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January 24, 1964

**MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
THE DEPUTY SECRETARY OF DEFENSE**

SUBJECT: Appraisal of US Sabotage Program Against Cuba

In June 1963, higher authority approved a CIA covert program against Cuba which consisted of six interrelated courses of action:

1. Collection of intelligence to meet US national security requirements and support covert operations.
2. Propaganda actions to stimulate low-risk sabotage and other forms of active and passive resistance.
3. Economic denial actions to support US economic exploitation measures.
4. Exploitation and stimulation of disaffection in the Cuban armed forces and other power centers of the regime.
5. General sabotage and harassment.
6. Support of autonomous anti-Castro Cuban exile groups to supplement and assist the US covert capability.

The ultimate objective of the program is "to encourage dissident elements and other power centers of the regime to bring about the eventual liquidation of the Castro/Communist entourage and the elimination of the Soviet presence from Cuba." (Tab A) CIA set approximately 18 months from June 1963 as the time frame within which these objectives could be substantially realized. This tentative schedule was based on the "simultaneous, coordinated execution of the individual courses of action." While this analysis is concerned with courses of action 5 and 6, the interlocking nature of the covert program must be kept in mind in appraising the sabotage program.

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The intensity of the sabotage program has never reached the level planned by CIA. Of 18 raids presented for approval, 10 were disapproved. Of the 8 raids approved, 3 were aborted due to operational problems and five were executed. These five raids were successful in the sense that (a) there was substantial damage to the target; (b) all participants were safely recovered; and (c) each was plausibly deniable. (See Tab B for a brief description of raids.) Any assessment of the effectiveness of the program must be made against a background of the operational success of the raids, the discrepancy between the planned and actual levels of intensity and the limited duration of the program.

In addition to the CIA controlled sabotage, there are two autonomous groups; one is receiving substantial financial and logistical support from the US Government; the other is receiving only relatively minor financial support. Both are entirely composed of Cubans, and with the exception of one or two individuals at the top of each of these groups, no member of them realizes that they are receiving US support. It is possible that one of these groups may have conducted at least one raid. We do not expect any significant sabotage activity from these groups for at least another month and probably longer. The purpose of these programs is to increase internal sabotage rather than intensify external raiding.

Appraisal of CIA Sabotage Program

Spontaneous Internal Sabotage.

We have not been able to determine any relationship between the CIA raids and incidents of armed clashes in Cuba. (Tab C) On the other hand, while only 18 spontaneous acts of sabotage were reported throughout Cuba from June through September 1963, there were 18 reports of such acts in October, 25 in November, and 18 in December. (Tab D) Although incidents of spontaneous internal sabotage tend to be seasonal (they occur more frequently during the winter months when there is sugar cane to burn), it is reasonable to conclude that the increase during the latter part of 1963 is in some measure attributable to the CIA raids in August, September, October and December.

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Turbulence Within Cuba.

The sabotage program has had substantial impact on Cuban military and security forces. As a result of these raids, certain areas and ports were placed on special alert status; orders were issued to increase vigilance; and strict security measures were instituted at industrial and military installations throughout the country. Air and sea searches were begun; navy and helicopter patrols were expanded; and additional army patrols were ordered. Air, naval and ground force elements have been put on special alert either on a local or island-wide basis on at least 36 occasions during 1963 as a result of rumored or actual maritime operations. Almost continuous anti-insurgency operations, involving up to 2500 men, have been conducted.

Castro expanded his coast-watching network from 46 observation posts at the end of June to 103 at the end of October. At least 10 surface search radar stations have been established since June and there is tentative evidence of 7 more. In August 1963, a new internal security force, the Lucha Contra Piratas, was formed in an attempt to cope with off-shore raiding parties. In September, new training courses were initiated for command cadres of "popular defense units," designed to organize the people to defend themselves against enemy attack and to protect industrial centers and installations from sabotage.

From the foregoing, it is reasonable to conclude that externally mounted raids significantly contribute to turbulence within Cuban military and security forces, with concomitant diversion of badly needed funds, resources and manpower.

Internal Morale.

There are firm indications that the CIA sabotage program has had considerable effect within Cuba. [

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] A former Major in the Cuban rebel army reported after his exfiltration from Cuba in January 1964 that the 23 December CIA Siguanoa raid (which destroyed a P-6 patrol boat) was a great boost to morale among disaffected Cubans.

Castro's fear of rising dissidence and insurgency is reflected in his initiation of a variety of repressive measures. These include the forceful relocation of inhabitants from dissident areas and more stringent controls on freedom of movement within Cuba. These measures are bound to have adverse political, psychological and economic repercussions inside Cuba.

Although the psychological impact of the CIA program on Cuba cannot be measured with precision, the following objectives appear to have been accomplished.

- a. An atmosphere of uncertainty and uneasiness within Cuba has been created with respect to the regime's ability to control dissident elements in the population.
- b. Opposition elements have been given a psychological boost.
- c. The raids revealed to the entire Cuban populace the limitations of Cuban defenses.

Exile Community.

The reports of successful raids against Cuba have apparently reduced the sense of frustration within the exile community -- a frustration which formerly manifested itself in vitriolic attacks by exile leaders against the US Government and its leadership. Although the CIA raids are not directly attributable to the US Government, most astute exiles have concluded that the raids are CIA sponsored.

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Effects on Our Allies.

We are confident that the British are aware of some US support of, or at least acquiescence in, the sabotage program. Similarly, other sophisticated allies also probably have strong suspicions about US support or acquiescence. It is reasonable to believe that Central American countries, particularly Nicaragua and Costa Rica, have similar suspicions. The extent to which our allies believe we may be supporting or condoning such raids, is a significant indication of our intent to topple the Castro regime.

Impact Within the United States.

Although US sponsorship of the sabotage program has been credibly deniable, it seems clear that discerning elements in the US such as experienced Washington reporters and congressmen, realize that the US is either sponsoring or permitting sabotage raids against Cuba. This realization provides credible evidence that existing programs are consistent with our publicly announced policy to replace the Castro regime with one acceptable to the US.

Soviet Reactions

Despite the likelihood that Castro has provided the Soviets with evidence of US sponsorship of sabotage operations against Cuba, Soviet reaction has been restrained. Aside from the usual propaganda, we have knowledge of only one sharp Soviet reaction to external raids. In September, following a series of air raids by Cuban exile groups for which the US Government had no responsibility, the Soviet Union expressed its concern to the US Government.

Prospects for the Future

Continuation of the Program.

The six point covert program is closely related to other on-going efforts which receive some impetus from it. These include programs for overt economic and diplomatic isolation, as well as surveillance and other anti-subversion measures.

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Particularly if the raids are increased in number and scope, continuation of the CIA program should result in a corresponding increase in any favorable results mentioned earlier. Continuation of the program should contribute to some degree to creating conditions favorable to a coup or a spontaneous revolt. In addition, continued raids could provoke Castro into taking the kind of action that would justify and, under certain circumstances, perhaps even require overt US military action to topple his regime.

The sabotage program is not without its risks. To whatever extent the current United States/Soviet dialogue is relaxing tensions, continuation of the program, particularly if a future operation is compromised, could provide a basis for disruption of the dialogue. Also, while one of the objectives of the program is to reduce the level of Soviet forces in Cuba, it is possible that continuation of the raids (or any increase in the scope or intensity of raids) could result in a stoppage of the Soviet force reduction or even an increase in Soviet personnel in Cuba. Although some have suggested that there is a relationship between covert US pressure against Cuba and the export of Cuban-supported insurgency in Latin America, we do not believe continuation of the program would affect Castro's subversive activity in Latin America. Finally, and particularly if there is no increase in the scope or number of raids, continuation of the program, may not achieve the original objectives sought.

Termination of the Program.

There are two major factors to be considered in terminating the program. One is the effect it would have on our programs, our allies and the Communist Bloc. The other is the existence of acceptable alternatives which would accomplish our ultimate objectives.

The sabotage program is sufficiently interrelated with our other overt and covert programs directed against Cuba so that the effect would be to reduce the impact of those programs. With respect to our allies, and particularly those Latin Americans who are encouraged by the belief that we are condoning or supporting raids against Cuba, termination could discredit our recognized intent to remove the Castro regime. This would be particularly true in view of developments which have occurred during the last few weeks to

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strengthen the Castro position in Cuba, the hemisphere and the world. These developments include (a) the expected continuation of high sugar prices (which enabled Cuba to expand its convertible currency reserves in 1963), (b) the Soviet/Cuban trade protocols of 1964, (c) the British bus deal, which points to a break in Cuba's economic isolation, (d) the recent rioting in Panama in which Castro had some hand, and (e) the Zanzibar coup with its attendant publicity for Castro whatever his actual involvement.

If in the aftermath of these incidents the sabotage program is ended, Castro will emerge with a major propaganda victory and a greatly strengthened political base. In addition, it should be recognized that such a decision would reduce the policy alternatives available to the US. At the present time we have been pursuing a policy track designed to maintain maximum acceptable pressure against Castro, thus playing for the breaks while developing a broad menu of contingency plans which would enable us to capitalize on any fortuitous situation. Discontinuation of the core of the CIA covert program will tend to reduce further our current flexibility to one of two broad policy choices. Essentially these alternatives are to pursue at some point in time a rapprochement with Castro or to rely on military force to accomplish our objective. Other possibilities, such as the recognition of the government in exile, seem remote at this time and would require some sort of sanction for or support of sabotage activity against Cuba if they were to be credible.

We do not have sufficient experience on which to judge the value of the autonomous programs. However, if they are terminated, a significant anti-US reaction can be expected from the exile leaders. In the event that it is decided to terminate only the CIA-controlled sabotage operations, it should not be assumed that the autonomous groups, despite the greater deniability of their actions, could take over entirely the mission of furnishing proof of visible resistance to Castro and inspiring dissident elements within Cuba to take the personal risks necessary to set a coup in motion. Autonomous groups are as yet untested in their capability to conduct successful sabotage and harassment operations on a sustained basis. It is unlikely that in the next months the autonomous groups will develop the ability to match CIA-controlled operations, either in quantity or quality.

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Conclusions

1. The sabotage program to date has been operationally successful and has had salutary effects within and without Cuba.
2. If continued at its current pace and in the light of recent events, the sabotage program in conjunction with our other programs, will accomplish little more than delaying consolidation of the Castro/Communist regime.
3. If the program is continued and the raids are permitted to intensify in number and scope, there is a reasonable chance of accomplishing our original objectives. At the same time the risks to the US will be increased.
4. Termination of this program will result in deterioration of the remainder of the covert and overt programs and will permit the consolidation of the Castro regime at a more rapid pace than would otherwise be possible. Termination also might be interpreted as a US policy decision to coexist with Castro, provided he does not boldly conduct subversive activities in Latin America.
5. There is insufficient experience on which to judge the autonomous program. However, it is unlikely that it will provide a substitute for the raids performed under the CIA program either in quantity or quality.

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