

re Harper Affidavit

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CITY OF LOS ANGELES

CALIFORNIA

OFFICE OF THE
CHIEF OF POLICE
THOMAS REDDIN



SAM YORTY
MAYOR

DEPARTMENT OF
POLICE
150 N. LOS ANGELES ST.
LOS ANGELES, CALIF. 90012
PHONE 624-5211

IN REPLYING PLEASE GIVE
OUR REF. NO.

July 16, 1971

Robert A. Houghton, Deputy Director
Department of Justice
Law Enforcement Division
Attorney General's Office
217 West First Street
Los Angeles, California

This Department has received an affidavit from William W. Harper, who, according to the affidavit, is now and has for 35 years been engaged as a consulting criminalist.

Mr. Harper stated in his affidavit that he has examined two exhibits in the Sirhan B. Sirhan case, and as a result of this examination, believes an error was made by a member of this Department.

The exhibits involved are No. 47, a bullet removed from the neck of Senator Robert Kennedy, and No. 54, a bullet removed from William Weisel.

The following is the verbatim statement by Mr. Harper regarding the error: "My examinations disclosed no individual characteristics establishing that Exhibit 47 and Exhibit 54 had been fired by the same gun. In fact, my examinations disclosed that bullet Exhibit 47 has a rifling angle of approximately 23 minutes (140) greater than the rifling angle of bullet Exhibit 54. It is, therefore, my opinion that bullets 47 and 54 could not have been fired from the same gun."

This request is to ascertain the validity of the above statement and what factors, if any, would be involved to make the statement scientific and objective.

E. M. DAVIS
Chief of Police

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The following are some suggested guidelines that you may wish to consider and include in answering our request:

1. How many lands were studied and how many lands is the figure based on.
2. The type of instrument used.
3. How was the axis of the bullets precisely ascertained.



OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

Department of Justice

STATE BUILDING, LOS ANGELES 90012

July 28, 1971

Edward M. Davis
Chief of Police
Los Angeles Police Department
150 North Los Angeles Street
Los Angeles, California 90012

Dear Ed:

On July 16, 1971 your office requested that experts in the Criminalistic Laboratory evaluate a comment made by Mr. William H. Harper regarding exhibits in the Sirhan case.

Attached is a report of the state criminalist in response to your request.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. Houghton".

ROBERT A. HOUGHTON
Deputy Director
Division of Criminal
Investigation and Information

RAH:hp
Att.

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This response is of such poor quality that it is rendered unreadable.

However, I have a good copy of this response - & shall attempt to find it - will then post on web site.

Yes - the agency contacted does agree with Harper's precepts & Baggett memo agrees with Harper's charge re 47-54 being fired from 2 different guns

from : Bureau of Criminal Identification and Investigation
Criministics Lab. Report

Subject: Dr. James Wolfen

The letter from Chief of Police...
dated July 10, 1971...
The examination...
Exhibit "A" and Exhibit...
things disclosed...
minutes (2-8) of...
therefore, my opinion...
the same gun.

It is true that a...
indicates that they...
it must be realized...
have with accuracy...
this fact.

As you can see...
marks are NOT...

1. Examination

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A F F I D A V I T

I, WILLIAM W. HARPER, being first duly sworn, depose as follows:

1. I am a resident of the State of California and for approximately thirty-seven years have lived at 615 Prospect Boulevard in Pasadena, California.

2. I am now and for thirty-five years have been engaged in the field of consulting criminalistics.

3. My formal academic background includes studies at Columbia University, University of California at Los Angeles and California Institute of Technology where I spent four years, including studies in physics and mathematics with the major portion devoted to physics research.

4. My practical experience and positions held include seven years as consulting criminalist to the Pasadena Police Department where I was in charge of the Technical Laboratory engaging in the technical phases of police training and all technical field investigations including those involving fire-arms. I was, during World War II, for three years in charge of technical investigation for Naval Intelligence in the 11th Naval District, located at San Diego, California.

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After my release from the Navy, I entered private practice as a consulting criminalist. Extending over a period of 35 years I have handled roughly 300 cases involving fire-

Exhibit "A"

- 1 -

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arms in homicides, suicides and accidental shootings. I have testified as a consulting criminalist in both criminal and civil litigations and for both defense and prosecution in both State and Federal Courts. I have qualified as an expert in the courts of California, Washington, Oregon, Texas, Nevada, Arizona and Utah. I am a Fellow of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences.

5. During the past seven months I have made a careful review and study of the physical circumstances of the assassination of Senator Robert F. Kennedy in Los Angeles, California. In this connection I have examined the physical evidence introduced at the trial, including the Sirhan weapon, the bullets and shell cases. I have also studied the autopsy report, the autopsy photographs, and pertinent portions of the trial testimony.

6. Based on my background and training, upon my experience as a consulting criminalist, and my studies, examination and analysis of data related to the Robert F. Kennedy assassination, I have arrived at the following findings and opinions:

