

23 Oct 70

Dear Harold (cc Hoch):

I write this quickly in response to a part of your 16 Oct letter to Paul and me, the paragraph beginning ~~"Bottom"~~ "Bottom-- if only...", relative to fragments in the neck.

We do not know for sure whether JFK was hit in the neck by a bullet of the same type as the one that hit in the front-right part of the head. I think, however, that that is the case-- at least the condition of the neck wound and the character of the fragments in the ~~wound~~ neck are not at all inconsistent with the same type of bullet having struck in both places.

Without describing basis of my belief here, let me tell what I think happened (I am almost certain of this): small, light-weight, very swift, frangible bullet entered the front-neck and produced characteristic small, round entrance hole. The bullet brushed against the right side of the trachea and tore the trachea (the force of this brushing or the force subsequently produced by the impact pushed the trachea slightly to the left). When the bullet struck the trachea it burst into many pieces which caused great damage in the area just behind the trachea (remember the description of two of the Parkland docs who said there was a "great amount" of contusion and hematoma to the right of the trachea. There must have been great damage also behind the point which was visible to them-- they saw only a margin of the damage). Fragments of the burst bullet were cast into and came to rest in the area behind the trachea (I cannot guess depth of penetration, since there are parts of the body of very different consistency in that area, soft and hard, I would guess that X-rays would show fragments that are (as the Panel says) "several" and "small"-- with perhaps a few discernibly larger fragments represented by parts of the bullet's jacket that may have been torn apart (The jacket would not fragment in the same way as lead, but that may not be visible in X-rays, since they would appear one-dimensional and opaque).

There is nothing in the Panel description of the fragments ("several small fragments") or the Parkland Docs' description of the internal damage (great contusion and hematoma to the right of-- and surely also behind-- the trachea). These fit perfectly with what I say above-- no contradictions whatever, but rather all that one would ~~would~~ expect if he believed JFK had been hit in the front-neck by small, light, fast, frangible bullet. One could not anticipate anything else, for this is the normal outcome in such a wounding.

I mentioned before to Harold and Howard that the Panel doc's (I forget which one) description of the fragments in correspondence to Howard makes no sense, no matter what firing conditions you suppose, and cannot possibly be true. That doc lied to Howard, and his reason for lying is clear, too.

His description of the size of the fragments, and the exceedingly small area that they occupy, necessarily implies that if the bullet entered from the rear, the fragments were detached from the bullet when it brushed against the transverse process of one of the vertebrae (I forget which one). That situation is impossible, for a bullet cannot have brushed against the transverse process without causing it damage of some kind-- one would expect considerable damage to the t.p. The transverse process is a very weak and brittle and frangible bone; it cannot endure any great shock, either to itself directly or to the flesh that surrounds it, without breaking. We know that the

transverse process was not broken, chipped, or damaged in any way whatever. (The t.p., by the way, is the wing-like protrusion that flares out from the sides of a vertebra-- there are two on each vertebra, one on each side.)

Why the doc lied is clear. By describing the frags of metal in the neck as "several" and "small" the Panel let a monster out of it's cage that could kill the single-bullet theory for good and for ever. I don't think they knew the implications of that knowledge until Howard began asking for details. Panel correspondence with Howard is nothing but an effort to push the monster back into his cage. They can't delete him completely, however, for they have already characterized him in a certain way. But they sure as hell sought to remove as much of him as possible from view.

Do you think that if the fragments were in fact as they are described in Howard's Panel letters the Panel would have characterized them as "several" and "small". Like hell, they would. That Panel doc has to be lying, so the fullest and most reliable description of the fragments is still that they are several and small. We can rightly base conjectures on that information, for the letters from the Panel doc tell more about the doc than they do about the fragments.

Re there small, fast, etc., bullets going into soft and hard material-- there would be a difference in the size of the frags, and consequently also in the range of distribution. Breaking on hard objects (E.G., skull-bone) these would go into very, very tiny fragments, ~~xxxxxx~~ and not penetrate deeply. On soft objects (e.g., flesh) the frags would be larger, and would penetrate deeper. But there would always be bursting of the bullet with such ammo when fired at close range).

The precise damage to target and bullet would depend on the precise type of bullet used-- something that we don't know. We do know, however, the class of bullets used-- we can tell that surely from the damage suffered by the bullet and (to a lesser degree of certainty) to the target. It falls into the class of bullets commonly known as "varminters". Caliber itself is not the important determinant in classifying bullets of this type, although most of them tend to be small caliber (e.g. .22 center-fire, .243 with light-weight bullet) because it is easier to move the small calibers at very high velocity. ~~xxx~~ The most important determinant is velocity, then construction of the bullet (soft-point or hollow-point), then weight (the more massive bullets tend to be more cohesive than the lighter), then other factors.

Could I guess exactly what cartridge was used against JFK? No, not exactly, but I would say it was one of the following types or their cognates:

.220 Swift	} these range in size between 50 and 60 grams.
.22/250	
.222 Rem. Magnum	
.223	
.243 (with light-weight bullet, about 80-grains)	
.270 (" " " " " 100-grains)	
.264 Mag. (same as above, the lighter loading for this caliber)	

and the like. All these are fitted with soft-nose or hollow-pointed bullets that burst on contact with targets that are struck at close range (say, 100-yards or less, though they will burst beyond 100-yards-- depends on their velocity when they hit.

I need to prepare a lecture now, so I must stop.

What I say here is sufficient to inform you, then, that there is nothing believing the assertion that the same type of bullet which hit JFK in the head also hit him in the front-neck. One can't say it with absolute certainty, but the facts that we know are consistent with that idea, and nothing contradicts it(except Howard's Panel letters, which can easily be proved to be full of lies-- the letters themselves contain their own self-deletion, for they imply a condition that cannot possibly be true).

Still,

Dick

Bernabei