

## Agency Information

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EDWARDS, SHEFFIELD  
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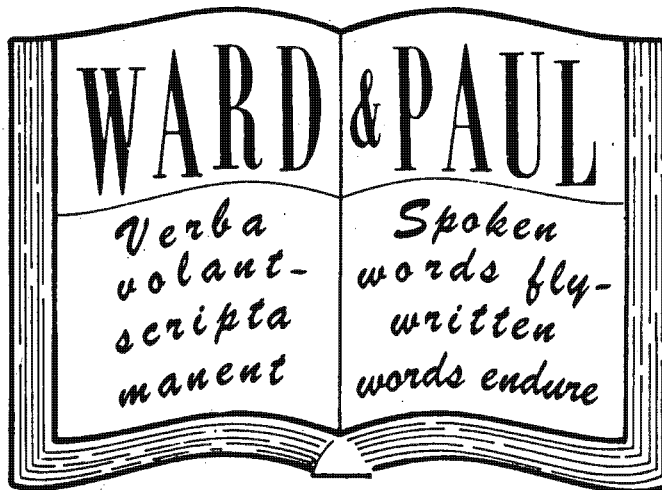
PRESIDENT'S COMMISSION  
ON CIA ACTIVITIES

1 of 2

Deposition of: RICHARD MCGARRAH HELMS

Wednesday, April 23, 1975

Langley, Virginia



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C O N T E N T S

TESTIMONY OF:

PAGE

Richard McGarrah Helms

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(AFTERNOON SESSION - p. 109)

EXHIBITS

NUMBER

FOR IDENTIFICATION

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1 with the Agency of the development or discussions of any plans  
2 concerning the possible assassination of Patrice Lumumba?

3 A I don't recall anything about any plans to assassinate  
4 Patrice Lumumba. I know that Lumumba was a controversial figure  
5 at the time. I know whatever year this was -- was in the  
6 Eisenhower or the Kennedy era that Lumumba was riding high.

7 Q I believe that the era would have been in the era of  
8 1959, '60. I believe he was killed in early '61.

9 A I remember later hearing all kinds of allegations  
10 about Lumumba and how he had been killed and why he had been  
11 killed. I remember also the fact that the -- it was abundantly  
12 clear that the Agency had had nothing to do with his demise  
13 but whether there was a plot on the Agency at sometime or  
14 another to try to bring about his demise I was not familiar with  
15 it. I want to say here I will obviously do the very best I  
16 can with my recollection but when you consider how much has been  
17 in the newspapers about a number of things in the last period of  
18 years it is pretty hard to stick in time when you first heard  
19 about something.

20 All I am trying to convey here is I was not as far as I  
21 know privy to any ongoing plan to get rid of Patrice Lumumba  
22 by assassination.

23 Q Now, the dictator of the Dominican Republic, Mr.  
24 Trujillo, was killed on or about May 30, '61. Prior to that  
25 time were you aware of the fact that there had been a request

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1 made of the Agency to deliver guns to dissidents in the  
2 Dominican Republic?

3 A I don't believe I was familiar with it at the time  
4 although I can't say. I certainly heard about the gun business  
5 later because I had occasion to go back when President Johnson  
6 asked me about this episode at one time to look into the records  
7 to find out about Trujillo. I could find no evidence that the  
8 Agency had been responsible for his demise but I did find  
9 evidence at the time that there was an opposition group in the  
10 United States Government was anxious to have the Agency support  
11 and assist and I think I may very well have known about the  
12 opposition group at the time.

13 I have no recollection any longer that I was privy to the  
14 sending of any guns for to the Dominican Republic and if I was,  
15 I don't recall they were ever identified as being designed to  
16 kill Mr. Trujillo. I know there was a desire on the part of  
17 whatever Administration was in power then, they didn't like Mr.  
18 Trujillo. They like Mr. Duvalier and certain others but I was  
19 aware of no attempts to bring about his death through Agency  
20 assets.

21 I think since you have raised this question of an assassi-  
22 nation I would like to say something as a generality here.

23 Dearly in the game when Colonel Galloway was my boss in  
24 what was then known as the Office of Special Operations, I don't  
25 even recall any more in what connection this came up but he said

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1 to me one day that the Agency should certainly have the  
2 capability to get rid of foreigners when required and that this  
3 had to be done secretly and you should never ask your boss for  
4 permission to do these things, and so forth. I remember at the  
5 time arguing with him about this and saying that I thought that  
6 there was no possibility whatever that the United States Govern-  
7 ment could develop a capacity to kill people because you could  
8 never keep it a secret. Sooner or later, maybe after five years  
9 ten years, Lord knows what, someone would come in or write some  
10 Congressman and say the Agency was responsible for killing so  
11 and so and aside from the morality of it I felt it was impracti-  
12 cal for the US Government to do something like that at this time  
13 I felt that way all the time I was Director. I never in my life  
14 towards killing, murder, assassination of anybody of whom I am  
15 aware, and so I can only tell you that as the years have gone  
16 by, as I say, quite aside from moral aspects of this thing,  
17 the improbability of ever being able to do anything like that as  
18 an American Government agency has become less and less viable.

19 In fact, I have often said to associates that there are  
20 three things that the American people would never stand for.  
21 One is assassination, two is rape, and three is dealing in  
22 drugs. So that I didn't want anybody in the Agency thinking  
23 that any of those things were going to be satisfactory to me.

24 Q Mr. Manfredi asked you about some notes in which there  
25 was the mention of three handwritten names by you. One was

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1 Castro, one was Trujillo, and do you remember what the third  
2 was?

3 A Diem.

4 Q And I think you have already testified about that.

5 A I just did, because President Johnson had raised these  
6 cases with me and I thought that since he had done it he might  
7 have raised them with President Nixon and early in his Admini-  
8 stration I wanted to get him straightened out on this.

9 You know, to this day I am not persuaded that President  
10 Nixon doesn't still believe that the Agency didn't have something  
11 to do with the demise of President Diem of Vietnam and there is  
12 absolutely no evidence of this in the Agency records and the  
13 whole thing has been, I mean, rather -- what is the word I want  
14 -- heated by the fact that President Johnson used to go around  
15 saying that the reason President Kennedy was assassinated was  
16 that he had assassinated President Diem and this was just  
17 justice. He certainly used to say that in the early days of his  
18 Presidency and where he got this idea from I don't know. I  
19 don't know how many of you had the privilege of trying to argue  
20 with Presidents about things like that but you tend to be a  
21 loser.

22 Q Let me just digress on that one point for the moment.  
23 Before we get back to Mr. Castro. After the election in Chile,  
24 I believe it was in 1970 where Allende derived a plurality,  
25 President Nixon called you or contacted you to ascertain if

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1 anything could be done to prevent his investiture, that is,  
2 Allende's investiture by the Chilean legislature. Do you  
3 remember that call?

4 A. No.

5 Q. Or contact?

6 A. I knew this subject had come up but I thought it came  
7 up in the context of the 40 Committee deliberations. I don't  
8 recall a conversation with President Nixon. I don't say I never  
9 had one. I just don't recall it in that form.

10 Q. Do you recall any request made by the President or  
11 anyone else in the White House that the Agency funnel funds and  
12 also even perhaps submachine guns to see if something could be  
13 done to prevent the legislature from electing him?

14 A. Well, certainly they wanted the legislature not to  
15 elect President Allende. The Nixon Administration certainly  
16 didn't want that. My recollection of the circumstance, though,  
17 at the time was that having investigated this, we came to the  
18 conclusion there was no way to prevent his investiture. And  
19 I do not recall anything about machine guns.

20 Q. Or guns of any kind?

21 A. I don't recall anything about guns. I recall a desire  
22 to bribe, see if it was possible to bribe enough representatives  
23 who were going to participate in the election. That was a non-  
24 available affair. There was no entity in Chile that showed the  
25 slightest interest in upsetting the Government or the results

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1 of the election and, although there was a great deal of  
2 pressure to do something about it, I don't recall our finding  
3 any way that we could have done it.

4 Q Do you recall that there was a specific direction  
5 from the President that you not advise the Secretary of  
6 State of this request from the White House? Do you ever  
7 recall that being done?

8 A No, I don't recall his saying it in this connection  
9 but, Mr. Belin, let me just say that this was a favorite  
10 device of President Nixon. Don't tell so and so. Be sure  
11 you keep this secret. So I am not questioning the fact that  
12 he might very well have said it. On the other hand, I don't  
13 recall it in this connection.

14 Q In what connection do you recall his telling you  
15 not to tell the Secretary of State about it?

16 A Oh, I think these were things having to do with  
17 Vietnam and Southeast Asia, as best I recall.

18 Q Do you recall his ever telling you not to tell any-  
19 thing about this particular subject involving Chile to  
20 the Forty Committee?

21 A No. I don't remember that.

22 Q I assume that if the President would have told you  
23 not to tell the Secretary of State, you would have followed  
24 the direction of the President.

25 A Oh, of course.

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1 Q And if he told you not to tell the Forty Committee  
2 you would have followed his direction on that?

3 A Yes. After all, these devices are part of his  
4 office.

5 Q And if he told you not to tell the President's  
6 Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board you would follow his  
7 direction there?

8 A Yes. I think there would be no question about it.  
9 He was my boss.

10 Q And if he told you not to tell Congressional over-  
11 sight committees you would follow his direction there?

12 A I never recall having discussed that with him, not  
13 informing the Congress. I don't recall any conversations of  
14 that kind.

15 Q Well, if he would have told you that --

16 A Nor do I recall any conversations about the  
17 President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board. If you  
18 have evidence that he asked me not to tell them something  
19 I won't challenge it but the President's Foreign Advisory  
20 Board quite frankly, never loomed in his mind large enough  
21 to be, I don't think, as a considered factor.

22 Q The Committee was not performing a true oversight  
23 function. Would that be a fair statement?

24 A The President's Foreign Intelligence Board?

25 Q Yes.

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1           A     No. I don't want to identify myself with that  
2 statement because they had their own way that they thought  
3 they were doing their job and I assume they thought they  
4 were doing it and I never regarded them as an oversight  
5 organization.

6           Q     Well, if the President would have told you to  
7 refrain from commenting about a subject to the Foreign  
8 Intelligence Advisory Board --

9           A     I would have found no strain with that at all.

10          Q     And if he would have told you not to tell a  
11 particular thing to a Congressional oversight committee,  
12 how would you --

13          A     I don't know. I might have argued with him about  
14 that depending upon what it was, because there you have  
15 a different kind of a situation. After all, the President is  
16 the boss of the Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board. He  
17 appoints it and they are his creatures, and so is the  
18 Secretary of State, and so are his assistants in the White  
19 House. After all, under our system of Government the President  
20 rides supreme over the Executive Branch, so if he tells  
21 somebody there not to tell somebody else he has got every  
22 right, I assume, to do so.

23                With a Congressional committee you are under a different  
24 situation because there you have a coordinate branch of the  
25 Government where his writ does not obtain, necessarily.

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1 Q And so what you are saying is to the extent that  
2 there is a Legislative Branch of the Government, that would  
3 basically depend upon what the particular request of the  
4 President was?

5 A Yes, and I think if I thought he was asking me to  
6 deprive them of something they had a right to have, I would  
7 certainly have an argument with him about it because after  
8 all, I have to live with both, or a Director has to live with  
9 both.

10 Q And hypothetically if you argue with him and you do  
11 not convince him then what would your disposition be?

12 A Well, that would be pretty tough over an issue of  
13 that kind. I suppose in the end I would have to comply, he  
14 being my boss, but I mean, I wouldn't feel very happy about  
15 it and I don't recall having had that kind of a trauma.

16 Q I want to now turn to the Castro situation, Ambassador  
17 Helms. When approximately did you first become  
18 aware of the fact that there was an ongoing plan within the  
19 Agency to try and have Castro assassinated?

20 A Well, when you put it this way, I am not sure what  
21 you are referring to because during the years of the Kennedy  
22 Administration, there was a flat-out effort ordered by  
23 the White House, the President, Bobby Kennedy who was after  
24 all his man, his right hand in these matters, to unseat the  
25 Castro government, to do everything possible to get rid of

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1 it by whatever device could be found and that was the  
2 reason for mounting this large operation in Miami to work  
3 on this very problem. And the Bay of Pigs was a part of this  
4 effort and after the Bay of Pigs failed, there was even a  
5 greater push to try to get rid of this Communist influence 90  
6 miles from the United States shores.

7 The business about the assassination of Castro, I have  
8 read about this in the papers. I have heard about it from  
9 associates. It has been kicked around whether this was a  
10 viable proposition or not. I have no doubt it was written  
11 into various plans as one of many options but I don't recall  
12 any successful effort that was made in this direction and  
13 since Castro is alive and apparently well in Havana, the  
14 extent to which this was serious I have never ascertained.

15 Q Do you recall the fact that poison pills were  
16 developed to be delivered to assets or to people in Cuba for  
17 possible insertion in food or drink to be eaten by  
18 Castro?

19 A Were poison pills taken to Cuba? I never knew any-  
20 thing about this. I don't recall ever having heard anything  
21 about poison pills or any of that. What I want to say in this  
22 connection is the fact that I never heard about this doesn't  
23 mean that there were ma-y, many ideas discussed in the Agency  
24 about what to do with the Cuban Government but I don't  
25 recall anything like poison pills.

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Q Do you --

A Whose idea was this? Do you have the information?

Q Well --

A I recall somebody discussing with me one day an even crazier idea which had to do with some kind of a thing that might be planted on the beach where Castro walked in the morning and it would blow up when he put his foot on it, or something. There were more nutty ideas. It reminded me of the time of OSS when somebody wanted to get propaganda into Germany and they discovered there was a herd of cows that grazed in Germany and were milked in France, so they devised some suppositories into which there were put a lot of propaganda leaflets and those were put in the cows on the theory they were being left on the German side of the border when the cows were grazing and nobody would be the wiser. So to say there are nutty ideas cooked up in organizations like this is to tell the truth.

Is there any evidence, may I ask, Mr. Belin, is there any evidence in the record that any Director authorized what I can only refer to by the dictionary definition of an assassination of a foreign leader?

Q Well, there is evidence in the record, Ambassador Helms, that there were plans made to try and assassinate Premier Castro of Cuba, that there were several series of plans, and that the plans at at least one or two of the

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1 stages included the delivery of poison pills developed in  
2 the Agency to be placed in food or drink --

3 A They were delivered in Cuba?

4 Q -- of Castro, and that the pills were delivered to  
5 Mr. Roselli, who in turn delivered them to other people,  
6 and that the pills eventually found their way to Cuba.

7 A How do we know that?

8 Q There are Agency reports that they were. We do not  
9 have any first-hand information that they were, but there  
10 are -- there are memoranda which indicates that they were  
11 through, among others, disaffected Cubans.

12 A Who returned to the United States and testified  
13 to the fact that they had received the pills or something?

14 Q Who have not testified to anything.

15 A I see.

16 Q That is one --

17 A Who authorized this particular operation?

18 Q This is one of the areas that we are trying to  
19 ascertain and I suppose my first question along this line  
20 was whether or not you had any knowledge of the existence of  
21 such a plan.

22 A Not that I recall.

23 Q And you indicate that you never knew of such a  
24 plan?

25 A I don't recall any plan.

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Q Do you ever recall after you succeeded Richard Bissell, that you were approached concerning whether or not you should advise John McCone of the existence of such plans or operations?

A I was approached to do what?

Q As to whether or not Mr. McCone should be briefed about the existence of such a plan or plans?

A This is after the fact? Or before the fact? Or in the process?

Q During the fact.

A You mean I had replaced Bissell and somebody in the Agency came to me and said should we tell Mr. McCone about a previously authorized plan?

Q Yes. Do you recall that at all?

A I don't recall it. I am sorry.

Q Do you recall ever discussing this with William Harvey?

A I don't know. I discussed hundreds of things with Harvey when he was working on the Cuban problem. I don't recall this. I recall a great deal to do with Harvey about Roselli but I don't recall any conversation with Harvey about talking to Mr. McCone about Roselli because Harvey- when he became in charge of the Cuban business, and so forth, that whole Cuban operation, picked up various things around and about and among them was the ongoing contact with Roselli

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1 which did not start, I believe, in the DDP area. It started  
2 in the Office of Security, if I recollect, to what I found  
3 in the record at one time. I believe it was Colonel Edwards  
4 who had first to do with Roselli.

5 Q I believe that is accurate.

6 A And when Harvey acquired Roselli, we had an ongoing  
7 liability and I had been told he had been asked to do these  
8 various things and there was no way to do it except to try  
9 to hold his hand and I was testifying earlier this morning,  
10 so for some years we had this Roselli albatross around our  
11 neck.

12 Q Do you recall ever briefing or submitting any  
13 documents to John McCone concerning a memorandum with Robert  
14 Kennedy? Does this ring a bell with you at all or not?

15 A Well, it seems -- I recall at some juncture it was  
16 -- somebody made a decision that it would be advisable to  
17 brief Robert Kennedy as the Attorney General about the  
18 existence of Roselli and various things that the Agency had  
19 had to do with him and I believe that -- this I have been  
20 told -- I have had my memory refreshed on this. I don't  
21 want to mislead you. I have been told that it was Edwards  
22 and Houston who went down to brief the Attorney General, although  
23 I am not 100 percent certain about that any more. But I  
24 know there was a memorandum for the record made at the time  
25 because I have had reason to review it.

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1 Q And who told you this?

2 A I don't recall. It may have been Houston, may have  
3 been Edwards at the time. I don't remember. But I remember I  
4 reviewed it when there was a story in the Chicago -- one  
5 of the Chicago newspapers some years ago about this whole  
6 Roselli business, that I asked for the records and looked at  
7 them at that time.

8 MR. BELIN: I am going to mark an exhibit, if I  
9 can. You can call this, if you would Helms' Exhibit 1.

10 (The document referred to was marked  
11 for identification, Helms' Exhibit  
12 No. 1.)

13 BY MR. BELIN:

14 Q I hand you what the reporter has marked Helms No.  
15 1, which appears to be a photostatic copy of a front-page  
16 story from the Chicago Sun Times under date of August 16,  
17 1963, headlines "CIA Sought Giancana Help for Cuba Spying."

18 I want you to examine this and see if perhaps that is  
19 what you had reference to in reference to the Chicago  
20 stories.

21 A It could very easily be. It looks just like what  
22 I recall came out at the time and I think somehow or other  
23 this name Sandy Smith sticks in my mind as being the writer  
24 of the article in question. So I have no reason to doubt that  
25 this is the article we are talking about.

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1 Q Do you remember Stanley J. Grogan?

2 A Yes.

3 Q He was one of your assistants?

4 A Stanley J. Grogan was in charge of the office here  
5 that dealt with the press. In other words, he was -- and  
6 [ ] one of his predecessors. His title was Assistant  
7 to the Director but he simply handled press inquiries.

8 MR. BELIN: Mark Helms' No. 2.

9 (The document referred to was marked  
10 for identification, Helms' Exhibit  
11 No. 2.)

12 BY MR. BELIN:

13 Q I hand you what has been marked Helms' No. 2,  
14 which is a memorandum for the record with a typewritten  
15 signature of Stanley J. Grogan dated August 16, 1963,  
16 referring to a telephone call the previous evening from Sandy  
17 Smith of the Chicago Sun Times and ask if you ever saw that  
18 before?

19 A I don't know. There is no reason why I shouldn't have  
20 seen it, if it was directed to me. Is there no copy around  
21 with my initials on it as having seen it?

22 Q I have not searched all of the records concerning  
23 that.

24 A Usually I initialed memoranda, or at least the cover  
25 sheets, or something, if they came to me.

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MR. BELIN: Mark Numbers 3 and 4.

(The documents referred to were marked for identification, Helms' Exhibit Nos. 3 and 4.)

BY MR. BELIN:

Q Handing you what has been marked Helms. Exhibit No. 3, which is a memorandum which appears to be prepared by you, also under date of August 16, 1963, I think that might have your initials on it. And there is a -- that is attached to what is marked as Helms' Exhibit No. 4, which is a memorandum for the records dated 14 May 1962, pertaining to Arthur James Balletti, et al.

A All right. I have read these.

Q Do you have any refreshed recollection as to the background of those, Ambassador Helms?

A Well, I don't understand what you mean by a refreshed recollection. I mean, at the time I was told that Roselli was trying to get into Cuba. Whether I was told that this was an assassination plot, for which \$150,000 was being projected, and so forth, I don't recall any more but I wasn't involved in the activity at the time and when I had to go back into the files to get this thing, you will see there that I had to call Colonel Edwards to find out if there was any records of this, and so forth, so it was something in which I hadn't been involved and I obviously in recent years have

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1 heard a great deal about the so-called Roselli assassination  
2 but I have never heard anybody come and tell me that anybody  
3 had ever verified that it was any more than conversation and  
4 I must say to this very day nobody has showed me one scintilla  
5 of evidence that anything ever happened about it except  
6 conversation.

7 Q The --

8 A I am not saying it didn't. I am just saying I  
9 have never seen any evidence.

10 Q The document Exhibit 4 was a memorandum for the  
11 record which pertained to an oral briefing in which Mr. Houston  
12 and Mr. Edwards of the Agency briefed Attorney General Robert  
13 Kennedy.

14 A (Nods in affirmative.)

15 Q Had you ever seen this memorandum for the record  
16 before today?

17 A Well, I am relatively certain I must have seen it  
18 the day I sent it to the Director.

19 Q Had you seen it before then?

20 A I don't recall.

21 Q This memorandum for the record dated 14 May 1962,  
22 refers to a plan which was started in the fall of 1960 and  
23 which continued through April of 1961. Were you ever aware  
24 that subsequent to that time there was a second plan which  
25 began in late 1961 or early 1962 in which William Harvey

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1 took over the plan?

2 A To do what?

3 Q To try and assassinate Fidel Castro.

4 A I don't recall ever any -- I mean, I recall a great  
5 many activities of Harvey but I don't recall an effort  
6 to assassinate Castro as put that way. I mean, the dictionary  
7 definition. I am telling you they were trying to unseat his  
8 entire government, so the fact that they were trying to get  
9 rid of him is no argument but I don't recall any specific plan  
10 or proposal that was approved to assassinate Castro.

11 Q Do you remember any authorization on your part  
12 for William Harvey to handle this on a special basis?

13 A Oh, I certainly remember the discussions with him  
14 about Roselli and his Mafia types and the fact they were  
15 going to have to be handled on a special basis but I don't  
16 recall any special basis being used to try to get them to  
17 do an assassination.

18 Q Do you remember that sometime in April of 1962 Sheffield  
19 Edwards obtained your approval to have William Harvey get  
20 in touch with Roselli?

21 A Well, that may be.

22 Q Do you remember?

23 A Because I certainly know at some point Harvey  
24 took over Roselli. I don't remember at what time but I know  
25 he took him over and for a long time handled him thereafter

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1 and reported these contacts to the FBI. We just had that  
2 albatross around our necks for a very long time indeed. I  
3 don't know when it finally ended but it seems to me it  
4 was some years.

5 Q Do you remember any discussions with William Harvey  
6 in which one of the things agreed upon was that the DCI,  
7 Mr. McCone, would not be briefed about this?

8 A No, I don't recall any conversations with Harvey  
9 or anybody else that Mr. McCone shouldn't be briefed. I don't  
10 say they didn't take place. I just don't have any recollection  
11 of it. I can't think today why I would have not wanted him  
12 briefed about something. I mean, after all, one of the bases  
13 on which this Agency has always operated was that the Director  
14 was privy to know anything that went on. That was established  
15 early in the game.

16 Q Well, the Director --

17 A Is there some evidence that I said no, don't tell  
18 the Director, or he shouldn't be briefed?

19 Q Well, there has been testimony and there is documen-  
20 tation that it was agreed between you and Mr. Harvey not  
21 to brief the DCI and I wonder whether or not you have any  
22 recollection, No. 1, of whether or not that discussion was  
23 had and if you do have any such recollection, as to why that  
24 discussion might have been had.

25 A No. I don't have any recollection of the discussion.

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1 Q Do you remember any briefing of the DCI at any time  
2 prior to Helms' Exhibit No. 3, the August 16, 1963?

3 A Let's see. Who would have been DCI then? John  
4 McCone?

5 Q Yes.

6 A I don't know. I don't recall any other discussion  
7 with him on this subject.

8 Q And on --

9 A I don't say it didn't take place. I just don't  
10 recall any.

11 Q Now, on August 16, 1963, you delivered this memorandum  
12 Helms' Exhibit No. 3, to Mr. McCone referring to Sam Giancana  
13 and you said this is an outgrowth of this Chicago Sun-  
14 Times story of also August 16, 1963, Helms' No. 1, is that  
15 correct?

16 A Yes.

17 Q Do you remember whether or not you briefed him at  
18 that time on the fact that Mr. Harvey had taken over the  
19 operation and the operation might have continued beyond the  
20 first stage with Mr. Giancana?

21 A I have no recollection of this -- I have seen the  
22 memorandum. I have no doubt it is mine. I have no doubt it  
23 went forward. I remember the episode but I don't remember the  
24 conversation with Mr. McCone at the time if there was one.

25 Q If Mr. Edwards or Mr. Harvey were to say they had

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1 discussions with you that I previously questioned you about,  
2 is it your testimony that you have no recollection that would  
3 enable you to confirm it or deny it?

4 A Yes. I just don't remember it. I mean, if they were  
5 to sit here and go back through the conversation, and so forth,  
6 maybe it would come to mind but I don't recall it now and I  
7 see no point in trying to testify to something that I don't  
8 remember.

9 Q Did you have any knowledge of any other plans  
10 involved in an attempt to assassinate Fidel Castro?

11 A As I was saying a moment ago, there were various  
12 ideas floated by various people in the Government that it would  
13 be nice to get rid of him, and so forth, but I don't recall  
14 any viable plans that were ever brought to light to do this  
15 and most of the -- I say most -- almost the entire energies  
16 of the DDP in those days were attempting to get these operations  
17 in Miami organized to see if there was some way to undo the  
18 government of Fidel Castro and it was a major effort going  
19 on and I am certain that there were discussions of the  
20 possibilities of killing various people in connection with, you  
21 know, the options that one has to carry through a certain  
22 injunction that you have been given, but I don't recall any  
23 plans that were approved or that were viable specifically  
24 directed at eliminating Castro, but that there were conver-  
25 sations about it, I haven't the slightest doubt.

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1 Q Do you know who in the White House would have had  
2 those conversations with his people in the Agency?

3 A It seems to me that back in those days there was  
4 something called -- there was some committee that sat at the  
5 White House that had to do with counter-insurgency as I  
6 recall it.

7 Q Would that be the Special Operations group?

8 A I don't know what the name is any more, different  
9 changes, but this group used to meet constantly on the  
10 problems of Cuba and Latin America, and so forth, and also  
11 problems all around the world -- how are we going to organize  
12 ourselves to fight this problem, that problem and the other  
13 problem? I am sure there must be records of this thing. It  
14 used to meet all the time down at the Executive Office  
15 Building. It had met a lot on Asia, as I recall it, and the  
16 problem in Vietnam, and so forth, and I have no doubt there  
17 was some organization that we used to report to regularly about  
18 our progress in the Cuban thing. I forget which committee  
19 it was but certainly, the Attorney General was right there  
20 all the time. Joe Califano was involved from the Army  
21 Department in these matters. I don't know. There were other  
22 people. I have forgotten now all the -- that is a long time  
23 ago.

24 Q Yes, sir. Does the name Mongoose ring any bell?

25 A Sure. Mongoose was sort of a general cover rubric

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1 for the whole effort to unseat the Castro government.

2 Q Is this the group that you are referring to?

3 A No. Mongoose would have been an internal agency  
4 thing, I think. Now, maybe it was known downtown as -- or  
5 some of these people who were privy to these things in  
6 other agencies that this was the rubric. I am not sure. It  
7 may well be.

8 Q When they name a special group, Special Group Augment  
9 or Special Operations Group --

10 A That sounds familiar, yes. That sounds familiar.  
11 I am ashamed that you know more about these things these  
12 days than I do but honesly, I haven't even thought about them  
13 in all these years.

14 Q Sir, do you have any recollection as to who might  
15 have been the driving forces from the White House in efforts  
16 to do something about Castro?

17 A Well, the principal driving force was the Attorney  
18 General, Robert Kennedy. There isn't any question about this.  
19 Involved in this was a group of individuals who were sort of  
20 hired and pulled together by Kennedy and Rusk and McNamara  
21 and McGeorge Bundy and all those people to get on with this  
22 job and as I sit here and start to think about this,  
23 Califano was one of them. It seems to me Lansdale, who had  
24 been successful in this kind of operation out in the Far  
25 East was brought in for a while. There was a small office.

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1 over in the Pentagon where people -- as a matter of fact, now  
2 that I think about it, that Mongoose thing, wasn't that a  
3 Lansdale invention that was produced in the Pentagon and that  
4 special operations, Gene Erskine headed -- isn't that -- some  
5 of this is coming back to me now.

6 Q Well, as it comes back to you, do you remember any  
7 discussions involved connected or indirectly connected or any  
8 way connected with that operation involving any attempts to  
9 assassinate Fidel Castro?

10 A I don't recall specifically. I would be surprised  
11 that it wasn't discussed at times but I don't recall any  
12 of these discussions particularly.

13 Q Do you remember any discussions with Mr. Harvey  
14 concerning the furnishing of either arms or poison pills  
15 to Cuban exiles to have them try and carry out any assassina-  
16 tion plan?

17 A I don't have any question that we tried to land  
18 them in Cuba, to bring down this government or to kill  
19 anybody that they could lay their hands on. This was a --  
20 the instructions and all this were pretty rough and  
21 pretty fulsome but when you come down to this question of a  
22 specific project was approved which was designed for a man  
23 to go to Point B and actually shoot or poison or do something  
24 to Castro, I don't recall anything of that kind and I to  
25 this very day would like to see some evidence that this

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actually was ever carried out. I think that there was a lot of lying on the part of those Cubans and a lot of backing and forthing with allegations of things that happened that never did happen and as I look back on the whole period, with all the effort that was made in money and manpower, and so forth, devoted to try and unseat the Castro government, when one looks back at it it was a pretty pitiful effort and I think a great deal of it was just, what shall I say, talking a good game.

Q Now, do you have any recollection of any briefing of McCone about any Agency plans in which Harvey or Roselli or Sheffield Edwards may have been involved other than Exhibit 4?

A I don't have any recollection of that, Mr. Belin. I want to tell you that all I recall was that McCone was constantly asking about how we were getting along with the Cuban operations and McCone was constantly being briefed about what we were trying to do about these operations but what was in all those briefings I have no recollection any more at all and no matter how I would work on this I would never be able to sort it all out. It was -- a lot of effort was being made, all kinds of things to get boats and to train Cubans to man those boats and land on secret shores and all kinds of things.

Q If --

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1           A     May I ask a question at this juncture? Since Castro  
2 is alive and well in Cuba, what is the problem about these  
3 -- trying to verify all this business about whether these  
4 attempts were made or not made? I mean, does it make any  
5 difference any more?

6           Q     Well, there are two major areas of concern apart  
7 from whether or not assassination should play any part in  
8 American policy. One area concerns how the plans were  
9 authorized, whether they were directed externally or whether  
10 they grew up internally.

11           The second area concerns what I would call internal moni-  
12 toring and control. If Mr. McCone didn't know about it, other  
13 than that briefing, that poses a problem so far as an Agency  
14 operating under control. If you did not know about it until  
15 the spring of 1962, and the information that I have gathered  
16 indicates that you were not privy to any information about  
17 this until the spring of 1962, you were in a fairly important  
18 position in the Agency and yet were not aware of what could  
19 have been a potentially disastrous operation, certainly an  
20 operation that had all kinds of ramifications for this  
21 country when one considers the trigger of World War I involved  
22 an assassination attempt.

23           And so, therefore, the scope of my inquiry is not  
24 necessarily to say it is this person's responsibility but in  
25 large part it is to determine how these plans got organized

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1 and how they were kept under control, and I should tell you  
2 that it is my information that, although you did not have any  
3 information about this prior to the spring of 1962, that  
4 in the spring of 1962 you were made privy to what I am going to  
5 call Phase I which was the Giancana phase and also what I am  
6 going to call Phase II when William Harvey took over the  
7 operation, and that Mr. McCone, according to the records that  
8 I have seen, was not briefed until the August 16, 1963  
9 memorandum, in part because of the fact Mr. McCone had not  
10 been DCI at the time the plans were undertaken, so the  
11 documents say that I have seen, and that at the time of his  
12 briefing in August of 1963, it was not an oral briefing but  
13 rather limited to a discussion of the Giancana matter in  
14 the memorandum for the record addressed to Senator Kennedy,  
15 Exhibit 4.

16 Now, is there anything that I have said which disagrees  
17 with anything that is to the best of your recollection?

18 A I have no reason to cavil with what you say. I  
19 don't have any contrary recollections but I don't remember a  
20 lot of this either. So --

21 Q Now, do you remember Senator Kennedy coming over  
22 to the Agency on or about March 8, 1967, to review this  
23 memorandum for the records that was Helms' Exhibit 4 that  
24 pertained to his 1962 briefing?

25 A Senator Kennedy visited the Agency to do that?

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1 Q Yes. He either visited the Agency or was hand-  
2 delivered a copy of that. Does that ring a bell with you  
3 at all?

4 A No, it doesn't, but I don't say it didn't happen.  
5 I don't --

6 Q You don't remember any conversations with Senator  
7 Kennedy about this?

8 A No, I don't.

9 Q Do you remember any conversations with Lawrence  
10 Houston about --

11 A Oh, yes, it was Houston who told me about the  
12 briefing in the first place.

13 Q That is right, and when Houston told you about the  
14 briefing and Houston was present at the briefing, do you  
15 remember what he said and what you said at all or don't you?

16 A No.

17 Q Do you remember having any conversations with either  
18 Houston about Robert Kennedy wanting to see the memorandum  
19 again on -- sometime in 1967?

20 A I don't remember the thing at all but, you know,  
21 if it -- if the record says that this happened I have no  
22 reason to argue with it. It would not have loomed large in  
23 my life at that late date and if he wanted to look at it  
24 I wouldn't have the slightest doubt I authorized somebody  
25 to show it to him. I don't recall his coming out here to

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1 look at it. In other words, I don't recall him ever being  
2 in my office here.

3 Q Do you have any recollection of a project known  
4 as Project Amlash?

5 A Amlash? By that name, not any more.

6 Q Did you ever?

7 A Don't forget, Mr. Belin, that there were hundreds  
8 of these things.

9 Q Do you have any recollection of any man by the  
10 name of Rolando Cubela who was a Cuban who at one time had  
11 been associated with Castro and then became disaffected  
12 with him?

13 A Let's see. Was he the fellow who eventually ended  
14 up in Paris or Madrid or something of this kind?

15 Q Yes. At one time he did and then eventually  
16 he ended up in Cuba but he was met by Agency people in Paris.

17 A What was his particular cryptonym?

18 Q Well, among other things, some Black Leaf 40 had  
19 been developed to be delivered to him in a pen which had been  
20 constructed to have a hypodermic needle with the object to  
21 inject the Black Leaf 40 into Castro. And that was delivered  
22 to him in Paris on November 22, 1963. Do you remember?

23 A I certainly remember Cubela. I certainly remember  
24 the fact that he was, I think -- was he a defector from the  
25 Cuban regime.

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1 Q Yes.

2 A Or was he an agent whom we recruited who had not  
3 yet defected or what? I certainly remember his name and I  
4 certainly remember the use that was made of a fellow named  
5 Cubela but I don't recall exactly for what.

6 Q There was an effort to recruit him in place.  
7 There were eventually some weapons delivered to him.

8 A Were there? I don't have any reason to doubt it.  
9 The Black Leaf 40 and the hypodermic pen, and so forth, I  
10 don't recall.

11 Q Do you recall any Agency scheme which involved trying  
12 to put a spectacular seashell in an area --

13 A That is what I was talking about earlier. womebody  
14 was talking once about trying to put a bomb on his beach  
15 where he walked, or something.

16 Q Or where he skin-dived.

17 A Yes, that is the idea. I do remember somebody  
18 discussing whether that would be aviable operation or not.

19 Q Do you ever remember anyone discussing giving  
20 Castro a skin-diving suit which would include some tuberculosis  
21 bacteria in the breathing apparatus and also possibly some  
22 fungus which would produce madura foot?

23 A Madura foot? I rememner, it seems to me, Fitzgerald  
24 had a bright idea about the skin-diving suit. I don't  
25 remember his -- I don't think I recall at all that there was

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1 any plan to put anything in it. I have even forgotten what  
2 the skin-diving suit was but I want to tell you these came  
3 up every day, some hairbrained idea like this to do some-  
4 thing about Cuba, but that these actually were carried out,  
5 I don't recall any instances of it. I don't recall any approvals  
6 given to actually set the seashell down or to send the thing  
7 or that any assets were developed to do these things. These  
8 were a lot of things that were discussed and I am sure they  
9 got down on paper since you have them but I don't recall they  
10 were ever approved or ever carried out or any attempt to  
11 carry them out.

12 Q Do you remember that eventually arms were delivered  
13 to Mr.Cubela in Cuba?

14 A I don't have any doubt about it. I think we  
15 delivered arms all over the place in connection with Cuba.  
16 I mean, let us not for a moment think that the Kennedy  
17 Administration wasn't dead serious about getting rid of the  
18 Castro government. I mean, let's not -- this was a  
19 Government operation and if Dean Rusk or anybody, McGeorge  
20 Bundy or anybody else is sitting around, no, no, no, we  
21 didn't have this in mind at all; let's get that all straightened  
22 out. They wanted to get rid of Castro. Well, let me say  
23 that I don't know that Dean Rusk wanted to get rid of him  
24 but certainly President Kennedy wanted to get rid of him.

25 Q What do you mean by getting rid of him?

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1           A     They wanted to unseat his government. They wanted to  
2 bring his government down by whatever device could be found.

3           Q     Which could include assassination?

4           A     I don't know that the word assassination was ever  
5 used but certainly if you land armed men on a beach and the  
6 effort is to recruit other armed men and to try to start a  
7 whole arrangement whereby you, you know, you bring down a  
8 government, somebody is bound to get shot. But the thing  
9 that I am doing my level best with you about and which even  
10 as I sit here thinking about it, is the focus on this  
11 assassination business as though this was a, you know, some-  
12 thing that was totally part and parcel of killing or invasions  
13 or anything of that kind. Put in that context, I just don't  
14 remember that any of these operations were ever mounted  
15 let alone had any prospects of success. That a lot of them were  
16 discussed, I haven't the slightest doubt and I don't know  
17 what other people in the Government have testified to but  
18 even that must have come up at various meetings as to whether  
19 this was a viable way to get rid of the man.

20                     There is a very great difference, it seems to me,  
21 when you actually approved it, were prepared to take the  
22 responsibility.

23           Q     For the record, there appear to have been no plans  
24 undertaken to carry out either the seashell or the skin-diving  
25 suit but there do appear to be plans to deliver the poison

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1 pills and plans to deliver weapons.

2 A All right.

3 Q You don't have any recollection to the contrary,  
4 do you?

5 A No, I don't.

6 Q I want to get back to Chile, if I can.

7 After the plurality victory of Allende -- I will back-  
8 track. Before the election the Agency spent a substantial sum  
9 of money in coordination with the Secretary of State as a  
10 part of a propaganda effort showing the dangers of the Marxist  
11 regime.

12 A Now, what years are we in now?

13 Q We are now in 1970.

14 A Because one of the problems about Cuba and  
15 testimony I have made in Congress is that there were two  
16 operations in Cuba, one in -- I mean in Chile. Excuse me.  
17 Chile. Not Cuba. Chile. One in 1964 and then a different  
18 kind of a thing in 1970, and one of the reasons that my  
19 credibility was questioned was that I answered rather narrowly  
20 a couple of questions that Senator Symington asked me because  
21 I assumed and I had reason to believe that he knew that  
22 in 1964 we had funded actual candidates in the Chilean  
23 election. In other words, we had given money to the candidates  
24 themselves, not money to civic action groups or things of  
25 this kind.

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1 Q Well, my particular questions now pertain to the  
2 election of 1970.

3 A May I say that I have absolutely no objection to  
4 your going into the Agency records. There are a lot of people  
5 around here who remember what was done in 1970. 1962 and  
6 1961, et cetera, people have died, but whatever those fellows  
7 that ran the W.H. Division and were Chief of Station in  
8 Chile and all the rest, I have got no reason to cavil with  
9 them. They are honest men and will tell the truth about it.  
10 I encouraged Senator Church to do it. They have gone over  
11 this with me over and over and over again and I remember only  
12 so much about it. But the facts are ascertainable.

13 Q Let me try to establish this, if you have any  
14 recollection on it, that prior to the election on or about  
15 September 4, 1970, the Agency did spend a considerable amount  
16 of funds in coordination with the State Department for  
17 propaganda efforts to convince or to show the people of Chile  
18 the dangers of a Marxist regime. Do you remember that?

19 A Yes. I have no doubt that money was spent. I  
20 think it was just for those purposes, as I recall it.

21 Q And after the election, but before the investiture  
22 by the legislature, there were the authorization of additional  
23 funds to be spent to prevent the accession of Allende to the  
24 presidency by seeking to induce various Chilean groups and  
25 possibly the military to thwart the investiture. Do you

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1 remember that?

2 A I don't remember that in that form. My recollection  
3 was that efforts were made to find out if there was any way  
4 to do it but I don't recall that anybody found any way to do  
5 it and that, therefore, the whole thing was dropped. There  
6 may have been some, you know, minor additional expenditures  
7 made but I don't recall anybody approving of a specific  
8 plan to stop the investiture.

9 Q And you don't have any recollection of the providing  
10 of any submachineguns to any military officers?

11 A No, I don't, but if  or one of  
12 those fellows testifies to the fact that they did send machine  
13 guns down there and they delivered to Mr. X or Mr. Y or Mr. Z,  
14 I have no reason to question it.

15 Q And do you have any recollection of any conversation  
16 with President Nixon after the Chilean election in this  
17 connection to see what could be done to thwart investiture  
18 of Allende and to not tell either the Secretary of State  
19 or other members of the Forty Committee about it?

20 A This was a private conversation between me and  
21 President Nixon?

22 Q Yes, sir.

23 A I don't recall it. Where did it take place?

24 Q Well, let me show you from your files a memorandum  
25 of a meeting on September 15, 1970.

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1 Who were present at that meeting besides you and  
2 the President, according to your memo?

3 A According to the memo it says present were John  
4 Mitchell and Henry Kissinger. Let's see what these notes  
5 say. As I interpret these notes, this was an injunction to  
6 me to do everything possible to stop it. But I don't recall  
7 that we were able to find any way to do it.

8 Q And how much funds were authorized to be spent?

9 A Well, it says here "\$10 million is available, more  
10 if necessary."

11 Q Then, what does it say?

12 A "Full-time job. Best men we have." In other words,  
13 this was a Nixon injunction to pull out all the stops to do  
14 this.

15 Q But you don't have any specific recollection of  
16 his direction to you not to tell the Forty Committee or  
17 the Secretary of State?

18 A No, I don't.

19 Q MR. BELIN: Mark No. 5.

20 (The document referred to was marked  
21 for identification, Helms' Exhibit  
22 No. 5.)

23 BY MR. BELIN:

24 Q The last item I want to talk to you about at this  
25 time goes back to 1962. I am sorry to skip back and forth.

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A All right.

Q You mentioned that the Attorney General, Robert Kennedy, was intimately involved with Operation Mongoose. And there appears to be a corroborating memorandum prepared by you dated October 16, 1962, pertaining to this, and I wonder if you would read this memorandum and see if it refreshes your recollection.

A 6 October 1962. When was the Cuban missile crisis?

Q The Cuban missile crisis, I believe, was in October of 1962.

A Colonel Patchell. I had forgotten all about him.

Q This letter has been marked Helms' Exhibit 5.

A That sort of lays it out, doesn't it?

Q Ambassador Helms, having read the Helms' Exhibit No. 5, this is a memorandum which you prepared which appears to have been prepared on October 16, 1962, the date that you met with the Attorney General, is that correct?

A Yes.

Q And to the best of your recollection, did the Attorney General express the general dissatisfaction of the President with the Operation Mongoose?

A I have every reason to believe that what I wrote in that memorandum was the best of my recollection of what was said and what went on in the meeting described.

Q Would it be fair to say that the Attorney General

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1 was personally involved and continued to become more personally  
2 involved with the overall Mongoose Operation?

3 A Yes.

4 Q Do you know whether or not at any time the Attorney  
5 General was ever advised of the fact that William Harvey  
6 had overtaken or had taken over a certain portion of the  
7 Roselli operation?

8 A I don't have any recollection of that. Have  
9 you ever talked to Harvey, incidentally?

10 Q Yes, sir.

11 A What did he have to say on the subject?

12 Q Well, Mr. Harvey never met with the Attorney General  
13 but Mr. Harvey did say that he --

14 A He never saw the Attorney General?

15 Q He never discussed -- no, he didn't say that.

16 A Oh.

17 Q He never discussed the particular plans in which he  
18 was personally involved with the Attorney General.

19 A I see. I see.

20 Q He did say that sometime in the spring of 1962  
21 you became aware of those plans and that would be corroborated  
22 by other documentation that I have seen, and that he also  
23 said that you and he determined not to brief the DCI on it  
24 at the time and that is also corroborated by other documenta-  
25 tion that I have seen.

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A What sort of documentation?

Q Memorandum.

A Memorandum for the record?

Q Well, memorandum involving among other things, review of the entire area of this. I have notes on it. I don't have the memorandum here at this time.

I don't know if I would call it a memorandum for the record but at least there is some written documentation, but I don't know whether made contemporaneously, that there was a decision not to brief DCI, McCone, the memorandum having been talked about earlier.

A Let me ask a very important question here at this point.

Q Surely.

A This plan that Harvey was alleged to have, how far did it ever get? I mean, what I am trying to get at here is that we are dealing with a lot of conjecture, a lot of thoughts, a lot of ideas. Now, did any plan get down to the point where somebody was about to get in a boat or airplane and go to Cuba and do X or Y and it shows I approved this happening or was this something he was going to try to develop and see if it could fly and if there was any possibility that it might work, and so forth?

Q There are reports that the people with whom there was contact did get to Cuba with pills and with --

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A This was the first --

Q -- other occasions.

A First phase?

Q And also the second phase and in addition, there were subsequent reports that there were arms provided also and what you are saying is if this plan continued over a period of several years it continued without your express overview, as I understand your testimony, is that correct?

A Yes. My recollection of Harvey's dealings with Roselli or during most of the period that was that nothing ever happened about anything.

Q Well, certainly Mr. Castro is still living.

A Yes, but I mean, I think this -- I don't know whose word to trust in this but I think that, you know, this is a pretty thin reed, this Roselli business. He was a pain in the neck and an awful albatross but I think we got zero use out of him.

MR. MANFREDI: Mr. Helms, this is Harold Baker, another member of the staff.

THE WITNESS: How do you do?

MR. BELIN: Mr. Baker is going to be here tomorrow. I think at this time we will let you take a breather and at least adjourn the deposition to resume tomorrow morning.

THE WITNESS: What time would you like me here, Mr. Baker?

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MR. BAKER: Mr. Gray was going to start first.

MR. BELIN: Mr. Gray is not -- well, I have asked the questions that Mr. Gray wanted to ask.

MR. BAKER: I see. What would be convenient for you?

THE WITNESS: I want to meet your convenience. I mean my desire is to be as available and get everything done that we can so I can get back to my job.

MR. BAKER: Half past nine?

THE WITNESS: Fine.

MR. BELIN: All right. Well, thank you, sir, for your cooperation.

THE WITNESS: Thank you. I want to cooperate. I want to help. I will try and be a little bit, lot more alert tomorrow.

(Whereupon, at 4:30 p.m., the taking of the deposition was recessed, to reconvene at 9:30 a.m., Thursday, April 24, 1975.)

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