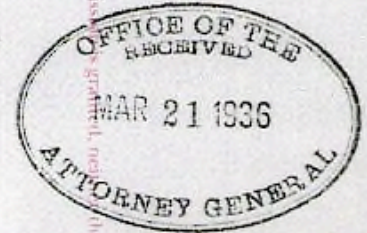


JOHN EDGAR HOOVER  
DIRECTOR

Federal Bureau of Investigation  
U. S. Department of Justice  
Washington, D. C.  
March 19, 1936.



MEMORANDUM FOR THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

Re: RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN HIGHLY-POWERED  
PISTOLS AND REVOLVERS

Reference is made to my memorandum to you dated February 5, 1936, in which I described in detail the recent developments in highly-powered sidearms.

Your particular attention is directed to page 2, paragraph 2, of the memorandum of reference, in which I advised you that I anticipated that the qualities of the Magnum cartridge and the zinc bullet would eventually be combined, thereby again increasing the velocity and penetrative ability of sidearms and their ammunition.

Please be advised that this Bureau is now in receipt of information which substantiates that anticipation. The information is to the effect that experimentation is at the present time in progress whereby the combination of the zinc bullet and the Magnum cartridge will soon be perfected. Also, that the Magnum cartridge will soon be manufactured with a metal jacket, which will again increase its penetrative force. The above information is of a confidential nature and if divulged to the public, would seriously jeopardize the possibility of obtaining additional information.

It appears that there now exists a competitive race between the leading firearms and cartridge manufacturers in the United States to develop the highest velocity cartridge possible for use in pistols and revolvers. As suggested in the memorandum of reference, the eventual outcome of such competition can not be foreseen. It should be borne in mind, however, that each advance in velocity and penetration renders hundreds of thousands of dollars of equipment now in use by law enforcement agencies useless and obsolete. May I also call to your attention the fact that these developments will eventually be of much greater assistance to the criminal element than to the law enforcement agencies or to the law abiding citizens.

3/19/36

ONLY ADVANTAGE IS PENETRATION

It is a recognized fact that the most effective pistol bullet to fire at a human being is the one exerting the greatest amount of shock. This quality is developed by combining a heavy bullet with low velocity, which accomplishes its end by remaining in the body at which it was fired, thus causing the recipient to absorb the entire energy of the bullet. This is more clearly understood when it is realized that when a high velocity bullet having 500 pounds energy passes through a body and emerges with sufficient velocity to exert 250 pounds energy on a second object, the body into which it was originally fired has only absorbed approximately half of the entire energy of the bullet, or 250 pounds. Therefore, only half of the total energy has been utilized and the other half wasted or permitted to pass on and jeopardize other persons. It is true that with extremely high velocity bullets, there is an explosive reaction which takes place in flesh, which will not be discussed here due to the fact that at the present writing at least, it only occurs to a marked degree through the use of rifle cartridges. The foregoing description of shock is brought to your attention so that it may be more clearly realized that the recent developments in pistol and revolver cartridges are not of any particular advantage, other than for their penetrative force, which the higher velocities are rapidly increasing.

EFFECT ON BULLET-PROOF MATERIALS

It is interesting to note that a representative of a concern which manufactures bullet-proof vests and shields recently advised that all the equipment which that concern has sold in the past has recently become obsolete, and attempts will be made to reinforce such equipment so that adequate protection can be afforded customers who now own it.

A similar matter of concern is the fact that the bullet-proof vests and shields owned by this Bureau will not withstand either the Magnum cartridge or the zinc bullet and obviously are extremely ineffective in so far as the contemplated metal patch or zinc bullet in the Magnum cartridge are concerned.

SHOOTING CLUBS AND HIGH VELOCITY AMMUNITION

It is not believed that members of the various shooting clubs and organizations would concern themselves over a curtailment of highly-powered sidearms. Additional penetration is of no value to target shooting, and it is logical to assume that organizations promoting this sport would be in hearty accord with legislation curtailing high velocity bullets in an attempt to insure their members the continued use of target pistols.



Memo for the Attorney General

-3-

3/19/36

HOW LIMITATIONS CAN BE DEFINED

As the menacing developments of these guns depend wholly upon the breach pressure and velocity, it would not be difficult to definitely define a limitation on these two items which would permanently control the rapid advances now being made. If you so desire, technicians of this Bureau will offer specific suggestions relative thereto.

May I respectfully suggest that you consider referring these facts to the appropriate House Committee for such legislative action as may be deemed advisable.

Respectfully,

*J. Edgar Hoover*  
John Edgar Hoover,  
Director.



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