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UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

Memorandum

Viper 12

- Tolson
- Belmont
- Mohr
- Casper
- Callahan
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- Evans
- Gale
- Rosen
- Sullivan
- Tavel
- Trotter
- Tele. Room
- Holmes
- Gandy

TO : Mr. Belmont *ABW*

DATE: March 24, 1964

FROM : A. Rosen

SUBJECT: ASSASSINATION OF PRESIDENT
JOHN F. KENNEDY; 11/22/63;
DALLAS, TEXAS

Franklin
DeLoach
Evans
Rosen
Sullivan
Tavel
Trotter
Tele. Room
Holmes
Gandy

Referenced memorandum dated 3/20/64 from Jevons to Conrad set forth information concerning testimony relating to firearms evidence and the fact that firearms evidence was to be made available to the President's Commission on March 21, 1964, in order that an independent examination could be made of the firearms evidence.

This matter was discussed with J. Lee Rankin, General Counsel, President's Commission, in the early evening of March 23, 1964. Mr. Rankin was advised that in view of the action taken by the Commission concerning the firearms evidence, it was obvious the Commission does not have confidence in the FBI Laboratory, and that in view of the independent examinations being requested, it would appear desirable for the Commission to have whatever examination they desire from independent experts made and for the Bureau to step out of the picture from the standpoint of laboratory examinations. It was pointed out to Mr. Rankin that our Laboratory was greatly burdened with a large volume of work and that if the examinations that we made were not going to be accepted, it would appear that there would be no reason for our Laboratory experts to be tied up on these examinations in utilizing the time it requires to furnish testimony concerning matters where independent examinations are being made.

Mr. Rankin immediately replied that he certainly desired to correct any impression that the Bureau may have received that anyone connected with the President's Commission had a lack of confidence in the examinations made by the Bureau Laboratory. He stated that there had been a tremendous amount of pressure from various sources on the Commission for accepting the work being performed by the Bureau and not subjecting it to any independent examination. He also commented that the Bureau had performed a tremendous amount of investigative activity at the Commission's request and that there was likewise considerable pressure on the Commission to have independent examinations made concerning the findings made available by the FBI. Mr. Rankin

- 1 - Mr. Conrad
- 1 - Mr. Sullivan

162-109090

NOT RECORDED

25 APR 8 1964

R/S

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Memorandum to Mr. Belmont
RE: ASSASSINATION OF PRESIDENT
JOHN F. KENNEDY; 11/22/63;
DALLAS, TEXAS

advised he had personally been completely opposed to any independent investigation by any outside investigators and that he had taken a strong stand that any investigation conducted should be handled by Government agencies unless it was found that the Commission could not obtain the results they desired. He stated thus far there had been no difficulties encountered with the FBI or any other Government agency relative to investigations and he did not anticipate there would be any. He stated he sincerely hoped he would be able to keep the members of the Commission agreeable to Government agencies handling investigative matters without any investigations on the part of outside investigators. Mr. Rankin was advised that his comments concerning investigative matters were appreciated but this did not change the picture relative to what appeared to be a lack of confidence in the Laboratory examinations. Mr. Rankin again stated that there was no lack of confidence and that the Commission relied completely on the thoroughness of the FBI Laboratory examiners, which he considered to be the best in the country. He stated because of the pressure that had been brought, the members of the Commission had made the decision to have the independent examinations. He stated emphatically that the Commission would insist that the Bureau Laboratory men be available to furnish testimony concerning matters examined by the Laboratory.

During the discussion, it was ascertained from Mr. Rankin that the Commission members had indicated they will probably desire independent examination concerning handwriting and fingerprint examinations. He gave no indication what items he was referring to or when such a request would be made.

Throughout the discussion Mr. Rankin seemed to be a little disturbed over the Bureau pointing out to him that the Commission obviously lacked confidence in our Laboratory and he repeatedly commented that the independent examinations of evidence were being made at the instructions of the seven members of the Commission. He gave no indication, however, whether this was the desire of certain members of the Commission and others were going along, or whether the Commission was in full agreement concerning this matter.

The foregoing is submitted for information.

[Handwritten initials and signatures]