

11/27/63

Controversy Over Assassin's Rifle

Dallas

✓ *S. F. Connally*
A.P. & U.P.
Nov. 27, 1963

A new controversy boiled up yesterday in the investigation of Lee Harvey Oswald, the accused assassin of President Kennedy.

It centered on whether the rifle believed the death weapon could fire three shots as rapidly as those aimed at Mr. Kennedy and Texas Governor John B. Connally.

The question arose as the FBI continued investigation of the murder on direct orders of President Johnson, issued Monday.

Dallas police yesterday turned over to the FBI all the evidence they had collected against Oswald. The mail-order Italian-made Carcano 6.5-mm. bolt action rifle had

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already been sent to the FBI laboratory in Washington.

EVIDENCE

The Federal investigation was stepped up as the press of both the Western world and the Communist countries continued to ask questions about the handling of the Oswald case and his own murder while in the custody of Dallas police.

A Milan, Italy, newspaper said that the Carcano, an Italian army surplus rifle, could not have been used to kill the President because it could not fire three shots in such rapid succession as were reported.

The Italian newspaper said that it would take at least ten seconds to reload, aim and fire each shot.

This same view was expressed by an Olympic champion rifleman, Hubert Hammerer, in Vienna, Austria. He said it was unlikely that one man could have triggered three shots at a moving target with the rifle in a matter of a few seconds.

But an American gun expert said it would be possible to fire three shots in five seconds from the Carcano type of rifle.

Leonard Davis, an ex-Ma-

rine and an official of the National Rifle Association, said in Washington, however, that such rapid and accurate fire would seem to require "a true expert, which Oswald didn't seem to be" on the basis of his record in the Marine corps.

SHERIFF

Dallas County Sheriff Bill Decker, commenting on these reports, said that the death shots could have been fired in less than 20 seconds.

"If a person was skilled," Decker said, "he could reload a rifle within two seconds. He could operate a bolt and reload it within two seconds. In this case, it took slightly longer because you have to include re-sighting. The whole operation could take less than 20 seconds for three shots."

An amateur strip of 8-mm. color film taken at the scene of the assassination in Dallas reportedly shows the President hit by two shots and Connally by one in a few seconds. The entire strip, 15 seconds, shows some of the action before and after the bullet was fired.

AUTOPSY?

The question of the weapon used and the number of shots fired is complicated by the fact that the White House in

Washington has declined to say whether an autopsy was performed on the body of the slain President.

Doctors in Dallas who administered to the mortally wounded Mr. Kennedy have not been able to say whether he was hit by one or two bullets.

Dr. Kemp Clark, a brain surgeon at Parkland Hospital who worked on Mr. Kennedy, said the bullet hole in the right rear of the President's head had done such massive damage that physicians could not tell whether it had entered or come out of the head at that point.

WOUND

Dr. Clark said again yesterday that he was unable to say whether the wound in the President's neck below the Adam's apple was due to the same bullet that had coursed through the President's brain. He said there could have been two bullets.

On Friday after the death, Secret Service operatives

picked up a bullet from the President's stretcher. Dallas police officials said that it matched fragments in the Presidential car and constituted one of their firmest pieces of evidence that it had been fired by the rifle traced to Oswald by them.

Dallas police are convinced that Oswald was the assassin, but he went to his death maintaining his innocence.