintain permanent records of such observations in the event that there is need to provide them in subsequent criminal litigation. (533) The panel also took note of the unavailability of the histopathologic sections and the brain, which had not hitherto been mentioned. The panel acknowledges the need for such evidence in subsequent criminal litigation and the adverse effect that failure to retain such evidence might have on the proper outcome of such litigation.

(534) The panel likewise took note of the failure to record properly the findings during the procedure, particularly the measurements of the location of the entrance wound in the head, or even to retain the original notes from which the final report was prepared for review as stated by Dr. Humes before the Warren Commission. The panel

concludes that the inability to examine such documentation in the event of a legal dispute could adversely affect the outcome of subsequent criminal litigation.

Finally, prosecutors should have reviewed the preliminary report in conjunction with the photographs taken during the course of the procedure and prepared a more complete diagram which included all measurements not otherwise recorded. By doing so they might have avoided a very obvious error in the location of the wound of entry on John F. Kennedy's head, as documented elsewhere in this report.

g. Post-mortem examination procedure

The more serious procedural errors of the post mortem examination include the following:

a. The body was moved out of the geographical area statutorily responsible for investigation of the death and autopsy. The pathologist(s) charged with performing the autopsy had insufficient training and experience to evaluate a death from gunshot wounds. They did not confer with the physicians who had treated the President at Parkland Hospital before commencing their examination and did not therefore realize that a bullet perforation in the neck had been covered by a tracheotomy procedure until after the body had been removed.

b. The pathologists did not or could not control the circumstances at the time of autopsy to afford privacy to the remains and to work unimpeded by visitors.

c. Proper photographs were not taken.

d. The President's clothing was not examined by the pathologist.

e. The autopsy procedure was incomplete:

1. The external examination did not take thorough note of all the wounds: The anterior neck exit wound was not noticed, the head entrance wound was not accurately located with reference to fixed anatomic reference points, and the head was not reconstructed in order to determine the precise location of the head exit wound.

2. The bullet track in the back and neck was not dissected, so the extent of injury to the neck structures was not evaluated and the course through the body not fully appreciated.

3. The angles of the bullet tracks through the body were not measured relative to the body axis.

4. The brain was not properly examined and sectioned.

5. The autopsy report was incomplete, prepared without reference to the photographs, and was inaccurate in a number of areas:

1. The entrance head wound location was incorrectly described.

2. The entrance and exit wounds on the back and front neck were not localized with reference to fixed body landmarks and to each other so as to permit reconstruction of trajectories.

3. There was no description of the neck areas which were not dissected. Instead, the pathologists referred to the observations of the treating physician at Parkland (Hensley) and did not mention that they failed to detect the presence of the missile exit in the anterior neck.

4. There was no description of the adrenal glands or of other organs.
 (543) Resources available to conduct medical autopsies vary tremendously in different sections of the country, with accompanying variation in the degree of sophistication of the examination and related ancillary procedures, such as odontology, toxicology, et cetera. The resources available for this autopsy, however, were extensive.

(544) The above list of deficiencies in the autopsy reflects only those gross errors which would have been avoided in most metropolitan medical jurisdictions and which probably would have been avoided in this instance if a forensic pathologist with day-to-day experience in the investigation and examination of such deaths had been present at the autopsy.

(545) Despite the deficiencies of the postmortem examination of the President, the panel found that sufficient documentation was available for it to arrive at correct and valid conclusions, as stated in this report, as to the cause of death of President Kennedy and the precise injuries the President suffered.

V. SUGGESTED PROCEDURES TO BE FOLLOWED IN THE EVENT OF SEQUENT ASSASSINATIONS OF FEDERAL OFFICIALS

The panel has taken note of chapter 18 of the United States Code, annotated, entitled "Presidential Assassination, Kidnaping, etc.," enacted in 1965, which states:

Sec. 1751. Presidential assassination, kidnaping, and assault; penalties:

(a) Whoever kills any individual who is the President of the United States, the President-elect, the Vice President, or if there is no Vice President, the officer next in the order of succession to the office of President of the United States, the Vice-President-elect, or any individual who is acting as President under the Constitution and laws of the United States shall be punished as provided by sections 1111 and 1112 of this title.

(b) Whoever kidnaps any individual designated in subsection (a) of this section shall be punished (1) by imprisonment for any term of years or for life, or (2) by death or imprisonment for any term of years or for life, if death results to such individual.

(c) Whoever attempts to kill or kidnap any individual designated in subsection (a) of this section shall be punished by imprisonment for any term of years or for life.

(d) If two or more persons conspire to kill or kidnap any individual designated in subsection (a) of this section and one or more of such persons do any act to effect the object of the conspiracy, each shall be punished (1) by imprisonment for any term of years or for life, or (2) by death or imprisonment for any term of years or for life, if death results to such individual.

(e) Whoever assaults any person designated in subsection (a) of this section shall be fined not more than \$10,000 or imprisoned not more than 10 years, or both.

(f) The terms "President-elect" and "Vice-President-elect" as used in this section shall mean such persons as are the apparent successful candidates for the offices of President and Vice President, respectively, as ascertained from the results of the general elections held to determine the electors of President and Vice President in accordance with title 3, United States Code, sections 1 and 2.

(g) The Attorney General of the United States, in his discretion, is authorized to pay an amount not to exceed \$100,000 for information and services concerning a violation of this section. Any officer or employee of the United States or of any State or local government who furnishes information or renders service in the performance of his official duties shall not be eligible for payment under this subsection.