

TREASURY DEPARTMENT
UNITED STATES SECRET SERVICE

WASHINGTON 25, D.C.

January 6, 1964

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF

Mr. J. Lee Rankin
General Counsel
President's Commission on the
Assassination of President Kennedy
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. Rankin:

Reference is made to your letter of December 30, 1963. The second paragraph requested information concerning the handling of the Presidential automobile since November 22, 1963.

When the President was taken from the Presidential car (SS 100-X) into the Parkland Hospital, the car remained at the emergency entrance of the hospital under the supervision of Special Agent Samuel A. Kinney. During its stay there the "Bubble Top" and the leatherette convertible cover were placed on the car by SA Kinney and SA George W. Hickey and a member of the Dallas Police Department. After the official party left the hospital, SS 100-X was driven to Love Air Field by SA Hickey and the car was placed aboard an Air Force C-130 for the flight to Washington. During this flight Special Agents Kinney and Hickey remained with the car in the plane.

Car 100-X arrived at Andrews Air Force Base, Washington, at 8 p.m., November 22. It was driven from Andrews under police escort to the White House garage by SA Kinney, accompanied by SA Charles Taylor of the Washington Field Office. When the car arrived at the garage at 9 p.m., it was turned over to SA Morgan Gies in charge of Secret Service vehicles at the White House garage. The entire car was then covered with a large sheet of plastic by SA Gies and two special agents from the Washington Field Office were assigned to guard the car. These special agents were instructed that no one was to approach the car or touch it until clearance was had from supervisory personnel of the Secret Service. The only access to the car permitted thereafter, until the guards were removed on November 24, was to Deputy Chief Paterni and the party with him and later to the FBI search team, both mentioned below.

There is attached a copy of a report of SA Charles Taylor of the Washington Field Office concerning the security measures surrounding the car and the activity at the White House garage in connection with the search of the vehicle.

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There is also attached a copy of the sheets of the log book of the White House garage for the period 1:05 a.m., November 23, 1963, (the last prior entry on that log was 3:40 p.m., November 22, 1963) through November 28, 1963, reflecting the entry of the FBI search team and the workmen of the Arlington Glass Company (November 26, 1963). This log identifies those persons admitted to the garage during this period, except for those with Secret Service or White House credentials.

SA William Greer, who was driving the car at the time of the assassination, states that he did not notice any damage to the windshield on the drive to the hospital.

SA Hickey, who drove the car from Parkland Hospital to Love Field said that he noticed some slight damage to the windshield on the drive to the airport, but that the damage was not extensive enough to affect his vision. The windshield, in the area around the damage, was spattered with debris. However, SA Hickey noticed upon the arrival in Washington and at the White House garage the "spidering" had increased and the damage to the windshield was more noticeable.

SA Kinney, who drove the car from Andrews Air Field to the White House garage, stated that he noticed very little damage to the windshield when he was loading it on the plane; that the damage was more noticeable when he arrived at the garage but that it was not so extensive as to affect his driving from the air field.

Special Officer Davis of the Secret Service and SA Gies stated that they noticed the damage to the windshield when the car arrived at the garage, that both of them ran their hands over the outside surface of the windshield and found it to be smooth and unbroken, and that the damage to the windshield was entirely on the inside surface. Both were present when the windshield was removed from the car by the Arlington Glass Company and noticed that the removal caused the cracks in the glass to lengthen, but the outside surface still remained unbroken and there is no hole or crack through the windshield.

Special Agent Gies has viewed the photographs of the windshield taken by the FBI and states that the damage noticeable to the windshield when it was first brought into the garage was not as extensive as the damage reflected in this photograph; i.e., the cracks were not so apparent. Apparently there was only a small spiderweb-like damage visible on the inside of the windshield when the car arrived, but SA Gies is of the opinion that the temperature changes involved in the flight from Dallas, the temperature change and the vibration from driving the car from Andrews Air Field to the White House garage, and then the storing of the car in the warm temperature of the White House garage is responsible for the change in the appearance of the damaged area of the windshield visible in the photograph taken by the FBI. The photograph is attached and labeled as Exhibit I.

In a photograph attached and labeled Exhibit 2, taken by the FBI, there is a dent in the chrome topping of the windshield, just above the attachment of the rear view mirror to the top of the windshield frame. SA Gies, who was responsible for the care and maintenance of this vehicle, believes that this damage was on this car prior to November 22, 1963, and it is his recollection that the damage was done in New York at the Empire Garage (Lincoln-Mercury Dealer) on November 1, 1961. Gies thinks the damage was done while he and employees of the Empire Garage were removing the "header" on the leatherette top to make repairs to the crank which secures the convertible top in place on this vehicle. If this was the case, no effort was made to repair the dent prior to the assassination.

Mr. Paul Michel, Service Director of the Empire Garage, who was present and assisted during those repairs, in an interview said that he did not remember that any damage occurred during these repairs but that it is very possible that it could have happened as a crank had broken off in the area. The repairs were done hastily since the car was needed to transport the President, and this slight damage might have gone unnoticed by him. It may be significant to mention here that this photograph accentuates the damage. This indentation is so slight that it could pass unnoticed in ordinary viewing of the area, especially since the sunvisors, being in a horizontal position most of the time, would frequently cut out the view of this portion of the frame.

Upon his arrival at the White House shortly after 9 p.m., on November 22, SA Kinney advised Assistant Special Agent in Charge Floyd Boring that he noticed what appeared to be a piece of bone or tissue on the floor of the rear of the car near the "jump" seat. Deputy Chief of the Secret Service Paul Paterni and ASAC Boring went to the office of Admiral Burkley, the President's physician at the White House, and requested Chief Petty Officers William Martinell and Thomas Mills of Doctor Burkley's office to accompany them to the White House garage at about 10 p.m., where they removed the plastic covering the car. They then recovered a three-inch triangular section of skull. Martinell also recovered what was apparently a quantity of brain tissue from the back seat of the car. In running his hands over the front cushion of the automobile, Deputy Chief Paterni found a metallic fragment in the front seat in the area between left and right front seats. A second metallic fragment was found by Mills on the floor in front of the right front seat. Both of these fragments were turned over to the FBI for their ballistics examination and are mentioned as Exhibits Q2 and Q3 in the ballistics report made by the FBI addressed to the Chief of Police of Dallas on November 23, 1963.

At 1 a.m., November 23, 1963, Deputy Chief Paterni arranged for a team of FBI agents to examine the Presidential limousine for evidence relating to the shooting. This team was comprised of special agents

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of the FBI Orrin H. Bartlett, Charles L. Killiam, Cortlandt Cunningham, Robert A. Frazer, and Walter E. Thomas. No report of their examination was furnished to the Secret Service; however, the ballistics report mentioned above also contains a statement "evidence obtained by FBI laboratory personnel during examination of the President's limousine, Q14, three metal fragments recovered from rear floor board carpet. Q15, scraping from inside surface of windshield."

No report has been received by the Secret Service from the FBI covering the damage to the windshield nor the damage to the chrome on the windshield frame. Neither SA Greer nor ASAC Kellerman, who were riding in the front seat at the time the shots were fired, recall noticing any fragments striking or ricocheting from the windshield or the windshield frame.

Late Saturday afternoon, November 23, SA Gies requested permission of Deputy Chief Paterni to clean the blood from the back seat and the floor of the car at the earliest possible moment. He was advised that this permission would be granted when the FBI search team and the Protective Research Section had completed their examination and sufficient photographs had been secured. On Sunday, November 24, SA Gies requested Deputy Chief Paterni for permission to begin to clean up the car since the odor from the car was becoming offensive. This permission was granted after clearance from FBI. Late Sunday evening, November 24, the guards were removed from the vehicle and SA Gies and Special Officer Davis and White House Police Officer Hutch began to remove the blood stains and the debris from the car. At that time there were still fragments of bone and hair in the debris of the car which had not been removed by the FBI search team. There were frequent attempts in the subsequent days to further remove the odor-causing material in the car; and until approximately one week subsequent to the first cleaning, the odor in the car was still evident. Color photographs depicting the condition of this car on its arrival at the White House garage are attached - (Exhibit 3).

When, on Sunday afternoon, November 25, 1963, Chief Paterni instructed SA Gies to do whatever was necessary to clean the car to make it available, SA Gies understood this to mean to do whatever was necessary to place the car in operating condition. He instructed F. V. Ferguson of the Ford Motor Company to arrange for the replacement of the windshield. The windshield was replaced on November 26 by personnel from the Arlington Glass Company. SA Davis was present during the removal of the windshield and verifies that this was carried out as described by Mr. Ferguson in his memorandum of December 1, 1963. SA Gies was also present part of the time while the windshield was being removed.

The windshield was stored at the Secret Service storeroom in the White House garage. This room is always kept locked and the garage is under the 24-hour supervision and control of the White House Police.

The windshield will be kept available for examination by representatives of the Commission if such an examination is considered necessary.

Since the assassination, the car has never been used to transport the President. It was kept at the White House garage until December 20, 1963, when the car was driven by Ford Motor Company employee, Vaughn Ferguson, to the Engineering Research Division of the Ford Motor Car Company, Dearborn, Michigan, for the purpose of re-designing a new Bubble Top.

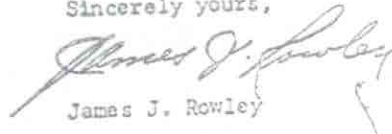
On December 24, 1963, the car was driven from the Ford Motor Company to the firm of Hess and Eisenhardt, custom body designers at Cincinnati, for the manufacture and installation of a bullet-resistant "Bubble Top." At this writing, the car is still at the Hess and Eisenhardt Company.

The third paragraph of your letter requested to be advised of the existence of any statements or investigative materials relative to our report of December 18, 1963. The Secret Service has a voluminous file containing information and reports of the investigation made of the circumstances surrounding the assassination and the killing of the suspect, Oswald. I have instructed Inspector Kelley of my staff to review all these reports and to furnish the Commission copies of reports considered pertinent to the investigation. Thereafter, a member of your staff may wish to review the remaining reports and to extract from our files any additional reports which your staff considers essential.

I suggest this procedure because, as you know, in a file of this type there are many reports of investigative leads which have been run out and found to have had no basis or contain only administrative information in which the Committee would have no interest. However, be assured that all information in the hands of the Secret Service is available for review by any member of your staff, and it is our intention to be as cooperative and as helpful as possible.

The Service has a roll of colored film taken by an amateur photographer showing the actual assassination, and a reel of film taken by Secret Service agents which shows the assassination scene and the view the assassin had from his vantage point. The reconstructed crime scene also shows the view the assassin had through the telescopic lens. These films would be of interest to the Committee and will be made available to the Committee upon request.

Sincerely yours,


James J. Rowley

Enclosures