Agency Information

AGENCY: SSCIA
RECORD NUMBER: 157-10014-10185
RECORD SERIES: MISCELLANEOUS RECORDS OF THE CHURCH COMMITTEE
AGENCY FILE NUMBER: 07-M-90

Document Information

ORIGINATOR: SSCIA
FROM:
TO:
TITLE: THE CONGO

DATE: 08/22/1975
PAGES: 5

SUBJECTS:
CIA
MOBUTU
LUMUMBA, PATRICE, ASSASSINATION

DOCUMENT TYPE: SUMMARY
CLASSIFICATION: Unclassified
RESTRICTIONS: 1B; 1C
CURRENT STATUS: Redact
DATE OF LAST REVIEW: 05/31/2000

OPENING CRITERIA:

COMMENTS:
JFK ASSASSINATION SYSTEM
IDENTIFICATION FORM

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DOCUMENT TYPE : SUMMARY
CLASSIFICATION : UNCLASSIFIED
RESTRICTIONS : REFERRED
CURRENT STATUS : POSTPONED IN FULL
DATE OF LAST REVIEW : 01/19/99
OPENING CRITERIA :
COMMENTS :

[R] - ITEM IS RESTRICTED
INTERVIEW AND MEETING SUMMARY

INTERVIEW WITH: "Victor Hedgeman"

REGARDING: The Congo

DATE-TIME-LOCATION: August 22, 1975, 8201, a.m./p.m.

PRESENT: Bill Bader

HAS OR SHOULD BE DIGESTED:

FOLLOW UP REQUIRED: SEE PAGE 5 -- POSSIBLE INTERVIEWEES

MATERIALS SUBMITTED BY INTERVIEWEE(S):

EXECUTIVE SESSION: YES ☒ NO
After an extended tour with the United States Army and some education at San Diego State, Hedgeman went to Harvard where he studied in the Department of International Relations, working to a degree in political science. He didn't finish his degree but went after being recruited at Harvard into the OPC. He then became an NOC in Europe and for a number of years worked in Belgium, Luxembourg and France. His primary responsibility in Belgium was that of surveillance of Soviet operators in Europe. While in he came to meet

In January of 1960 he became the first Chief of Station in the Congo; prior to that time the Agency had had merely a liaison service. In late July of 1960 Hedgeman returned to the United States with Ambassador Timberlake to press for a U.S. policy of political action in the Congo. Hedgeman's position was that the Soviets were moving large amounts of equipment and manpower into the Congo and that something had to be done to head it off. At the time he first went to the Congo he was the only man in the Station. A year later there were and eventually the Station would reach upwards of . Hedgeman mentioned that the relationships and staff that he built in the Congo persisted, and that when the operation started the group would move almost intact to . Hedgeman believed that the Congo was vitally important to American interests,
Despite some criticism of that point from the State Department. He felt that the economic wealth of the Congo was important to the United States' future, and that it was equally important that the Congo remain a viable unit. He said that there was very strong resistance at the State level for political action involvement in the Congo. Fortunately the Congo operation became one of Allen Dulles' projects. At the beginning, with the approval of the Special Group, it was agreed that the CIA would begin to provide financial support for moderate Congolese politicians. By August of 1960, however, Hedgeman and Timberlake were pushing for instructions that would allow them to pursue a course that would lead to a change in government. Hedgeman said that those close to Lumumba at that time were Soviet agents. The way that it was initially pursued was to the building of personnel assets investing in labor unions to help them with their propaganda, a lobbying campaign, direct payments to politicians.

The first major effort to rid the Congo of Lumumba came with a plan developed by Hedgeman to bribe enough members of the Senate in order to induce them to vote Lumumba out. This plan was to have taken place on the 7th of September, 1960. Hedgeman had arranged that the radio would be denied Lumumba after his defeat so that he would not be able to go on the radio to try to change the decision of the Senate. Unfortunately and for reasons Hedgeman does not know to this day, Mobutu jumped the gun and threw Lumumba out. Lumumba in turn went
to the Assembly and harangued them and got the vote and also got
the vote in the Senate by bringing troops out and surrounding
the Senate building. Hedgeman said that up to this point he
had been thinking largely in parliamentary terms; that the
way to rid the country of Lumumba was through the paramilitary
method. After this experience of the 5th through the 7th, he
decided more drastic and direct methods had to be employed.
Hedgeman contends that the coup of Mobutu seized control was
arranged and supported, and indeed, managed, by the Central
Intelligence Agency. During the course of the interview
Hedgeman spoke glowingly of Mobutu, who he feels is a man with
good political judgment, a sense of history, and the capacity
to be a Pan African leader. Mobutu was only twenty-nine at
the time. Hedgeman says his most difficult time with Mobutu
came in February of 1961 when the Kennedy administration decided
that a federalized government, including all political factions
was the only hope of averting civil war. Hedgeman was charged
with going to Mobutu and telling him that the United States
had decided to withdraw all support from him and that he
would have to resign. He said Mobutu was utterly shocked
by this and could not possibly believe the United States
could believe that the Congo was ready for parliamentary
government. He said Mobutu was so upset that he drew his gun
and waved it in the direction of Hedgeman and said "If this
happens, I will die," and, looking at Hedgeman, "so will others."
Hedgeman said Mobutu only put his gun away when Hedgeman
told him that he did not personally agree with the decision,
that he was just carrying out orders like a good soldier.
Hedgeman stressed that in this period, 1960-1961, the Congo was fraught with utter confusion; he said that what they were running was a Scotch tape and baling-wire opera-
tion. As for paramilitary operations, Hedgeman said they be-
gan seriously in the end of 1962 with the arrival of a number of T-6's that he and Ed Gullion had asked for. He said that these aircraft were not intended to be used in combat, but only to reassure the Congolese that the United States was with them and provide them with a bit of black magic. Hedgeman professed that the paramilitary combat missions of 1963, in support of anti-
rebel activities, were really quite minor affairs.

Some specifics. Hedgeman contended that he had no knowledge of the approval of funding of South African mercenaries and tribal leaders capable of resistance as approved by the 303 Committee. He also said, though, that he had important contact with Mike Hoare mercenaries, they gave no direct or indirect support to them. He also said there was ne, repeat no, com-
plicity or support on the part of the CIA in the ouster of Kasavubu by Mobutu in November of 1965.

Throughout the conversation, Hedgeman interspersed the most hair-raising tales of his and his daughter's brushes with death in their dealings with unruly mutinous Congolese, ranging from being placed before two different firing squads during one day and his evening as the selected victim of a hit con-
tract given by the Union Miniere.

As for CIA employees who might testify well, should the Committee handle the Congo issue in executive session, Hedgeman recommended Edward Korn-Patterson, Bronson Tweedy, and Glen Fields.