



U. S. NAVAL MEDICAL SCHOOL
 NATIONAL NAVAL MEDICAL CENTER
 BETHESDA, MARYLAND 20014

In reply refer to
 NC43-34-MBD
 5830
 13 FEBRUARY 1967

FROM: BOARD OF INVESTIGATION
 TO: COMMANDING OFFICER, NAVAL MEDICAL SCHOOL, NATIONAL NAVAL MEDICAL CENTER, BETHESDA, MARYLAND 20014

SUBJ: INFORMAL BOARD OF INVESTIGATION TO INQUIRE INTO THE CIRCUMSTANCES SURROUNDING THE DEATH OF LIEUTENANT COMMANDER WILLIAM BRUCE PITZER, MSC USN, 416681/2301 ON 29 OCTOBER 1966

ENCL: (1) APPOINTING ORDER NC43-3-RCR 5830 SER: 445 DTD 3 NOV 1966
 (2) COPY OF STATEMENT OF ADMINISTRATIVE DUTY OFFICER, NNMC
 (3) COPY OF SYNOPSIS OF INTERVIEW WITH MRS. JOYCE B. PITZER
 (4) PHOTOGRAPH OF REMAINS
 (5) STATEMENT OF R.L. BRAY, SUPERVISORY GUARD, NNMC
 (6) AUTOPSY PROTOCOL (SF 503) OF 0800, 30 OCTOBER 1966; COPY OF
 (7) COPY OF CERTIFICATE OF DEATH (NAV MED FORM N)
 (8) COPY OF MARYLAND STATE MEDICAL EXAMINER'S CERTIFICATE OF DEATH
 (9) COPY OF SYNOPSIS OF INTERVIEW WITH
 (10) COPY OF PSYCHIATRIST'S MEMORANDUM
 (11) COPY OF LETTER FROM LCDR PITZER TO

PRELIMINARY STATEMENT

1. IMMEDIATELY AFTER THIS BOARD OF INVESTIGATION WAS APPOINTED, THE BOARD WAS ADVISED THAT ASSISTANCE BY THE NAVAL INVESTIGATIVE SERVICE OFFICE HAD BEEN REQUESTED BY THE NATIONAL NAVAL MEDICAL CENTER TO DETERMINE THE CIRCUMSTANCES SURROUNDING THE DEATH OF LCDR PITZER. MR. PITZER HAD BEEN GRANTED A FINAL TOP SECRET CLEARANCE AND THE SERVICES OF NIS WERE INDICATED TO PROTECT THE INTEREST OF NATIONAL SECURITY IN THE EVENT THE INVESTIGATION DISCLOSED POSSIBLE COMPROMISE. THE BOARD WAS ADVISED ALSO THAT, THROUGH NIS, ASSISTANCE BY THE FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION HAD BEEN REQUESTED TO PROVIDE FOR THE CONTINGENCY OF HOMICIDE. IN COMPLIANCE WITH THE INSTRUCTION CONTAINED IN SECTION 0213, MANUAL OF THE JUDGE ADVOCATE GENERAL, THE BOARD CONTACTED THE LOCAL FIELD REPRESENTATIVE OF NIS. THE NIS REPRESENTATIVE DID NOT SPECIFICALLY WITHHOLD CONSENT FOR THE BOARD TO CONDUCT AN INDIVIDUAL INVESTIGATION, BUT REQUESTED THAT THE BOARD INTERVIEW NO WITNESSES UNTIL THE NIS INVESTIGATION WAS COMPLETE, AND STATED THAT ALL PHYSICAL EVIDENCE HAD BEEN COLLECTED

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AND WAS RETAINED BY NIS. ON 15 NOVEMBER 1966, THIS BOARD OF INVESTIGATION SUBMITTED A PRELIMINARY REPORT SOLELY FOR THE PURPOSE OF ADVISING THE CONVENING AUTHORITY OF DELAY IN SUBMITTING ITS REPORT WHICH WOULD RESULT FROM AWAITING COMPLETION OF THE NIS INVESTIGATION. THROUGHOUT THE PROGRESS OF THE NIS INVESTIGATION THIS BOARD OF INVESTIGATION MAINTAINED FREQUENT CONTACT WITH THE LOCAL REPRESENTATIVE. INFORMATION DEVELOPED BY NIS WAS ORALLY REPORTED TO THIS BOARD, AND ON 9 JANUARY 1967, THIS BOARD OF INVESTIGATION OBTAINED A COPY OF THE PENDING REPORT SUBMITTED BY NIS. INVESTIGATION DATA CONTAINED IN THIS REPORT WAS DEVELOPED BY THE NIS AND HAS BEEN OBTAINED BY THIS BOARD OF INVESTIGATION THROUGH REGULAR CONTACT WITH THE NIS REPRESENTATIVES AND BY A REVIEW OF THE PENDING REPORT SUBMITTED BY THE NIS. ON 9 FEBRUARY 1967, NIS, WASHINGTON, D.C. AUTHORIZED THIS BOARD OF INVESTIGATION TO REPRODUCE CERTAIN ENCLOSURES TO THIS REPORT WHICH ARE INCLUDED HEREIN AS ENCLOSURES (2), (3), (9), (10), AND (11). NO INDEPENDENT DATA DEVELOPED BY THIS BOARD IS IN CONFLICT WITH THE FINDINGS REPORTED BY NIS.

FINDINGS OF FACT

1. THAT AT APPROXIMATELY 1950 ON 29 OCTOBER 1966, A BODY WAS DISCOVERED IN THE TELEVISION STUDIO, NAVAL MEDICAL SCHOOL, BUILDING 144, NATIONAL NAVAL MEDICAL CENTER, BETHESDA, MARYLAND, BY ENS J. M. QUARLES, MSC USNR, AND NNMIC SECURITY PATROL OFFICER, THOMAS E. BLUE (ENCLOSURE (2)).
2. THAT SPECIAL AGENT _____, NAVAL INVESTIGATIVE SERVICE, ARRIVED ON THE SCENE AT 2105, IN RESPONSE TO A TELEPHONE REQUEST FROM THE CHIEF OF THE DAY, NNMIC, HMC J. E. OSTRANDER.
3. THAT THE BODY WAS TENTATIVELY IDENTIFIED AT THE SCENE BY CAPT J. H. STOVER, MC USN, AND CDR JAMES G. HARMELING, MC USN, AS BEING THE REMAINS OF LCDR WILLIAM B. PITZER, MSC USN, 416681/2301. THAT ON 2 NOVEMBER 1966, CDR J. W. GUINN, MSC USN, VIEWED THE REMAINS PRIOR TO INTERMENT. BASED ON YEARS OF ASSOCIATION HE IDENTIFIED THE REMAINS OF LCDR WILLIAM BRUCE PITZER, MSC USN.
4. THAT SHORTLY BEFORE THE BODY WAS FOUND, MRS. PITZER HAD CONTACTED THIS COMMAND, STATING THAT SHE WAS CONCERNED BECAUSE HER

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HUSBAND WAS OVERDUE AT HOME. SINCE HIS PERSONAL AUTOMOBILE WAS ON THE PARKING LOT, THE SECURITY PERSONNEL ON DUTY ENTERED THE TV STUDIO IN FURTHERANCE OF THEIR EFFORTS TO LOCATE LCDR PITZER (ENCLOSURE (3)).

5. THAT LCDR ROBERT W. STEYN, MC USN, EXAMINED THE REMAINS AT 2010, ONLY AS NECESSARY TO PRONOUNCE DEATH.

6. THAT A S & W .38 CALIBER REVOLVER CONTAINING ONE SPENT CARTRIDGE, ONE LIVE ROUND, AND ONE LIVE BLANK ROUND WAS FOUND ON THE FLOOR NEAR THE BODY.

7. THAT A PHOTOGRAPH WAS TAKEN OF THE REMAINS AND THE SURROUNDING AREA AS THEY APPEARED SHORTLY AFTER THE NIS INVESTIGATION WAS INSTITUTED (ENCLOSURE (4)).

8. THAT THE REVOLVER HAD BEEN DRAWN FROM THE NNMC SECURITY OFFICER TO BE USED AS A TRAINING AID BY LCDR PITZER, BUT THAT ONLY BLANK AMMUNITION HAD BEEN SUPPLIED WITH IT (ENCLOSURE (5)).

9. THAT AN AUTOPSY WAS PERFORMED ON 30 OCTOBER 1966, AT THE NAVAL HOSPITAL, BETHESDA, MARYLAND, WHICH DISCLOSED THE CAUSE OF DEATH TO BE A GUNSHOT WOUND IN THE HEAD (ENCLOSURE (6) AND (7)).

10. THAT JOHN G. BALL, M.D., MONTGOMERY COUNTY MEDICAL EXAMINER, EXAMINED LCDR PITZER'S REMAINS AT ABOUT 2330, 29 OCTOBER 1966, AND THAT ON 2 NOVEMBER 1966, DOCTOR BALL ADVISED NIS AGENTS IT WAS HIS PROFESSIONAL OPINION THAT THE CAUSE OF DEATH WAS SUICIDE BY GUNSHOT, THE BRAIN HAVING BEEN LACERATED BY A BULLET (ENCLOSURE (8)).

11. THAT ALTHOUGH A THOROUGH SEARCH OF LCDR PITZER'S PERSON, HIS OFFICE, INCLUDING A PERSONAL BRIEFCASE, AND HIS AUTOMOBILE FAILED TO REVEAL A SUICIDE NOTE, NEITHER WAS ANY EVIDENCE ADDUCED TO SUPPORT THE IDEA OF HOMICIDE.

12. THAT LCDR PITZER WAS EXPERIENCING PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL DIFFICULTIES FROM OVERWORK; THAT HE HAD BEEN DEEPLY CONCERNED WITH DISCIPLINARY PROBLEMS INVOLVING HIS YOUNGER SON; AND THAT HE WAS EXPERIENCING MARITAL DIFFICULTY AND WAS INTIMATELY ASSOCIATED WITH ANOTHER WOMAN (ENCLOSURE (9), (10), AND (11)).

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OPINIONS

1. INVESTIGATION OF THIS INCIDENT REVEALED NO DIRECT REASON FOR SUICIDE AND NO APPARENT TENDENCY TOWARD SUICIDE, BUT THE INFORMATION DEVELOPED DURING THE INQUIRY PERHAPS JUSTIFIES AN INFERENCE THAT THE PROBLEMS CONFRONTING LCDR PITZER WERE MORE THAN HE WAS ABLE TO TOLERATE.

2. IT IS THE OPINION OF THIS BOARD OF INVESTIGATION THAT LCDR WILLIAM P. PITZER'S DEATH OCCURRED FROM A SELF-INFLICTED GUNSHOT WOUND IN HIS HEAD.


T. G. FERRIS
LCDR MSC USNR


J. W. GUINN
CDR MSC USN

in motel rooms and Pitzer spoke of his various dissatisfactions with his married life. After he last left her in Pensacola on October 22, the woman wrote him a "casual note" at his business address and then, on October 28, a somewhat complaining letter noting that she had not heard from him: "am I that easy to forget?" Then, on the fateful afternoon of Saturday the 29th at 2:45 p.m., Pitzer calls the woman from his office, is unable to reach her, and then pens a note acknowledging the "casual note", asking her not to write again but to wait to hear from him, but projecting a meeting with her in January, then closing with the provocative phrase, "until you hear from me or of me, I am always, Bill." This was enough to convince the woman that Pitzer was thus anticipating his suicide (he left no suicide note). The Navy seemingly agreed, the Board of Investigation citing as a possible factor that Pitzer was "experiencing marital difficulty and was intimately associated with another woman." [11]

Although the Navy investigators were quite sure that Pitzer's death was a suicide, Marvin has been able to obtain through FOIA 140 pages of FBI investigative material on the Pitzer death; [12] and this material sup-

ports a far different scenario of Pitzer's death. The FBI was initially brought into the case through a request from NIS for Bureau investigation "to provide for the contingency of homicide." [13] There are two basic kinds of material in this file: a) interviews with witnesses aimed at showing Pitzer's mental condition at the time of his death in an attempt to establish the plausibility of his committing suicide; and b) laboratory examinations of ballistics and finger print evidence from the scene. Most of this investigation was handled by the Baltimore office of the FBI.

On October 30, the Baltimore office contacted LCDR H. B. Lowsma, who had participated in the autopsy, and got his "preliminary opinion" that Pitzer died from a gun shot wound to the head, although he noted that the "gun not resting against head when shot fired and he could not estimate the distance away." [14] On the following Monday, November 1, the NIS forwarded to the FBI laboratory numerous pieces of physical evidence, including the weapon, one spent, three blank and one live cartridge; fourteen latent fingerprints lifted from chairs and beer cans at the scene; and a paraffin cast of the deceased's right hand. [15] We shall return shortly