

Chuck Lewis
ABC News
1124 Connecticut Ave., NW
Washington, D.C. 20036

4/3/81

Dear Chuck,

A few suggestions. Please excuse the haste because there is work I want to do today and a college professor is here working with other parts of my files.

What I know about the ammunition used in the Reagan shooting is limited to a few brief, pre-dawn radio accounts and what GMA had this morning. It raises questions. You will recall that two days ago I suggested you look into the revolver and the ammo and that I found the totality of absence of any information as suspicious. I identified two tests that should have been made and about which nothing had been said.

Now we are told that explosive bullets were used. From the accounts available to me nothing indicating how the small bullets were made explosive.

There is nothing to indicate why there appears to have been no identification of the bullets as explosive from Monday until late on Thursday. This is odd. But it can be explained, in part, by the characteristic secrecy of agencies like the FBI and their devotion to control as a means of covering their asses.

However, if the FBI knew or even had reason to suspect that the bullets were explosive, how explain the long delay in informing the doctors so they could decide whether to try to remove the possibility of explosion from so close to Delahanty's spine? Either the FBI knew and was silent or it didn't make the tests and studies that provided the information for as much as four days. The latter is not easy to believe.

Spectrographic analysis should have been completed before dawn on Tuesday. Other examinations should have disclosed that the bullets were explosive even earlier.

We still know nothing about what I called to your attention, whether there were unfired bullets in the revolver. Were there any in Hinckley's pockets or room?

Another large void, by the way, is any accounting of Hinckley's financing. How did he do all that travelling, buy all those pistols, pay for food and lodging when I've seen no report of any employment? Search of his person, room and possessions would have yielded leads if not proofs. His Social Security number would have been given to the Social Security office in Baltimore immediately and the FBI would have known promptly. This is an FBI investigative norm. I've seen too many records not to know this.

I don't think that the average gun shop stocks explosive bullets and I don't believe that explosive .22 longs are readily available.

Even what is meant by explosive is not reported in what I've heard. (Nothing in the edition of the Post that reaches here on this at all.) Hollow-points are sometimes called explosive, although they are not. They become dumdums, with explosive effect but they do not really ~~explode~~ explode. They expand, disintegrate and tear.

If the bullets were made explosive by insertion of an unstable substance in the hollow points, are they safe to carry around?

Inadequate press inquiries can account for some of what has not been reported, but there also is an inadequacy if what seems to have been given to the press. I've not seen any identification of the revolver or ammo. Not at all normal, based on prior cases.

You can be sure that whether or not there were other searches, as the scene of the crime and Hinckley's person and room, there was at least a pair of FBI agents at the hospital awaiting the removal of bullets or parts of bullets and that they were rushed to the FBI Lab. Any in the revolver would have been at the Lab even earlier.

Spectrographic analysis would have identified each of the substances used in making

the bullets, up to about a dozen, as well as ~~any~~ any other substances, like those that would be explosive. Even if the same substances are used to make the bullets explosive, which I doubt, quantitative differences would have been apparent. So, it does not seem likely that if the bullets were explosive the FBI did not know immediately.

This makes it difficult to understand why there was so long a delay when there was danger to Delahanty's life if not also to those near him if and when there was an explosion.

Possible sources are gunshops, NRA, police contacts, etc.

While there are very few indications of any conspiracy, official suspicion of a conspiracy could account for the withholding of so much information that ordinarily is not withheld. Like where did he get his money? Perhaps innocently, but why the secrecy about it if innocently?

Please excuse the typos. I can still get this in our only mail for the day.

Best wishes,