

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

Memorandum

TO : Mr. Conrad *VC*

DATE: 11/27/63

FROM : R. H. Jevons

SUBJECT: ASSASSINATION OF PRESIDENT
JOHN F. KENNEDY

Tolson	_____
Belmont	_____
Mohr	_____
DeLoach	_____
Evans	_____
Malone	_____
McGuire	_____
Rosen	_____
Sullivan	_____
Tavel	_____
Trotter	_____
Tele. Room	_____
Holmes	_____
Gandy	_____

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In connection with our examination of evidence received in the above matter, we have considered all possible examinations and techniques which would be productive in identifying the perpetrator of the crime. It is noted that we have already by means of microscopic examinations, identified the gun used in the assassination and further through handwriting examinations identified Lee Harvey Oswald as the individual who ordered and paid for this gun. It is further noted that an eyewitness reportedly selected Oswald from a line-up as being most similar in appearance to the subject whom the eyewitness saw aiming and firing the rifle at the Presidential car although the eyewitness was unable to make a positive identification.

Among the analytical techniques considered from the beginning has been a rather recently developed technique known as neutron activation analysis, which is an outgrowth of the atomic energy program and which makes it possible to analyze for the presence of much smaller quantities of materials than heretofore possible by the earlier existing techniques. One consideration of this technique in the present case was directed toward the possible detection of powder residues on the person and clothing of the suspect with the objective of showing that he actually fired the gun. In this respect, it is noted that the detection of such residues on the hands and on the person and clothing of Oswald would not necessarily establish the exact kind of weapon fired by him, the time at which he fired the weapon or the number of times the weapon was fired. Accordingly, in view of the nonspecific nature of such results and in view of the massive evidence already available indicating Oswald's guilt, it was not felt that this type of examination would contribute essentially to the investigation and trial of Oswald.

Enclosure

- 1 - Mr. Tolson
- 1 - Mr. Belmont
- 1 - Mr. Mohr
- 1 - Mr. DeLoach
- 1 - Mr. Rosen
- 1 - Mr. Sullivan
- 1 - Mr. Handley, Rm. 5710

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However, Oswald is now dead and there will be no trial. In view of this development, it is felt that this examination should now receive further consideration in order to protect the Bureau against any possible future allegations, however unfounded, that if neutron activation analyses type of analyses had been conducted, one might have obtained extremely significant data.

Such allegations, for example, might originate from relatively highly placed individuals in the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) charged with developing neutron activation analysis and who will recognize the publicity potential of such allegations.

It is noted that this type of analyses requires access to an atomic reactor, and, as pointed out in earlier memoranda, because of the cost and impossibility of placing such a reactor in any building presently in control of the FBI, the Bureau has not considered it feasible to purchase such a reactor. However, with the Director's approval, we have had for some time, a standing arrangement with the AEC and others whereby we have ready access to their facilities for such examinations. Moreover, representatives of the AEC and others have called since the assassination to offer any possible assistance.

The paraffin casts reportedly made by the Dallas Police Department of the hands and face of Oswald are now being forwarded to the FBI and these casts represent the best possibility of applying the neutron activation technique for the detection of powder residues. Accordingly, for the reasons set out above and primarily to place the FBI in a position to refute any speculative allegations as to the potential value if such tests were not made, it is felt we should conduct neutron activation tests of the casts upon receipt in the Bureau.

Any such examinations will, of course, be with the strict understanding that the information and dissemination of the results will be under complete FBI control.

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There is attached a more detailed discussion of the technical limitations and related details concerning this matter.

RECOMMENDATION:

That we arrange with AEC to use the facilities under contract to them for the purpose of conducting neutron activation tests on the paraffin casts made by the Dallas Police Department and on any other items of evidence such as clothing where it may appear logical.

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