

# MEMORANDUM

July 22, 1996

To: Jeremy Gunn

Via: Tim Wray \_\_\_\_\_

From: Doug Horne

Subject: Clarification of Sibert-O'Neill FBI Report of 11/26/63 (and Sibert and O'Neill HSCA Interviews)

In May I was asked by Tim Wray to prepare a memorandum containing my opinions and recommendations regarding what additional actions ARRB should take to clarify the existing records pertaining to President Kennedy's autopsy. That memo was submitted on May 29, 1996.

This is an addendum to that memo. I strongly recommend that ARRB interview former FBI agents James W. Sibert and Francis X. O'Neill, Jr. regarding the drafting of their FBI report titled: "Autopsy of Body of President John Fitzgerald Kennedy" (DL 100-10461/cv). There are many questions which could and should be asked in an attempt to clarify this document. Examples follow:

A. Irregularities in typescript: The misplaced word "One" in the phrase "Air Force One" on page 1; the apparent missing (and possibly removed) acronym in the middle of the page on page 3; and the blank 4-letter space on line one of page 4 all suggest typographical changes subsequent to the original typing of this document. In the absence of an original draft of the document,<sup>1</sup> the only hope of clarifying the circumstances of these irregularities in typescript is to interview the report's authors.

B. Dr. George Bakeman, U. S. Navy: Sibert and O'Neill should be asked to clarify whether or not "Dr. George Bakeman" on page 3 refers to Dr. George Burkley (military Physician to

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<sup>1</sup>*Best Evidence* (Carroll & Graf, 1988), page 490: the FBI advised researcher David Lifton by letter dated November 17, 1978 that the report had been produced by a mimeograph process in which a master copy (stencil) was prepared, necessary corrections made on the master, copies were run off, and the master was eventually destroyed after being retained for a short period of time.

the President), or someone else. This document is replete with misspellings of names. If the authors' intent was to identify Dr. Burkley, the President's military physician, then the uncertainty surrounding this name will be resolved; however, if their intent was not to identify Dr. Burkley, but rather someone else, then ARRB should intensify its efforts to locate "Dr. George Bakeman, U. S. Navy."

C. Bullet Fragment Seen in X-Rays of Skull: The next to last paragraph on page 3 contains a sentence which reads (pertaining to X-Rays of President Kennedy's skull): "The next largest fragment appeared to be at the rear of the skull at the juncture of the skull bone." Since no such fragment is described in the autopsy protocol, or in any subsequent medical testimony, as having been removed, the authors of this report should be asked to clarify what this means, by both verbal descriptions and diagrams, if necessary (and perhaps even by pointing out this object on the lateral X-Rays of the President's skull).

D. Use of Probes: The Sibert-O'Neill report mentions Dr. Humes probing the President's back wound with his finger, but does not make any overt mention of the use of metal probes in the examination of the body. In a report as detailed as the Sibert-O'Neill report, this seems peculiar, in view of the fact that nine other persons in the morgue (Dr. Humes, Dr. Boswell, Dr. Finck, Dr. Karnei, John Stringer, Richard Lipsey, Tom Robinson, Robert L. Knudsen, and ASAIC Roy Kellerman) have at various times made specific mention of the use of metal probes either in sworn testimony, or in interviews conducted by official government bodies. Sibert and O'Neill could be specifically asked by ARRB whether they saw metal probes inserted into the body of the President; similarly, use of the term "further probing" on page 4 should be explained by the report's authors (i.e., does it mean with a finger, or with metal instruments?).

E. Chain-of-Custody of Photos and X-Rays: The listing of the total number of X-Rays taken at the autopsy provided on page 5 (11) is three short of the total in the official collection (14); Sibert and O'Neill should be asked whether they counted these items themselves, and exactly what time they left the morgue, in an attempt to explain this discrepancy in the record. (If the 3 additional X-Rays were simply taken after they left the morgue, then asking them to recollect their departure time would help indicate when the additional X-Rays were taken.) Additionally, Sibert and O'Neill could be asked, in regard to page 5 of their report, why they recorded that the roll of 120 film contained 5 exposures (i.e., were they counting flash bulbs, or did the federal agent who seized the film and exposed it to light first count the number of exposures taken?). Finally, they could be asked whether the "22 4 X 5 color photographs" entered on page 5 represents a count of duplex film holders, or individual sheets of film (i.e.,

did they notice any half-empty duplex film holders?).

F. General Questions About Autopsy: Questions which would enhance the historical understanding of the autopsy would include inquiries about the president's casket, casket detail, body wrappings, the appearance of the President's wounds when they first saw the body, the "surgery of the head area, namely in the top of the skull" statement on page 3, and questions regarding the removal and examination of the President's brain.

G. Timing of Report's Dictation and Preparation: Former agents Sibert and O'Neill should be asked about the circumstances surrounding the relatively "late" (author's interpretation) drafting and submission of this report, namely on the Tuesday following the Friday, November 22, 1963 autopsy.

Additionally, interviewing Sibert and O'Neill about their report of 11/26/63 would allow ARRB an opportunity to question them about the contents of their HSCA interview reports, specifically the drawings they made for the HSCA of the President's head wounds.   END