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Summary of HSCA Interview w/ Balmer Nieves Barney Hidalgo
at CIA HQ, July 28, 1978, 10:00 a.m. - Charles Berk and
Dan Hardway present for HSCA. Jr.

On July 28, 1978 at 10:00 a.m. Charles Berk and Dan Hardway of the House Select Committee on Assassinations conducted a three hour interview at CIA headquarters with Barney Nieves Hidalgo, Jr. Mr. Hidalgo was ~~provided~~ provided with a copy of the CIA release letter prior to the beginning of the interview. Upon reviewing the release letter, Mr. Hidalgo stated that whatever Admiral Turner may ^{seem to} permit by the release letter's wording, the letter ~~did~~ ^{did} not release Mr. Hidalgo from his self-imposed secrecy standards. Mr. Hidalgo ^{further} stated that he had heard of such a release letter in the press although he had not seen this ^{specific} release letter prior to the interview. # Mr. Berk explained to Mr. Hidalgo that whatever was discussed during the interview would be treated as confidential information. Nevertheless, Mr. Hidalgo replied that he might not

respond to the question asked of him. At this point, ^{Mr.} Hidalgo was asked if he had discussed this interview session with anyone prior to ~~the beginning~~ the beginning of the interview. Mr.

Hidalgo said that he had not discussed the interview with anyone other than ~~the~~ the CIA's contacting him in order to arrange a time and a place for the interview.

Mr. Hidalgo stated that he has no present connection with the CIA having retired from the Agency in 1970. When queried whether he is presently employed, Mr. Hidalgo would not respond to the question. He also would not provide his current address when requested by Mr. Berk.

Mr. Hidalgo indicated that at the time of President Kennedy's assassination, he was a CIA case officer working at Agency headquarters on Cuba-related matters. When asked to identify his specific responsibilities as a

case officer, Mr. Hidalgo responds that he had no specific responsibilities. Rather, he said that he was assigned to various Agency components on a day to day basis traveling at the discretion of his superiors. He related that he had been of use to Agency components concerned with foreign intelligence, counterintelligence, and propaganda and ^{moreover} psychological warfare. Mr. Hidalgo did indicate that he had been on tour of duty in Mexico during the years 1963-1964 though he would not be more specific.

Mr. Hidalgo explained that he had worked at times specifically on Cuba-related matters. In this regard, Mr. Hidalgo declared that he had been involved in the Bay of Pigs operation on behalf of the CIA both at headquarters and in the field. He stated that he had been indirectly responsible for Brigade 20506, serving as the CIA's counterintelligence officer for that operation. He stated the

20506 designation represented the sixth person he had ^{interrogated and} cleared for operational use in the Brigade. 20506 had subsequently met an unexpected death resulting in his operational designation being adopted by the Brigade as its name. It was Mr. Hidalgo's belief that the Castro government had effected no penetration against the Brigade. However, ^{though not known to him} he could not recall the name of the penetration agent.

Mr. Hidalgo stated that in his work for the Agency, he had traveled to both New Orleans and Miami. However, he said this work had little to do with his Bay of Pigs activities. Rather, these trips involved the handling of a CIA agent who had been in the Cuban Intelligence Service (COIS).

Mr. Hidalgo recalled that during his CIA career he had successfully developed expertise in a number of operational procedures. When asked if his exper-

These included interrogation and surreptitious entry, Mr. Hidalgo would not give a direct response. He explained that he would not answer a question if he believed ~~that his answer~~ his answer would threaten the lives of others or would endanger the national security.

When asked to define what made him successful at his various CIA endeavors Mr. Hidalgo replied that his success was measured by the fact that he was never caught. He further remarked that if we thought Espionage is a gentleman's game, it is not a gentleman's game.

Mr. Hidalgo was queried whether he recalled the CIA cryptonym AMMUS/1. He stated that the cryptonym was familiar to him. He further stated that he recalled AMMUS/1 defected from CUIS to the CIA in April 1964. At this time Mr. Hidalgo was shown DIR 16369, 23 April 1964, a CIA cable describing AMMUS/1's

in []
 deflection while enroute to Prague, Czechoslovakia. This cable indicated that AMMUS/1 was knowledgeable of CUIS operation and personnel. After reviewing this cable, Mr. Hidalgo was asked to assess the significance of AMMUS/1's deflection to the CIA. Hidalgo refused to answer this question. *
 Hidalgo did state that he was not sent to [] to bring AMMUS/1 back to the United States. That task was handled by Harold Swenson, Chief WH/SA/CI, Hidalgo's immediate superior. Mr. Hidalgo if he knew Mr Swenson's current location. Mr. Hidalgo replied he did but would not provide this information to the HSCA staff.
 Mr. Hidalgo was asked to describe Mr. Swenson's relationship with AMMUS/1. He responded that

* Two hours later in the interview, this question was again posed to Mr. Hidalgo. He then responded that AMMUS/1's ^{deflection} was of great significance to the Agency. However, he would not further elaborate.

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it would be best to ask Mr. Swenson that question. ^{Mr.} Hidalgo was also asked to describe the relationships of [Daniel Flores] and Joseph Piccolo (both CIA case officers who handled AMMOV/1) to AMMOV/1. Once again, Mr. Hidalgo deferred to [Swenson] for an answer to the question.

Mr. Hidalgo was next asked what specific information AMMOV/1 provided the CIA concerning Lee Harvey Oswald. Mr. Hidalgo replied that he would rather not answer that question. Mr. Hidalgo was then asked if he knew whether Mr. Swenson had tape recorded his debriefing sessions of AMMOV/1 while in [redacted]. Mr. Hidalgo stated that this would have been standard operating procedure in a case of this kind. However, he said that he could not recall whether he had listened to the above-referenced tape recordings or had read the transcripts of the debriefing sessions.

Mr. Hidalgo was next queried when he first learned of AMMUG/1's defection. He indicated that he first became aware of AMMUG/1's defection when he read the cable which describing AMMUG/1's defection ~~was~~ disseminated to CIA headquarters on ~~the~~ April 23, 1964. Mr. Hidalgo said that his first personal contact with AMMUG/1 took place after AMMUG/1 was transported to Washington, D. C. during the last week of April 1964. Mr. Hidalgo stated that he debriefed AMMUG/1's ~~former~~ ~~residence~~ during AMMUG/1's residence in Washington which he believed to ^{have} been for approximately six months.

Mr. Hidalgo refused to describe the operational use to which AMMUG/1 was put by the CIA. Mr. Hidalgo also pointed out that as of November 2, 1964 he no longer maintained operational contact with AMMUG/1.

Mr. Hidalgo was asked to

examine [] IN 68894, 24 April
 64. a CIA cable [] from the []
 [] station] which provided
 additional information on AMMUC/1
 and his knowledge of the CUIS.
 This cable identified certain ~~DE~~
 CUIS officers (referred to hereafter
 as Director General Intelligence,
 DGI officers) stationed at the
 Cuban Embassy/Consulate in Mexico
 City. Mr. Hidalgo stated that
 he had reviewed the above-
 referenced cable ~~and was not~~
 upon its receipt at CIA head-
 quarters. Mr. Hidalgo refused
 to identify the cable's author
 nor would he provide any infor-
 mation on the DGI officers
 named ~~in~~ on page 2, paragraph
 5 of the cable. Mr. Hidalgo
 declared he "just knew what
 the Agency knew at the time!"
~~He stated~~ He stated that he had no
 personal knowledge of the persons
 therein cited. At the point
 Mr. Hidalgo weakened his previous
 position ^{as to his knowledge} by stating that he was
 aware in 1964 of the DGI stationing

The two persons referred to, Alfredo Mirabal and Manuel Vega. He stated that he probably knew what their specific responsibilities were when the cable was disseminated but that he could not presently recall this information.

Mr. Hidalgo was then referred to page 3, paragraph 6 of the [redacted] cable wherein it states that AMMUS/1 had brought out CUIS documents from Cuba upon his defection. Mr. Hidalgo was asked if any of these CUIS documents referred to or concerned Lee Harvey Oswald or the JFK assassination. He responded that he had not reviewed all these documents but ~~that~~ ^{that} he did review ~~them~~ did not refer to Lee Harvey Oswald or the JFK assassination. He did indicate, however, that the subject matter of these documents may have been of interest to Oswald's case or the JFK assassination. Mr. Hidalgo was again deferred to Mr. Swenson for

any amplification on this point.

Mr. Hidalgo next ~~rept~~ examined a ~~###~~ ~~§~~ May 8, 1964 CIA memo entitled "Ammy/1 Debriefing Report #65; ~~which detailed~~ which detailed DSI responsibility for issuance of visas to persons seeking entry into Cuba. Mr. Hidalgo did confirm that Mr. Swenson had written the above-referenced memo and that the memo was an accurate summary of then available information. # In reference to the DSI visa issuance procedure, Mr. ~~Hidalgo~~ stated that a would-be traveler to Cuba who seeking a visa at the Cuban Embassy would not necessarily have been in personal contact with a DSI office. However, the DSI office would have been made aware of the traveler's presence due to DSI interest in all travelers to Cuba. He further added that a DSI officer would have reviewed all visa applications.

Mr. Hidalgo could not recall if any specific word such as "Mauricio"

was used in Mexico by visa applicants to indicate their affiliation with Cuban intelligence.

When asked if AMMU 6/1 had reported which DGI officer Lee Harvey Oswald dealt with in Mexico City, Mr. Hidalgo would not answer. Mr. Hidalgo also would not answer if he had been stationed in Mexico. He did state that he had been in Mexico prior to 1965, probably during 1963 but neither during September nor October of that year.

Mr. ^{while in Mexico} Hidalgo was queried whether he knew either Win Scott or David Phillips. He responded in the negative and stated that Win Scott ^{in fact} may have been unaware of Mr. Hidalgo's presence in Mexico City because Mr. Hidalgo never went near an American installation in that city. Mr. Hidalgo explained that he had ~~contact~~ ^{but not to their knowledge} with Cubans in Mexico City. When asked if this meant that he was running penetration agents into the Cuban Embassy,

Hidalgo refused to answer. Mr. Hidalgo did state that while in Mexico he had been in contact with the [redacted] on one occasion.

Mr. Hidalgo was queried whether he knew Maurice Bishop. He responded affirmatively but indicated he did not know him as well as either Win Scott or David Phillips. Mr. Hidalgo said he ~~was~~^{became} acquainted with Mr. Bishop at CIA Headquarters. He stated that he did not know Mr. Bishop's Agency responsibilities nor had he worked with Mr. Bishop. Rather, he explained that he knew Mr. Bishop as ^{just} another person who worked at CIA Headquarters. Mr. Hidalgo indicated that he knew Mr. E. Howard Hunt in much the same manner as he knew Mr. Bishop. However, when Mr. Hardway continued to question Mr. Hidalgo about Mr. Hunt, Mr. Hidalgo countered by asking why the subject of Mr. Hunt had been brought up. He declared that the HSCA was

(17)

"spinning its wheels" by investi-
gating Mr. Hunt.

At this point, Mr. Hardway
queried Mr. Hidalgo on his
knowledge of the following persons:

- 1) The true name of Daniel
Carwell - He said he
knew Mr. Carwell but
would not discuss him.
- 2) Silvia Duran - Mr. Hidalgo
said that he "sure do ~~know~~
(know her) but I sure
don't want to discuss it."

He did state that he had had
indirect contact with Silvia
Duran but doesn't recall
when this indirect contact
occurred. He explained that
he had received information
concerning Silvia Duran from
a CIA agent in Mexico. Mr.
Hidalgo said he put this infor-
mation into report form.

The CIA agent was a woman
who maintained direct con-
tact with the Mexican
Communist Party. This woman

Mr. Hidalgo stated, was a close associate of Silvin Duran. It was his belief that the agent had not worked in the Cuban Embassy in Mexico City. When queried as to the agent's name, Mr. Hidalgo responded that he could not recall the name. He did remember that the agent's Mexico City Station case officer had a thin lip and spoke with a lisp. When asked if this person was [Robert Shaw,]

Mr. Hidalgo replied that it might have been [Mr. Shaw;]

3) William Hawey - Mr. Hidalgo stated that he was acquainted with Mr. Hawey. Mr. Hidalgo stated that he had never heard of ZR or ZRRIFLE;

4) Frank Sturges - Mr. Hidalgo knew of Mr. Sturges but had no personal contact with him;

5) Tony Varona - Mr. Hidalgo knew of Mr. Varona as the result of past operational contact.

Mr. Hidalgo was next asked to examine an ARMMUG/1 CIA debriefing report of April 30, 1964. This debriefing report identifies Alfredo Mirabal, Manuel Vega, and Ricardo Concepcion as DOI officers at the Cuban Embassy Consulate in Mexico City. After examining the report, Mr. Hidalgo reiterated that ~~the~~ he had no personal knowledge of these persons. He did state that he had previously seen the debriefing report, a verbatim translation from Spanish which Mr. Hidalgo had himself translated.

Mr. Hidalgo was questioned concerning a polygraph test administered to ARMMUG/1 on or about May 11, 1964. Mr. Hidalgo said that he was not present during administration of the polygraph but that ~~Mr.~~ Mr. Swenson and the polygraph operator were present. Mr. Hidalgo did recall reading the results of the polygraph but did not recall whether Lee Harvey Oswald was discussed. It was his belief, however, that Oswald would have been discussed because of the length of the polygraph session. Mr. Hidalgo

also stated that he believes
 26 IC/WH/3, on a need
 to know basis, would have
 been given access to the poly-
 graph results.

Mr. Hidalgo was again asked
 to describe the information
 which AMMUG/1 provided concern-
 ing Lee Harvey Oswald. Mr. Hi-
 dalgo again deferred to Mr.
 Swenson for such information.

In an effort to refresh his recol-
 lection, Mr. Hidalgo was asked
 to examine a 5 May 1964, CIA
 blind memorandum prepared
 by Mr. Swenson. This memorandum
 in summary fashion set forth
 AMMUG/1's knowledge about
 Lee Harvey Oswald and the JFK
 assassination. Mr. Hidalgo

remarked that he may have seen
 the memorandum previously.

He stated that he did not know
 who wrote the memorandum
 but was confident of its ac-
 curacy. He stated that he did
 not recall reading any other
 reports similar to this one and
 did not know if any other
 reports of this kind had been
 prepared (In fact, such reports
 were subsequently prepared).

Mr. Hidalgo was next shown
 a CIA dispatch [OSOA 7763,] May 1
 64, indicating that twenty-two

reels of tape recorded debriefing
sessions of AMMUG/1 while in
[redacted] were being forwarded
to Chief, Special Affairs Staff, from
the Chief of Station, [redacted] Mr.

Hidalgo indicated that he had
seen some of these reels. However,
he said he ~~did~~ not know ~~the~~

the Agency filing procedure for
such tape recordings. He further
stated he did not recall seeing
the ^{English} translations of these reels.

Dan begin next part under the blue line

any other similar reports & does not know in fact if the report of the kind were prepared (such reports were in fact prepared on 6, 7, 8 & 11/74)

Hidalgo was next shown CIA dispatch [OCOA 7763,] 1 May 64, which indicated that twenty two reels of tape recordings debriefing sessions of A/T, while in [redacted] were

being forwarded to Chief, ~~Special~~ Special Affairs Staff from the Chief of Station, [redacted]

[redacted] Hidalgo indicated that he did see some of these ~~reels~~ reels. However, he does not know how they would have been filed. He further stated that he doesn't recall seeing any translation of these reels.



M. Hidalgo was next shown a ~~the~~ July 17, 1964 ^{CIA} contact report of a meeting ~~with A/T~~ ^{with AMMOB}, written by Joseph Piccolo. The report identifies M. Hidalgo as being

present at the meeting along with another CIA agent [AMNIP/]

M. Hidalgo stated that the report was accurate.

When asked to identify [AMNIP/]

M. Hidalgo refused. He

explained that [AMNIP/] was also a CUI ^{office} but that

he had died at age 25 of an apparent heart ^{attack} disease. However

[AMNIP/1] had no history of heart disease and Hidalgo

expressed the belief that

[AMNIP/1]'s death was fashioned by sinister hands.

M. Hidalgo further related that he ^{could} not recall whether

a photograph of a red-haired negro had been shown to

either ^{AMNIP/1} or [AMNIP/1] during the session. He ~~also~~ ^{did}

said that he ~~did not~~ ^{did} not know how such report would have been filed. He

did not deal w/ filing procedure.

M. Hidalgo was next shown

The report reflects that AMNIP/1 and AMNIP/1 had been known as "Cuban" a "Cuban" in order to identify various Cuban intelligence officers at the meeting.

a ~~1971~~ April 9, 1971 CIA
report from [Eustace]
[D. K. Look] indicating
that AM/US/ had again been
shown the "Cuban maybros"
& had identified various
Cuban personalities.
At p 3, 8th name from
the top, ^{with reference contact report} Mr. Hidalgo was
asked if the name
Andrés Nicolás Armas
Pamos was familiar to
him. He replied in the
negative. However, he did recall
hearing the pseudonym
"Ernesto" used in relation
to DGI personnel in Mex. G.
~~Mr. Hidalgo was asked~~

In response to the question
of whether he had known
AM/ASH/1 or ever acted as
AM/ASH/1's case officer,
Mr. Hidalgo replied in both
cases in the negative.
~~Mr. Hidalgo was asked~~
~~whether he had known~~
Gordon of the CUBA. He
characterized CUBA as
sinister, capable of any action
and stated that he knows Castro had been
~~admitted~~ CIA asset admitted.

Mr. Hidalgo was also asked if the name Antonio Valencia was familiar to him. He responded negatively. However, he did recall the name — Rail.

Mr. Hidalgo was next shown a document entitled "Information from ^{CIA} ~~App~~ ^{on} Agents" dated August 21, 1964, unsigned. The document described use of foreign organizations by CUBs for recruitment of CUB agents. Mr. Hidalgo was queried whether FPCC ^{had ever been} a front organization for CUBs. Mr. Hidalgo said he believed it to be the case but this was only a belief on his part.

Mr. Hidalgo was next asked about his knowledge of Gilberto Policarpo Rojas. Hidalgo responded that he recognized the name but had no other memory. He stated he ^{did} ~~does~~ not know whether Policarpo ^{ever} was associated with the Agency.

Mr. Hidalgo was next shown a ~~report~~ ^{Report} (# FE390) dated June 28, 1963 written by ~~Charles R. [redacted]~~ ^{Charles R. [redacted]}. Mr. Hidalgo ~~could not~~ ^{could} identify ~~[redacted]~~ ^[redacted].

~~Blanco's~~ report made reference to Teresa Proenza. Hidalgo commented that her name "rings a bell" but he could recall nothing more. He also stated that the name of Luisa Calderon, cited on p 3 of the above-referenced report, was familiar to him but he knew no more about her than indicated by the short description set forth therein.

Mr. Hidalgo was then asked if he could ^{identify} what a "Black Tape" 201 file is. Hidalgo said he could not recall the type of file.

~~Mr. Hidalgo was next shown a CIA~~
~~memorandum dated~~
~~March 11, 1963, providing~~
~~information on Luisa Rodriguez~~
~~Calderon.~~ ^{and bearing a date stamp of AMMUGII}
 Mr. Hidalgo stated he was not familiar with this document. He further stated that he had never seen the transcript of Calderon's 22 Nov 63 conversation intercepted by CIA in Mexico City. He explained

that when this report was written he was no longer working on Cuba-related assignment.

CIA dispatch [E 600-4675] June 15, 1964
which indicate that [A/14/105/1] debriefing information was being forwarded by a "split transmittal". Mr. Hidalgo could provide no information on the meaning or routing of the dispatch.

~~Mr. Hidalgo was interviewed~~

#7 Mr. Hidalgo was questioned on his knowledge of James Cobb, an alleged CIA/FBI informant in Mexico City circa 1963. Mr. Hidalgo stated that Cobb's CIA case officer was a woman who he could describe but prefers not to describe.

The interview was concluded at 1:00 p.m. Mr. Hidalgo (over)

was asked whether he
would ~~be willing~~ consent
to be interviewed again
by HSCA. He responded
affirmatively but indicated
that ~~his~~ his position
in answering HSCA questions
would remain unchanged