

Gentlemen, I am grateful for the opportunity to tell you in brief detail some of the problems faced by the Dallas Police Department, before, at the time of and subsequent to the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. Because of the magnitude of the crime it is difficult for me to know exactly what to include and what to omit. In approximately fifteen minutes I must try to summarize the days of preparation of the President's visit to Dallas, and the weeks of investigation following his assassination there.

My remarks are necessarily going to be to a certain extent incoherent. An account of all that has occurred would take hours rather than the few minutes I have. My task is primarily one of selection and I apologize to you in advance if I fail to address points in which you are particularly interested.

Another thing I must explain at the outset - investigations into the circumstances surrounding the assassination continue. While we have no indication of exactly when they will be completed we confidently expect that everything that can be learned will be learned and will eventually be made public knowledge. At the present time certain information in possession of investigative agencies has not been released. It has been indicated to the Dallas Police Department that the Warren Commission, studying the assassination, would prefer that no comments be made regarding certain evidence accumulated against Lee Harvey Oswald and Jack Ruby. So, to a degree I am here under limitations. Certain things I am not permitted to discuss. I must honor the limitations placed upon me. At times I might seem inconsistent to you, for I may discuss parts of a question and must decline comment on other parts. Perhaps I might err in my appraisal of

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what is proper for discussion and what is not. I have to be the one who decides how far I go. I do promise you this - I will not fail to answer any question you pose because of a desire to be evasive. I will not refrain from answering merely because I think my answer will not reflect favorably on me or my Department. If I fail to field one of your questions because I think it is too hot to handle I will very frankly tell you so.

The activities of the Dallas Police Department, so far as this subject is concerned, fall into rather clearly definable categories. One is our preparation for the visit of President Kennedy to the City of Dallas on November 22, 1963.

The Police Department first became officially aware of his impending visit on November 13, nine days prior to his arrival. Of course, we knew from newspaper accounts in advance of this date that he was coming. It was, however, on Wednesday, November 13, that we first met with members of the Secret Service to receive authoritative notification that the President would visit Dallas. From that time until November 22 there were at least daily conferences and on most days several conferences were held.

I might point out here that at that time the position of the Dallas Police Department was purely supportive. The Air Force had primary responsibility for seeing that the President arrived in Dallas safely, and the Secret Service had primary responsibility for his continued safety after his arrival. It was the responsibility of the Police Department to assist the Secret Service in any manner possible.

Our plans for security called for attention to three specific locations - first, the airport at which the President would de plane; second, the route his motorcade would follow to the Trade Mart, the location at which he was

to speak, and; third, at the Trade Mart itself.

To provide as great a degree of safety as possible a Deputy Chief and fifty-four members of the Dallas Police Department were at Dallas Love Field when the President's plane arrived. They assisted in crowd control at that location and did those things necessary to insure that the President's motorcade left the airport on time.

An additional 178 men were assigned to the parade route. As a part of the planning process members of the Police Department and representatives of the Secret Service traveled over the parade route and decided at what locations officers would be needed. At the request of the Secret Service we assigned an officer at each signalized intersection through which the motorcade would pass. Additionally, we assigned from two to four men at each intersection where a turn would be made, because of the belief that at these locations the crowd would be heaviest. We assigned men to all locations where the motorcade would pass under a bridge or railroad trestle. Without being asked to do so we assigned plain-clothes detectives and uniform officers to patrol blocks where the crowds were expected to be the heaviest.

At the Trade Mart we assigned 63 men to work the parking area outside and 150 men under the command of a Deputy Chief to provide security inside.

In all 447 men were used on specific assignments associated with the President's visit. The very great majority of these men were off-duty personnel. Approximately 400 off-duty men were brought back on duty to supplement the regularly assigned details. Of 1100 total strength of the Department at least 850 were on duty at the time of the President's arrival.

I mentioned that the role of the Dallas Police Department in preparing

for the visit of the President was a supportive one. In the few seconds it took to fire the shots that took the President's life the role of the Department changed from one of support to one of primary responsibility for the investigation of his death.

At the location of the assassination investigators were able to quickly determine that an employee had been at work prior to the assassination, but was missing after the offense. A description of this man was secured and was broadcast on the police radio. The description was "A slender white male, about 30 years of age, about 5' 10" tall, weighing about 165 pounds, carrying what looked like a 30-30 rifle or some type Winchester."

At 1:18 p.m. a citizen came on the police radio, to report that an Officer had been shot in the 400 block of east 10th street, approximately 2 miles from the scene of the assassination of the President.

Later investigation revealed that Dallas Police Officer J. D. Tippit had approached a man subsequently identified as Lee Harvey Oswald, and had been killed by Oswald. Since both Officer Tippit and Oswald are now dead, we can only speculate on what probably happened at the scene of the Officer's death.

Officer Tippit was driving his squad car east on Tenth Street, when he observed Oswald walking west on the south side of the street. The Officer pulled alongside Oswald, and talked to him briefly across the front seat of the police car. The Officer then got out of the car and walked around to the front of it. When he reached the front of the car Oswald opened fire. His three shots struck Officer Tippit in the temple, the forehead and the chest. Any of the three would probably have been fatal. Oswald fled the scene on foot, and a short time later the Department received

information that he had entered a theatre in the 200 block of West Jefferson, seven blocks from the scene of the Officer's death. Policemen converged on the theatre, and a search was begun. Officer M. N. McDonald approached a man later identified as Oswald in the center section of the theatre, three rows from the back. As he approached, Oswald said, "This is it," and attempted to draw a gun. Officer McDonald grappled with him, disarmed him and placed him under arrest. He was immediately taken to the Central Police Station for interrogation by members of the Homicide and Robbery Bureau. He arrived at Police Headquarters approximately an hour and ten minutes after he killed the President.

When Oswald arrived at the police station it was already crowded with newsmen. They had begun to arrive within minutes of the assassination, and within an hour the hallways resembled the scenes you saw on your televisions and in your newspapers. From that time until many hours after the murder of Oswald the hallways were congested by newsmen.

We have been severely criticized by a great number of people for permitting newsmen to remain in the hallways of police headquarters. Perhaps this criticism is justified. At that time we felt a necessity for permitting the newsmen as much latitude as possible. We realized the magnitude of the incident the newsmen were there to cover. We realized that not only the nation but the world would be greatly interested in what occurred in Dallas. We believed that we had an obligation to make as widely known as possible everything we could regarding the investigation of the assassination and the manner in which we undertook that investigation.

We realized that if we hid the most important prisoner of the century from the public eye, accusations would be made that he actually did not

commit the offense with which he was charged and that we had fabricated a suspect.

We realized that improper investigation procedures could be charged against us. As a matter of fact, even with the openness with which we approached the investigation we heard murmurs in this vein. A short time after Oswald's arrest one newsman held up a photograph and said, "This is what the man charged with the assassination of the President looks like. Or at least this is what he did look like. We don't know what he looks like after an hour in the custody of the Dallas Police Department."

I believe that what was a whisper would have been a deafening roar of protest had we failed to make available to the public all possible information concerning our investigation. Many persons who criticized us for permitting newsmen to remain at the scene have admitted that they lived in front of their television sets with their newspapers in their hands. We were, I am sure, in a position of being "Damned if we did and damned if we didn't."

We have been further criticized for announcing to the press the time of the anticipated transfer of Oswald. Without in any way attempting to evade responsibility for any action which we took, let me briefly explain how the statement of a 10 o'clock transfer came about.

On Saturday night some of the newsmen, who had been at the station constantly since shortly after the assassination, approached our Assistant Chief and asked if they would have time to get something to eat before Oswald was transferred. They were told that if they were back by 10 o'clock the next morning, they would be in time for the transfer. This statement did indicate to the newsmen our intention to transfer Oswald sometime after

10:00 a.m. Sunday and it did indicate our intention to permit them to be present when the transfer was made. We didn't know exactly at what time we could effect the transfer. We were sure it would not be prior to 10 o'clock.

We have been asked why we did not transfer him under cover of darkness when the police station and the streets were empty. In the first place, visibility at night is greatly reduced and we felt that we needed as great a degree of visibility as possible to provide as great a degree of security as possible. We felt that darkness would work against us and would serve as an ally to anyone who might choose to attack from that darkness.

Also, so far as the crowd at the City Hall was concerned there was little difference between 3:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. At no hour were the hallways clear. I am sure that if we had waited a week to make the transfer there would have still been a large number of newsmen in the police station around the clock.

Again, this is not an attempt on my part to evade responsibility. Obviously, the newsmen were in the police station because we permitted them to be there. They were exercising a privilege we gave them.

The attempted transfer of Oswald to the County Jail was not accompanied by the lackadaisical attitude with which we have been frequently charged. We took far greater precautions than we believed to be necessary. Prior to the transfer members of our Department went into the basement and required everyone there to leave. With flashlights they then searched every nook and cranny where anyone might hide. They searched every automobile there to be sure that no one had concealed himself, even opening the trunks to make sure that they were not occupied.

Men were stationed on every stairway, every elevator, every ramp and every doorway leading to the parking area. Then the newsmen were permitted to come back into the parking area after their credentials had been checked.

I am not permitted to say how Jack Ruby gained entrance into the police basement. We are convinced we know exactly how it was done, but I have been asked not to comment on it. I will say that it was a momentary breakdown of security at one specific location and that Ruby did not gain entrance by collusion either with a newsman or a policeman, both of which possibilities have been frequently voiced.

There is no question that the presence of a large number of news media representatives in the basement made it possible for Ruby to enter and murder Oswald. Again, this is not an attempt on my part to place responsibility on the shoulders of the press. The newsmen were in the basement because we permitted them to be there.

I realize that my remarks have ignored entire areas and that I have touched very lightly upon many points I have attempted to cover. At the proper time I shall be happy to try to answer any questions you might have that come within the limitations imposed upon me.