

MEMORANDUM

TO: JEREMY
FROM: JOE
RE: LATENT PALM PRINT ON MANNLICHER-CARCANO
DATE: DECEMBER 16, 1996
CC: BOARD

The controversy surrounding Lee Harvey Oswald's palm print on the barrel of the rifle centers around the following chronology:

1) On November 22, Lt. J.C. Day of the Dallas Police reports finding three prints on the rifle. Two in the area of the magazine, which were not sufficient for identification, and one he discovered beginning at the end of the stock towards the end of the rifle barrel and extending three inches on the bottom side of the barrel, covered by the stock. This would indicate that the print had been placed there while the weapon was disassembled.

Lt. Day dusted the palm print and lifted it with tape. He states, in his Warren Commission testimony that ordinarily one photographs a print which will not lift, and he did this for the two prints around the magazine, but that the palm print on the barrel had been there for some time and so he lifted it, and that the print remained on the barrel. He further states that this was the "best bet" for the FBI in making a match between the weapon print and Oswald. However, he did not photograph the palm print.

2) The FBI took custody of the weapon at 11:45 p.m. on November 22. Agent Vincent Drain took possession of the rifle from Lt. Day. However, Agent Drain was not informed of the palm print nor was he given the lifted print. Furthermore, the other two prints around the magazine were protected with cellophane and were observed by agent stombaugh, who received the weapon to examine it for fiber.

3) The weapon then went to Vincent Latona who examined the rifle for prints. He saw the two prints covered with cellophane and when examining the weapon found no other prints. Vincent Latona could make no connection between the weapon and Oswald since there was no print. The weapon was returned to the Dallas police Department on November 24.

4) The Dallas Police was requested to provide the weapon to the FBI on November 26, along with all other information, to include photographs and lifted prints. The lifted palm print did not arrive until November 29, and when examined by the FBI, it was determined that it was the print of Lee Harvey Oswald. However, the FBI never lifted or observed a print on the barrel of the rifle. In a letter from FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover to the Warren Commission, he stated that the lifted print originated from the weapon by matching irregularities on the barrel with irregularities observed on the lifted print.

Key questions to be considered are: 1) Why did Lt. Day not inform FBI Agent Vincent Drain of the palm print and provide him with the lifted print? 2) Why did Lt. Day state to the Warren Commission that the palm print on the barrel was the FBI's "best bet" when there was no print that FBI could observe? 3) Why did Lt. Day not photograph the palm print on the weapon when he photographed the other two? 4) Why did he wrap the other prints in cellophane for protection and not the palm print? 5) Was there mishandling of the weapon, and a resultant loss of the palm print, in transit from Dallas to Vincent Latona of the FBI?