

March 26, 1964

Mr. J. Lee Rankin
General Counsel
~~President's Commission on the~~
Assassination of President Kennedy
200 Maryland Avenue, N. E.
Washington, D. C. 20002

Dear Mr. Rankin:

Reference is made to your letter of March 24, 1964, requesting a more detailed description of the events leading up to the release in the press of the motorcade route in Dallas and the actual release of the route; and in particular who released the route to the press and by what authority.

November 14, 1963

On this date Special Agent Winston G. Lawson, White House Detail, advance agent in charge of preparation for the President's visit to Dallas, Texas, was informed by Mr. Jack Puterbaugh, representing the White House Staff, that the luncheon would be held at the Trade Mart. Agent Lawson also received telephone verification of this decision from the White House Detail Office in Washington on this date, but was told that the release would not be made until November 15, 1963.

Later in the day, Agent Lawson, Mr. Puterbaugh and Forrest V. Sorrels, Special Agent in Charge, Dallas Office, drove over a route from the airport to the Trade Mart (later selected as the route to be used on November 22, 1963) for the purpose of determining the time it would take to drive the route and the exact distance involved.

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November 15, 1963

At a meeting held in the office of Chief of Police Jesse Curry about 11 am this date, all route possibilities were discussed; three from the airport to the Trade Mart and two or three to the fairgrounds where the Women's Building had been discussed as a possible luncheon site. Emphasis was placed on the route driven the preceding day from the airport to the Trade Mart because the selection of this site was known to SAIC Sorrels and Agent Lawson, but the police were not informed by any representative of the Secret Service that the Trade Mart had been selected as the luncheon site. Chief Curry, Assistant Chief Charles Batchelor, Deputy Chief R. H. Lunday, Deputy Chief N. T. Fisher and other command officers of the Police Department, SAIC Sorrels and Agent Lawson were present on this occasion.

About Noon Mr. Puterbaugh informed Agent Lawson that the Trade Mart site had been released to the press. (Exhibit 6C of the Secret Service Report to the Commission)

At 3 pm a meeting was held in the Baker Hotel, attended by the host committee and other interested parties, which included Mr. Robert Cullum, President of the Dallas Chamber of Commerce, Mr. Felix McKnight, Executive Editor, Dallas Times-Herald, Mr. Erik Johnson, President of the Dallas Citizens Committee, Mr. Sam Bloom of the Sam Bloom Agency, a public relations firm, Assistant Chief Batchelor, Mr. John Stemmons, co-owner of the Dallas Market Center, a few press representatives invited by the local committee, utilities representatives, SAIC Sorrels and Agent Lawson. The various possible routes from the airport to the Trade Mart and return to the airport were discussed, with emphasis on a downtown motorcade because of the 45-minute trip time factor, citizen participation and the expressed interest of the White House and the local political group in providing an opportunity for the President to see and be seen by the largest possible number of people in the time available. This meeting was announced as an off-the-record discussion.

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November 18, 1963

A meeting was held at the Trade Mart and a general discussion of the itinerary of the visit, press arrangements and other details were discussed with Mr. Wayne Hawks, White House Aide. Mr. Hawks departed later in the day for Fort Worth. See attached news story which appeared in the Dallas Times Herald November 18, 1963. Present were Mr. W. E. Cooper, Manager of the Trade Mart, Special Agent Jerry D. Kivett, advance agent for Vice President Johnson, SAIC Sorrels and Agent Lawson.

Early in the afternoon, SAIC Sorrels, Agent Lawson, Assistant Chief Batchelor and Deputy Chief Lunday drove over the final route selected, and police coverage for intersections, underpasses, overpasses, crowd control, etc., was decided upon. The approximate time required in driving this route and exact distance was also verified.

Later in the afternoon, Agent Lawson attended a meeting at the Dallas Club which was already in session when he arrived. A number of matters were discussed which included the size and membership of the reception committee, the number and identity of the head table guests, seating of the guests at the luncheon, and other matters concerning the luncheon. In addition, Agent Lawson indicated that he had completed the final selection of the route with the police and the selected route was furnished to those present. Those present included Mr. Bloom, Mr. Puterbaugh, Mr. Eugene Locke, State Democratic Chairman, Mrs. Betty Harris, Mr. Scott Sayres, Mr. Cliff Cassidy, Mr. Robert Strauss, representing the Governor's office and the local party, and possibly one or more other people. Agent Lawson left this meeting prior to it being concluded to meet Special Agent Grant at the airport.

The selected route of the motorcade appeared in the November 19 Dallas Morning News (Exhibit 6D), and in the November 19 edition of the Dallas Times Herald (Exhibit 6E).

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The route of a Presidential motorcade after it has been decided upon by the Secret Service, the local police and the local committee, is released either by the White House Press Secretary or by the local committee, usually after they have checked with the White House Press Secretary. The time of the release is decided by either the White House Press Secretary or the local committee. The Secret Service does not release selected routes of Presidential motorcades to the press and it did not in Dallas.

Specifically, the Secret Service does not know who released the route to the press, nor by what authority.

It is conceivable that someone present at the November 18 meeting may have released the details of the route after they had been furnished with this information.

At the time the Secret Service Report to the Commission was being compiled, a brief inquiry was made in Dallas by SAIC Sorrels of press representatives as to the source of the release and he was informed only that it was obtained from a reliable source.

I hope the foregoing information is what you desire.

Sincerely,

James J. Rowley

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