

C. Ballistics

In April 1995, a member of the public wrote to Attorney General Janet Reno to advise her that Warren Commission Exhibit 567 (CE 567)--a bullet fragment--had embedded in it tiny strands of fiber that this member of the public believed came from President Kennedy's shirt collar. In January 1996, John Keeney, Acting Assistant Attorney General, wrote to FBI Director Louis Freeh requesting that the FBI "initiate an inquiry into specific aspects of the assassination theory related to collected bullet fragments and residues now in the possession of the federal government."

The Review Board determined that the Firearms Examination Panel of the HSCA recommended analysis of CE 567 more than 19 years ago. For unknown reasons, the Panel's recommendation did not appear in the HSCA's March 1979 report. The Review Board contacted former HSCA staff members to determine why this recommendation was deleted from the HSCA report but former staff member were not able to provide a reason for the omission.

In March 1996, the Review Board, the FBI, the Department of Justice, and NARA began a series of meetings to discuss re-examination of the ballistics evidence. In June 1996, the FBI provided its report to the Review Board and stated that "a complete fiber analysis could be conducted on the fibrous debris adhering to CE 567 and the materials composing the shirt and the tie [of President Kennedy]."

In August 1998, after lengthy consideration about whether the testing would be appropriate, NARA finally agreed to allow limited testing of CE 567 to complete the earlier recommendation of the HSCA's Firearms Panel. NARA also determined that the bullet fragment should be tested for "suspected biological tissue and/or organic material," the presence of which was noted by the HSCA in 1978 and the FBI in 1996.

In September 1998, testing began on CE 567 and, at the time of this writing (September 1998), was ongoing. NARA will issue its report on the results of the testing in October 1998.