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24 June 1956

MEMORANDUM FOR: ~~Deputy~~ Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT: ~~MAHEU, Robert A.~~ JOHNNY ROSELL

1. This memorandum is for information only.

2. In August 1960, Mr. Richard M. Bissell approached Colonel Sheffield Edwards to determine if the Office of Security had assets that may assist in a sensitive mission requiring gangster-type action. The mission target was ~~(the liquidation of)~~ Fidel Castro.

3. Because of its extreme sensitivity, only a small group was made privy to the project. The DCI was briefed and gave his approval. Colonel J. C. King, Chief, WH Division, was briefed, but all details were deliberately concealed from any of the JMWAVE officials. Certain TSD and Commo personnel participated in the initial planning stages, but were not witting of the purpose of the mission.

4. Robert A. Maheu was contacted, briefed generally on the project, and requested to ascertain if he could develop an entree into the gangster elements as the first step toward accomplishing the desired goal.

5. Mr. Maheu advised that he had met one Johnny Roselli on several occasions while visiting Las Vegas. He only knew him casually through clients, but was given to understand that he was a high-ranking member of the "syndicate" and controlled all of the ice-making machines on the Strip. Maheu reasoned that, if Roselli was in fact a member of the clan, he undoubtedly had connections leading into the Cuban gambling interests.

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6. Maheu was asked to approach Roselli, who knew Maheu as a personal relations executive handling domestic and foreign accounts, and tell him that he had recently been retained by a client who represented several international business firms which were suffering heavy financial losses in Cuba as a result of Castro's action. They were convinced that Castro's removal was the answer to their problem and were willing to pay a price of \$150,000 for its successful accomplishment. It was to be made clear to Roselli that the U. S. Government was not, and should not, become aware of this operation.

7. The pitch was made to Roselli on 14 September 1960 at the Hilton Plaza Hotel, New York City. His initial reaction was to avoid getting involved but, through Maheu's persuasion, he agreed to introduce him to a friend, Sam Gold, who knew the "Cuban crowd." Roselli made it clear he did not want any money for his part and believed Sam would feel the same way. Neither of these individuals was ever paid out of Agency funds.

8. During the week of 25 September, Maheu was introduced to Sam who was staying at the Fontainebleau Hotel, Miami Beach. ~~His initial impression of Sam was that of a hard, uncouth individual who looked and acted like a common run-of-the-mill hoodlum. However, his living accommodations at the hotel belied this, as did the fact that Maheu learned Sam was under periodic surveillance by the FBI.~~ It was several weeks after his meeting with Sam and Joe, who was identified to him as a courier operating between Havana and Miami, that he saw photographs of both of these individuals in the Sunday supplemental "Parade." They were identified as Momo Salvatore Giancana and Santos Trafficant, respectively. Both were on the list of the Attorney General's ten most-wanted men. The former was described as the Chicago chieftain of the Cosa Nostra and successor to Al Capone, and the latter, the Cosa Nostra boss of Cuban operations. Maheu called this office immediately upon ascertaining this information.

9. In discussing the possible methods of accomplishing the mission, Sam suggested that they not resort to firearms but that they will be furnished with some type of potent pill that could

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be placed in Castro's food or drink, it would be a much more effective operation. Sam indicated that he had a prospective nominee in the person of Juan Orta, a Cuban official who had been receiving kickback payments from the gambling interests, who still had access to Castro and was in a financial bind.

10. Cornelius Roosevelt, Chief, TSD, was consulted and assigned Dr. [redacted] to develop a pill that had the elements of rapid solubility, high lethal content, and little or no traceability. Six of these items were produced and, after being checked out for their effectiveness by Dr. Edward M. Gunn, three pills were ultimately turned over to Sam for the mission. Neither TSD nor Dr. Gunn was briefed on the ultimate use of the pills.

TSD  
Approved  
Produced  
Pills  
Gunn

11. Joe delivered the pills to Orta. After several weeks of reported attempts, Orta apparently got cold feet and asked out of the assignment. He suggested another candidate who made several attempts without success.

12. Joe then indicated that Dr. Anthony Verona, one of the principal officers in the Cuban Exile Junta, had become disaffected with the apparent ineffectual progress of the Junta and was willing to handle the mission through his own resources.

13. Dr. Verona was approached and jumped at the opportunity of getting involved in an independent operation. He was told that the private interests backing the project did not want the U. S. Government and, particularly the CIA, to know of their involvement. (So far as this Office knows, he has never divulged his participation in the project to the Agency.)

14. He asked, as a prerequisite to the deal, that he be given \$10,000 for organizational expenses and requested \$1,000 worth of communications equipment.

15. Dr. Verona's potential was never fully exploited, as the project was canceled shortly after the Bay of Pigs episode. Verona was advised that the offer was withdrawn, and the pills were retrieved.

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16. Of significant interest was an incident which involved a request levied by Sam upon Maheu [and now shapes up as a potential flap.]

At the height of the project negotiations, Sam expressed concern [redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted] Sam asked Maheu to put a bug in [redacted] room to determine the extent of [redacted]

[redacted] Maheu told Sam he didn't have the facilities, whereupon Sam threatened to leave Miami to go to Vegas and take care of the matter himself. In order to prevent this, Maheu contacted Edward Dubois, a Florida investigator, and asked him to handle the job.]

Instead of installing a bug in the room, the technician placed a tap on the phone, which obviously did not serve Sam's purpose. The technician involved in the assignment was discovered in the process, arrested, and taken to the Sheriff's office for questioning. After he failed to reach Dubois by telephone, he called Maheu at the Kenilworth Hotel, Miami, and informed him that he had been detained by the police. This call was made in the presence of the Sheriff's personnel.

Subsequently, the Department of Justice announced its intention to prosecute Maheu along with the technician. On 7 February 1962, the Director of Security briefed the Attorney General, Robert Kennedy, on the circumstances leading up to Maheu's involvement in the wiretap. At our request, prosecution was dropped.

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Two articles appeared in the Chicago press, one on 16 August 1963, and one on 20 August 1963, that suggested Sam was working with the Agency. The first article appeared in the Chicago Sun-Times written by staff writer, Sandy Smith, and had as its headline: CIA Sought Giancana Help for Cuba Spying. It relates that the Agency reportedly was in touch with Sam in 1959 and requested that he assist them in obtaining intelligence out of Cuba. It also mentioned the Las Vegas wiretap, which the article claimed was handled by a "Florida investigative organization." It further went on to state that, upon inquiry of this organization, they stated the tap was placed at the request of the Central Intelligence Agency. The other article appeared in the Chicago Daily News, authored by Columnist Tony Weitzel, and commented that during March 1962, Sam confronted an FBI Agent who was shadowing him and said, "Why don't you fellows leave me alone? I'm one of you!" Sam allegedly stated that, after Castro's rise in Cuba, a CIA operative contacted him and wanted to know if Sam could do anything for the Government on the turbulent little island. Sam said he had friends on both sides, but no clout. That was it.

17. Roselli was introduced to James P. O'Connell, of this Office, who was identified to him as an employee of Robert A. Mahou, Associates. Over the several months of close contact between these two individuals, Roselli began to speculate as to O'Connell's true employer and, at one point, stated that he was convinced he was employed by the CIA, and that the project was sponsored by the Agency. He hastened to state that he was not forcing the issue, nor would he want confirmation of this and, further, he would not mention this to anyone else, including Sam. Sam was never introduced to any Agency personnel and, while CIA was never mentioned to him, it is Mahou's belief he eventually suspected the Agency was the power behind the operation.

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18. In May 1962, because of Mr. O'Connell's assignment to an overseas post, it was decided to turn Roselli over to Mr. William Harvey, who was at that time Chief, Task Force W. Harvey was introduced as William Walker. It is not known whether Roselli ever became aware of Harvey's true name.

Howard J. Osborn  
Director of Security

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3rd party, personnel deletions from  
24 Jun 66 memo to Det RG  
Johnny Roselli