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CIA OPERATIONS AGAINST CUBA PRIOR TO THE ASSASSINATION
OF PRESIDENT JOHN F. KENNEDY ON 23 NOVEMBER 1963

A. INTRODUCTION

1. Agency planning and operations directed at Cuba during the latter part of 1959, 1960 and early 1961 were almost totally devoted to the development of the paramilitary operation which culminated in the Bay of Pigs invasion on 17 April 1961. During this period, major efforts were devoted to training a paramilitary force, formation of a Cuban exile organization in Miami to direct opposition activities and to provide future Cuban leadership and a propaganda campaign designed to rally opposition to Castro in Cuba and elsewhere in Latin America.

2. Some of the actions initiated during 1960-61 continued following the defeat of the Agency supported Cuban brigade. For example, prior to the break in diplomatic relations between Cuba and the U.S. on 3 January 1961, CIA maintained a Station in Havana. This Station recruited and trained intelligence agents and procured and cached communications equipment to form a staybehind net to provide intelligence on Cuba following the break in diplomatic relations. Following the Bay of Pigs defeat, this net continued to function providing information on Cuba via radio communication and Latin American diplomatic pouches. Radio

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S E C R E T

Swan is another example of an operation which continued after the Bay of Pigs. It was established in the Spring of 1960 as a component of the anti-Castro propaganda campaign. It continued in this role until its termination in 1968.

3. Following the Bay of Pigs and in response to administration urgings to do something about Castro, CIA established a large Station in Miami in September 1961 to continue operations against Cuba. The operations described below were developed and run by the Miami Station; many of them were still in the developmental stage at the time of President Kennedy's assassination.

4. The Station initiated three major classes of activities: intelligence collection/espionage, covert action/propaganda, and infiltration/exfiltration actions. It should be noted that there was no clear delineation between these activities, e.g., an exile organization primarily engaged in propaganda on the Agency's behalf might also provide positive intelligence information from interrogation of an exile or provide candidates for an infiltration team to perform sabotage. It should also be noted that infiltration/exfiltration actions were undertaken for a variety of purposes such as espionage, sabotage and to assist defectors. Aside from intelligence collection, all of the remaining activities would constitute forms of covert action.

- 2 -

S E C R E T

S E C R E T

B. COVERT ACTION/PROPAGANDA

1. Agency Supported Cuban Exile Organizations:

CIA provided monetary support and guidance to a number of Cuban exile organizations in the Miami area who disseminated anti-Castro propaganda. Some of these organizations came into existence through Cuban exile initiative, but they became largely dependent on CIA to carry on their activities.

a. Directorio Magisterial Revolucionario (DMR):

An exile teachers organization in which CIA became interested in early 1961. DMR produced a bulletin (Magisterio Cubano Libre) which was mailed to 18 Latin American countries, to DMR members and to press and radio organizations in the U.S. Radio programs directed at Cuba were prepared and broadcast over station WMIE in Miami. Copies of these programs were sent to various Latin American countries and were broadcast over 88 different stations. The DMR also produced seven TV programs which were broadcast over Channel 2 in Miami. The theme of DMR propaganda was the destruction of the Cuban educational system by Castro. The head of DMR attended the National Education Association meeting in 1962, gave a talk at the meeting and was instrumental in having a resolution approved condemning the Castro regime. By the end of 1962, the DMR was mailing out 350,000 booklets and pamphlets a year to various Latin countries and France.

- 3 -

S E C R E T

S E C R E T

b. Union Deportiva de Cuba Libre (UDCL):

A sports oriented organization established by CIA in October 1962. Led by a well known Cuban sports figure and a prominent Cuban sports writer. Purpose of UDCL was to expose Cuban abuse of international sporting events for political propaganda purposes. UDCL leaders attended the IX Central American and Caribbean Games at Kingston, Jamaica in August 1962, disseminated anti-Castro propaganda and were in part responsible for the defection of ten Cuban athletes. A similar operation was launched at the II Ibero-American Games at Madrid in October 1962 with less success. Propaganda was distributed and two defections were induced. Pamphlets were also distributed at the IV Panamerican Games at Sao Paulo, Brazil in January 1963. No defections were induced. In 1963, the UDCL is credited with obtaining a temporary suspension of Cuba from Olympic competition and changing the site of the XVI Amateur Baseball World Championship from Cuba to another country.

c. Comite De Organizaciones Juveniles Cubanas in el Exilio (COJCE):

A youth organization headed by a former Cuban Boy Scout leader. CIA began support to this organization in December 1962. Starting in July 1963, COJCE published a monthly bulletin with a distribution of several thousand copies to Latin American and European youth contacts. Purpose of bulletin was to furnish information on the effect of Castro-Communist policies on Cuban youth.

- 4 -

S E C R E T

S E C R E T

d. Directorio Revolucionario Estudiantil (DRE):

Led by several former Cuban student leaders. CIA support to the DRE started prior to the Bay of Pigs. The DRE was primarily a paramilitary organization and prior to April 1961, 21 DRE members were trained and infiltrated into Cuba to create resistance and guerrilla units. This DRE apparatus was destroyed in the aftermath of the Bay of Pigs. Subsequent paramilitary operations also ended in failure and CIA withdrew its paramilitary support in December 1961. In January 1962, the DRE turned to hemispheric propaganda operations. DRE sponsored students were placed in Latin American universities where they carried on anti-Castro activities. This so-called student project also engaged in such activities as drumming up support for the U.S. position at the 1962 Punto del Este Conference and carrying out successful operations at the Helsinki Youth Festival in May 1962. Starting in 1962, the DRE began broadcasts over NY shortwave radio station WRUL six days a week and Miami radio station WMIE once a week. The DRE also published an international bulletin which was mailed to contacts throughout the hemisphere and a pony edition of 4,800 copies was mailed into Cuba.

e. Frente Obrero Revolucionario Democratico Cubano (FORDC):

Established by CIA in October 1960 as a rallying point for middle and upper echelon trade unionists in exile. Led by former Cuban

S E C R E T

Labor leaders, FORDC published a weekly circular letter which was mailed to labor organizations throughout Latin America. Prior to 1961, FORDC sponsored a daily program over Radio Americas (Radio Swan). Starting in December 1961, FORDC broadcast a daily program over station WMIE. In addition to published and radio propaganda, groups of FORDC leaders were sent on trips throughout Latin America to maintain contact with hemisphere labor leaders and to sample attitudes toward Castro. FORDC also maintained contact with international labor organizations.

f. Unidad Revolucionaria (UR):

Originally established in Cuba in December 1960 as a clandestine resistance movement. Its leadership was largely put to death or imprisoned as a result of the Bay of Pigs. The organization was re-established in Miami in August 1962 with CIA support. A paramilitary arm was established in April 1963, but no effective paramilitary action was ever carried out. Starting in March 1963, UR sponsored a daily radio program over WMIE targetted at Cuban farmers and another daily program exposing Cuban internal security service activities. In July 1963, UR initiated a shortwave broadcast from station WRUL, New York. The UR utilized nonobjective, lurid propaganda themes. The UR was also a prolific producer of propaganda pamphlets. During 1963-64, 1,442,500 items were mailed to Cuba and other Latin American countries. On a

S E C R E T

weekly basis the UR published a list of free world ships visiting Cuba. This was consistently picked up by the Associated Press and Agence France Presse. Throughout its history, the UR was wracked with internal bickerings and power grabs which detracted from its impact.

2. Agency Supported Individuals:

Aside from utilizing various exile organizations for propaganda purposes, CIA also supported several prominent exiles who prepared propaganda materials. Zig Zag Libre was a successful satire magazine in Cuba prior to the Castro regime. The Agency supported its former editor who published an edition for mailing into Cuba. In the 1963 period it was considered an effective weapon for ridiculing Castro. CIA also supported a former prominent student leader, and one of the former directors of Prensa Libre, a leading Havana newspaper. These individuals produced daily radio programs for Radio Swan and prepared propaganda materials for publication. These individual efforts tended to be more effective and to receive better audience response from Cuba than the organizational broadcasts described above.

3. Agencia de Informaciones Periodesticas (AIP):

AIP was a news information service financed by CIA. Agency sponsorship was an open secret. It was designed to fill the gap in coverage by the regular news media. It was accepted in the hemisphere

5
S E C R E T
5

as an accurate and objective reporter of events. It prepared four news bulletins a week which were distributed to 1200 Latin American news outlets and prepared radio tapes based on the bulletins which were distributed to hemisphere radio stations.

4. Radio Americas (Radio Swan):

An Agency-financed radio station; the transmitter was located on Swan Island with broadcast studios in New York initially and later Miami. Started broadcasting in mid-1960 with entertainment programs purchased from Pan American Broadcasting interspersed with news programs and propaganda. CIA sponsorship was an open secret. Its image and credibility was smudged considerably as a result of its use in the Bay of Pigs operation. Most audience response was received from Caribbean countries outside of Cuba.

5. Mailing Operation:

Most propaganda mailing operations were directed to Latin American countries outside of Cuba. This project, initiated in 1963, was designed as a mass mailing operation into Cuba to encourage subtle sabotage, resistance and harassment. Utilizing names and addresses from Cuban telephone books, letters with fictitious return addresses were mailed to Cuba from various Latin American countries and by insertion into international mail transiting the U.S. From refugee debriefings, it is known

- 8 -

S E C R E T

S E C R E T

that some of this mail was delivered, but like most of the operations described in this section, it is unknown if the program was effective in increasing Cuban resistance.

C. INTELLIGENCE COLLECTION/ESPIONAGE

1. Refugee and Defector Exploitation:

Cuban refugees were entering the United States at the rate of 1700 per week during 1961-62. The Immigration and Naturalization Service (I&NS) recorded basic biographic data on all incoming refugees. Cards, containing this data, were provided to the Miami Station to conduct a file check for counterintelligence purposes. In reviewing the cards, the Station identified refugees who might be used for operational purposes and arranged interviews which, frequently, also provided positive intelligence information.

CIA's Domestic Contact Division (DCD) had primary responsibility for obtaining positive intelligence information from refugees. DCD interviewed refugees of positive intelligence interest at the Caribbean Admissions Center (CAC) in Opa-Locka. These interviews were documented in Preliminary Information Reports (PIRs) which were provided to the Intelligence Community and to the Miami Station for review to obtain operational leads.

Prior to the Cuban Missile crisis in October 1962, the flow of

- 9 -

S E C R E T

S E C R E T

refugees was large, and it was relatively easy to obtain information on current events in Cuba and Cuban exiles that could be utilized operationally. Following the crisis, the flow of refugees decreased significantly. As a result, the Station established a section to exploit refugees more intensively, to centralize files on refugees, and to prepare studies on exile groups operating in the U.S.

2. Anonymous Organization Group:

During 1960-63, this Group consisted of between 50 to 100 Cuban exiles who constituted a structured intelligence support group for the Station. It performed a variety of functions for the Station, and it was the Station's prime source of information on Cuban exile activities. It is considered the single most valuable operational activity undertaken by the Station. In summary, this Group:

- a. Infiltrated exile groups and reported on their activities.
- b. Maintained extensive files on Cuban exiles, exile groups and Cuban Government personalities.
- c. Monitored Cuban radio broadcasts and summarized content.
- d. Produced intelligence reports and special studies.
- e. Debriefed refugees.
- f. Recruited infiltration agents.

S E C R E T

3. Intelligence Net:

In mid-1962, the Agency recruited a former Cuban politician to establish an agent net in Cuba. This individual recruited a member of the presidential entourage, a Cuban working in a foreign consul, and a third individual. These individuals recruited an extensive net of 150 subagents and informants which was very productive in reporting information of intelligence interest via the diplomatic pouch of the foreign consul. The high living and immoral behavior of one of the principals ^{also} attracted the attention of the Cuban security service. This individual was arrested and interrogated prior to Christmas 1963 resulting in the arrest and conviction on espionage charges of all of the members of the net.

4. Juana Castro:

Juana Castro, younger sister of Fidel Castro, was one of the more significant CIA agent recruitments. She was a strong supporter of her brother until she realized he had led the revolution not on behalf of the oppressed Cuban people, but on behalf of the Communist movement. The wife ²⁴ [redacted], who was working as a CIA agent, convinced Juana to cooperate with the Agency. She was recruited in Mexico City by a CIA officer in September 1962, briefed extensively and trained in intelligence tradecraft. She worked as a resident foreign

- 11 -

S E C R E T

1/27

S E C R E T

intelligence agent until 1964 when it was determined that she would be more valuable in a defector role.

D. INFILTRATION/EXFILTRATION OPERATIONS

As noted earlier, infiltration/exfiltration operations, which started in mid-1962, were undertaken for a variety of purposes, such as:

- a. Emplace arms and communications caches for use by agents and resistance groups.
- b. Infiltrate agents to recruit agents for espionage purposes.
- c. Exfiltrate agents who had completed their missions, or for further training, or to obtain reporting.
- d. Exfiltrate significant political defectors.
- e. Commit acts of sabotage.

Each of these operations were approved by the Special Group or its successor, the 303 Committee. They were a major preoccupation of the Miami Station and large amounts of money and manpower were devoted to them. They were executed with varying degrees of success and were frequently aborted because they encountered resistance from Cuban security forces or rendezvous were missed.

These operations were supported by a small maritime force which, in 1963, consisted of three mother ships and six smaller vessels. During 1963, 88 operations were planned of which 15 were cancelled. Of the

- 12 -

S E C R E T

S E C R E T

operations carried out, four involved sabotage and ten others encountered contact with Cuban forces. Thus, during 1963, the Castro Government was aware of at least 14 operations involving infiltration of Cuban coasts and harbors, and it would be logically assumed that the U.S. had a hand in these actions.

During 1963, a CIA trained exile paramilitary group committed two acts of sabotage which inflicted some damage, caused a great deal of commotion and attracted a lot of publicity. On 31 August 1963, this group attempted to destroy a POL dump in Casildo Harbor using an 81mm mortar and a 75mm recoiler^s rifle. Unknown to the team, the Harbor was under an air defense alert at the time. Shortly after opening fire, the team came under heavy enemy fire. The team inflicted some damage on the POL dump, and hastily departed in two small boats. This attack was reported in the Cuban press.

On 30 September 1963, this group conducted a commando raid against a large sawmill on the coast of Oriente Province. The sawmill was destroyed and no enemy opposition was encountered. The mill was a main producer of railroad ties. Its loss was felt, and noted in a Castro speech, when a hurricane destroyed most of the railroad's lines in part of Cuba several weeks later.

- 13 -

S E C R E T