

February 11, 1998

Dr. Vincent J.M. Di Maio
Chief Medical Examiner
Bexar County Forensic Science Center
7337 Louis Pasteur Drive
San Antonio, Texas 78229

Dear Doctor Di Maio:

I would like to thank you again for taking the time to come to Washington. We appreciate your willingness to examine the digitized autopsy photos and the computer enhancements.

As we discussed, the purpose of your visit was for us to obtain your candid thoughts on whether the additional visual information in the digitized images of the autopsy is sufficient to warrant the convening of a panel of experts to examine the materials. It was not our intention to ask that you make any substantive judgments regarding what the autopsy materials reveal in the way of injuries. In lieu of your drafting a written report, I offered to write a brief summary of what I understood your thoughts to have been. There is no need for you to respond to this letter, unless you believe that I have misrepresented issues in any way.

Materials Examined

The Review Board gave you access to three sets of materials. You were first shown digitized images of the autopsy photographs on computer monitors. This digitized information allowed you to select portions of the images for enhancements. You were shown several views, both in black and white and color. (No prints were made from these images, as the information is all on computer disk.) Second, you were shown prints ("hard copies") of the digitized images that are stored at the National Archives. Finally, at your request, you were shown the autopsy x-rays.

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Observations and Recommendations

It is my understanding that you were very impressed by the technical quality of the digitized photographs and that you noted that there is a great deal of detail that can be observed in these images. The images are of such high quality that it is possible to observe, for example, the minute detail of the pores of the skin and the contours of the wounds. The problem that you identified was not the quality of the images, but the fact that ideally there should have been additional photographs taken, that the wounds should have been shown with the head shaved, and that there should have been clear images of the skull with the scalp reflected. The problem, in brief, is not that the available images are not of use, but that additional photographs showing additional views would be needed in order to answer questions about the exact nature of the wounds to the head.

It is my understanding that you and Dr. Lee believed it would be appropriate to undertake the creation of a "3-dimensional" x-ray using copies of the x-rays that are now at the National Archives. We will look into this matter.

There was also a suggestion that attempts be made to electronically "filter out" the hair color on the digitized autopsy images of the head in an attempt to determine whether it is possible to observe any additional wounds or damage on the scalp or skull. We will look into this matter, although the preliminary indications are that the likelihood of success is slim.

Finally, you did not recommend that a panel be convened at this time, inasmuch as the additional visual evidence is not now sufficient that a panel would be able to reach any conclusions with a sufficient degree of scientific certainty.

I hope that this is a reasonably accurate summary of your recommendations. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you believe any corrections to this memorialization should be made.

Again, we very much appreciate your contribution to our work.

Sincerely,

T. Jeremy Gunn
Executive Director