

1-Mr. Belmont - Encl.
1-Mr. Rosen - Encl.
1-Mr. Sullivan - Encl.
1-Mr. Malley - Encl.

105-2555

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REC-117

February 7, 1964

By Courier Service

Honorable J. Lee Rankin
General Counsel
The President's Commission
200 Maryland Avenue, Northeast
Washington, D. C. 20002

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Dear Mr. Rankin:

Reference is made to your letter of February 4, 1964, inquiring as to the basis for the conclusions with respect to the identification of the bullets and cartridge cases in this matter and concerning the metal fragments from the President's lead.

Firearms identifications such as those made on the bullet and cartridge case evidence in the Oswald matter are based upon a microscopic study of the individual characteristic markings impressed in the surfaces of the bullets and cartridge cases by the mechanism of the weapon and upon a microscopic comparison of these markings with those produced on test specimens fired from the suspected weapon. Since the markings left by a weapon on a bullet or cartridge case are characteristic of that weapon, a suspected bullet or cartridge case bearing such markings, in general, can definitely be identified as having been fired from a particular weapon. These identifications are thus based on sound scientific principles which have been accepted in court for many years.

The metal fragments from the President's head are very small pieces of lead which bear no markings that could be used for identification purposes and, therefore, there is no basis on which they could definitely be associated with any weapon. It is noted in this regard that the rifle bullets involved in this matter consisted of a lead core surrounded by a copper alloy jacket; the identifying marks left by a gun barrel in such a situation appear only on the metal jacket and not on the lead core or fragments of the lead core.

- Tolson
- Belmont
- Mohr
- Casper
- Callahan
- Conrad
- DeLoach
- Evans
- Gale
- Rosen
- Sullivan
- Tavel
- Trotter
- Tele. Room
- Holmes
- Gandy

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(see note on page 3)

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Section 97

Honorable J. Lee Rankin

In the list of specimens on page one of your letter, it was noted that specimen Q8 was described as a cartridge case. Actually, this specimen was described in Special Agent Gemberling's report dated November 30, 1963, as a cartridge and is in fact an unfired cartridge.

Sincerely yours,

J. Edgar Hoover

Honorable J. Lee Rankin

NOTE: The bullet found on the stretcher at the hospital, specimen Q1, and the large bullet fragments, Q2 and Q3, found in the President's automobile were identified in the Laboratory as having been fired from the Mannlicher-Carcano rifle submitted in this case and which was identified as belonging to Oswald. The three cartridge cases found in the Texas School Book Depository Building were definitely identified in the Laboratory as having been fired in the submitted rifle. Several cartridge cases recovered in connection with the shooting of Officer Tippett were identified as having been fired in the .38 Special Smith and Wesson revolver, SN V510210.

The tiny lead fragments removed from the President's head bore no markings suitable for identification purposes. To further our study in respect to these small fragments, a spectrographic examination was made of them and they were found to be composed of a bullet alloy comparable in composition to the core of the fragments from the President's automobile; however, this is not sufficient to definitely establish that they are from a bullet fired from Oswald's gun.

PRESIDENT'S COMMISSION
ON THE
ASSASSINATION OF PRESIDENT KENNEDY
200 Maryland Ave. NE.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20002

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Miss Holmes	_____
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FEB 4 1964

Mr. J. Edgar Hoover
Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation
Department of Justice
Washington, D. C. 20530

Dear Mr. Hoover:

With respect to ballistic identification of a bullet cartridge case fitting the rifle found on the sixth floor of the Texas School Book Depository Building on November 22, 1963, Special Agent Robert P. Gemberling's report dated November 30, 1963, at pages 162-164 sets forth in part the following information:

"Specimens:

- "Q1 Bullet from stretcher ...
- "Q2 Bullet fragment from front seat cushion
- "Q3 Bullet fragment from beside front seat ...
- "Q4 Metal fragment from the President's head
- "Q5 Metal fragment from the President's head
- "Q6 6.5 millimeter Mannlicher-Carcano cartridge case from building
- "Q7 6.5 millimeter Mannlicher-Carcano cartridge case from building
- "Q8 6.5 millimeter Mannlicher-Carcano cartridge case from rifle ...
- "K1 6.5 millimeter Mannlicher-Carcano rifle, with telescope sight No. C 2 766 ...

"Results of Examinations:

"The bullet, Q1, is a 6.5 millimeter Mannlicher-Carcano rifle bullet . . . It consists of a copper alloy jacket with a lead core.

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"Speciman Q2 is a portion of a core of a rifle bullet . . . Speciman Q3 is a portion of the base section of a copper alloy core bullet . . .

"The rifle K1 is a 6.5 millimeter Mannlicher-Carcano Italian military rifle model 91/38. Test bullets were fired from this rifle for comparison with Q1, Q2 and Q3. As a result, Q1, Q2 and Q3 were identified as having been fired from the submitted rifle.

"Specimen Q6 and Q7 are 6.5 millimeter Mannlicher-Carcano cartridge cases. . . .

"Test cartridge cases obtained from the submitted rifle were compared with specimen Q6 and Q7. As a result, specimen Q6 and Q7 were identified as having been fired in this rifle."

With respect to the same rifle the report of Special Agent Robert P. Gemberling dated December 10, 1963, at pages 333-334 in part states:

"Q48 6.5 millimeter Mannlicher-Carcano cartridge case from building.

"Results of Examination: . . .

"Q48 is a 6.5 millimeter Mannlicher-Carcano cartridge case . . . The cartridge case Q48 was compared with test cartridge cases fired in the K1 6.5 millimeter Mannlicher-Carcano rifle, serial No. C2 766. As a result Q48 was identified as having been fired in this rifle."

With respect to the revolver taken from Lee Harvey Oswald at the time of his arrest on November 22, 1963, Special Agent Robert P. Gemberling's report dated November 30, 1963, at page 162 states in part:

"K3 .38 Special Smith and Wesson revolver, serial # V510210, assembly # 65248."

In addition, Special Agent Robert P. Gemberling's report dated December 10, 1963, at page 351, in part, states:

"Specimens received:

"Q74 - Q77 four .38 special cartridge cases . . .

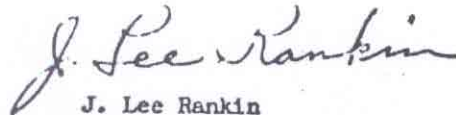
"Results of Examination:

"The four cartridge cases Q74 - Q77 were compared with test cartridge cases obtained from the previously submitted revolver K3. As a result, Q74 - Q77 were all identified as having been fired in K3."

It would be greatly appreciated if your laboratory would describe in some detail the evidentiary facts upon which the above-quoted ultimate conclusions are based with respect to the respective connection between the bullet, the cartridge and the cartridge cases and the corresponding weapon. I assume -- but would like to be advised if the contrary be the fact -- that no conclusion can be drawn relating Q4 and Q5, the metal fragments from the President's head, with either weapon.

I appreciate your continuing cooperation in the work of this Commission.

Sincerely,



J. Lee Rankin
General Counsel