

[390] TESTIMONY OF ROBERT A. FRAZIER

The President's Commission met at 9 a.m. on March 31, 1964 at 200 Maryland Avenue, NE, Washington, D.C.

Present were Chief Justice Ear Warren, Chairman; Representative Hale Boggs and John J. McCloy, members.

Also present were J. Lee Rankin, general counsel; Melvin Aron Eisenberg, assistant counsel; Norman Redlich, assistant counsel; Charles Murray and Lewis Powell, observers; and Leon Jaworski, special counsel to the attorney general of Texas.

.....  
Mr. Eisenberg: Mr. Frazier, will you give your name and position?

Mr. Frazier: Robert A. Frazier, Special Agent, Federal Bureau of Investigation, assigned to the FBI Laboratory, Washington, D.C.

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E: And your education?

F: I have a science degree which I received from the University of Idaho.

E: Could you briefly state your training and experience in the fields of firearms, firearms identification, and ballistics?

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.....  
Mr. Eisenberg: May I ask that this person be accepted as a qualified witness on firearms?

The Chairman: Yes, indeed.  
.....

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Mr. Eisenberg: I now hand you a bullet fragment, what appears to be a bullet fragment, . . . For the record, this was found--this bullet fragment was found--in the front portion of the car in which the President was riding. I ask you whether you are familiar with it.  
Mr. Frazier: Yes; I am.  
.....

Mr. Eisenberg: . . . Is this a bullet fragment, Mr. Frazier?

Mr. Frazier: Yes, sir. This consists of a piece of the jacket portion of a bullet from the nose area and a piece of the lead core from under the jacket. [Emphasis added = RAR]  
.....

Mr. Eisenberg: Did you examine this bullet to determine whether it had been fired from Exhibit 139 to the exclusion of all other weapons?

Mr. Frazier: Yes, sir.

E: What was your conclusion?

F: This bullet was fired in this rifle, 139.

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E: Mr. Frazier, did you weigh this fragment?

F: Yes; I did. It weighs 44.6 grains.

.....  
Mr. Eisenberg: . . . I don't think I asked for admission of the bullet fragment which Mr. Frazier identified. May I have that admitted.

Mr. McCloy [Presiding in the absence of Chairman Warren]: It may be admitted.

E: The bullet fragment will be 567 and the photograph just identified by Mr. Frazier will be 568.

McC: It may be admitted.

(The items described, identified as Commission Exhibit Nos. 567 and 568, were received in evidence.)

E: Mr. Frazier, could you discuss this photograph with us?

F: In Commission Exhibit 568 is again the vertical dividing line through the center of the photograph, with the test bullet from the rifle 139

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on the left, and the bullet, Exhibit 567, on the right. . . .

Mr. Eisenberg: . . .

Mr.

Frazier:.....  
.....

. . . . Exhibit 567 . . . is a jacket fragment, . . . it was torn from the rest of the bullet, and is greatly mutilated, distorted

. . . .

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Mr. Eisenberg: What portion of the bullet fragment provided enough markings for purposes of identification, approximately?

Mr. Frazier: I would say that one-fourth, in this instance, one fourth of 567's surface was available. One-fifth to one-sixth would have been sufficient for identification, . . .

.....  
E: Mr. Frazier, do you feel that the amount of markings here were sufficient to make positive identification?

F: Yes, sir.

.....

Mr. Eisenberg: . . . Have you ever had an occasion where you examined a bullet and saw one portion of it which was an apparent match and then found out that the balance of the bullet was not an apparent match?

Mr. Frazier: No, sir; and if I understand your words "apparent match," there is no such thing as an apparent match. It either is an identification or it isn't, and until you have made up your mind, you don't have an apparent match. We don't actually use that term in the FBI. Unless you have sufficient marks for an identification, you cannot say one way or the other as to whether or not two bullets were fired from a particular barrel.

.....  
Mr. Eisenberg: Do you avoid the category of "probable" identification?

Mr. Frazier: Oh, yes; we never use it, never.

E: And why is that?

F: There is no such thing as probable identification. It either is or isn't as far as we are concerned.

E: And in this case it is?

F: It is, yes.

.....  
Mr. McCloy: As a result of all these comparisons, you would say that the evidence is indisputable that the three shells that were identified by you were fired from that rifle?

Mr. Frazier: Yes, sir.

McC: And you would say the same thing of Commission Exhibit 399, the bullet 399 was fired from that rifle

F: Yes, sir.

McC: And the fragment 567--

F: 567, the one that we have just finished.

McC: Was likewise a portion of a bullet fired from that rifle?

F: Yes, sir

McC: You have absolutely no doubt about any of those?

F: None whatsoever

Mr. Eisenberg: Now finally in the category of bullets and bullet fragments, I hand you what is apparently a bullet fragment, . . . and which, I state for the record, was also found in the front portion of the President's car, and I ask you whether you are familiar with this item, marked Q-3?

Mr. Frazier: Yes, sir; this was submitted to me as having been found inside the front seat of the automobile.



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E: Mr. Chairman, may I have this bullet fragment marked Q-3 admitted as Commission 569?

Mr. McCloy: It may be admitted.

(The item, identified as Commission Exhibit No. 569, was received in evidence,)

E: Mr. Frazier, did you examine this bullet fragment with a view to determining whether it had been fired from the rifle, Exhibit 139.

F: Yes, sir.

E: What was your conclusion?

F: This bullet fragment, Exhibit 569, was fired from this particular rifle, 139.

E: Again to the exclusion of all other rifles?

F: Yes, sir.

E: Did you weigh this fragment, Mr. Frazier?

F: Yes, I did. It weighs 21.0 grains.

E: Can you describe the fragment?

F: Yes. It consists of the base or most rearward portion of the jacket of a metal-jacketed bullet, from which the lead core is missing. [Emphasis added = RAR]

.....  
Mr. Eisenberg: Can you determine whether this bullet fragment, 567, and 569 [sic; perhaps these numbers are reversed = RAR] are portions of the originally same bullet?

Mr. Frazier: No, sir.

E: You cannot?

F: There is not enough of the two fragments in unmutated condition to determine whether or not the fragments actually fit together.

. . . [S]o that they could be parts of one bullet, and then, of course, they could be parts of separate bullets.

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Mr. Eisenberg: Getting back to the two bullet fragments mentioned, Mr. Frazier, did you alter them in any way after they had been received in the laboratory, by way of cleaning or otherwise?

Mr. Frazier: No, sir. . . .

.....  
Mr. Eisenberg: As you examined the bullet [399] and the two bullet fragments [567 and 569], are they in the same condition now as they were when they entered your hands?

Mr. Frazier: Yes, sir.

.....  
Mr. McCloy: From your examination of the actual bullets that you have been told were fired on the day of the assassination from this rifle, and from your--how many separate bullets do you identify?

Mr. Frazier: Two, at the maximum, possible three, if these two jacket fragments came from different bullets. If they came from one bullet, then there would be a maximum of the whole bullet and this bullet in two parts.