

JFK ASSASSINATION SYSTEM

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TO: DIRECTOR, FBI
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COMMENTS: INC LHM

~~SECRET~~

FBI

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Date: 9/28/76

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REASON 1.5 (S)
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REASON FOIM II, 1.2.4.2
DATE OF REVIEW 9-28-96

TO DIRECTOR, FBI (134-25251)

FROM SAC, ALBANY (105-11938)

SUBJECT: MANUEL LEONARDO DE ARMAS
IS - CUBA (C)
REGISTRATION ACT

(OO: ALBANY)

Re Albany airtel of 9/27/76. (U)

Enclosed for the Bureau is the original and six
copies of a letterhead memorandum dated and captioned as
above, which reflects the subject's interview of 9/17/76 at
the Utica, New York, Resident Agency. (U)

Enclosed for Miami are two copies and for Chicago
one copy of the above described LHM. (U)

Contents of the LHM are self-explanatory and are
being furnished to the Bureau for transmittal to the CIA at
the Headquarters level. (U)

Agents who conducted the interview were SA's
JOSEPH T. DEYO and JAMES J. ROSE. (U)

This LHM has been classified "Secret" in that it
reflects information concerning the Cuban Intelligence Service
as well as a possible double agent situation. (U)

Albany continues to afford this sensitive investi-
gation a priority status and all future developments in this
case will be expeditiously brought to the attention of
FBIHQ. (U)

- 2 - Bureau (Encs. 7) (RM)
- 2 - Miami (105-23589) (Encs. 2) (RM)
- 1 - Chicago (Enc. 1) (RM)
- 2 - Albany

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

In Reply, Please Refer to
File No.

Albany, New York ~~(S)~~(u)

10-21-80

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Declassify on: OADR ~~7/6/83~~

September 28, 1976

CLASS. & EXT. BY ~~SP-4 JWA/jw~~
REASON-FCIM II, 1-2.4.2
DATE OF REVIEW ~~9-20-96~~

~~(S)~~(u) MANUEL LEONARDO DE ARMAS ~~(S)~~(u)

Information contained in this memorandum
is considered secret unless otherwise noted herein. (U)

On September 17, 1976, MANUEL LEONARDO DE ARMAS, by request, voluntarily appeared at the Utica Resident Agency of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. (FBI) He was advised of the FBI's interest and jurisdiction in internal security matters as well as his constitutional rights as they appear on an Interrogation; Advice of Rights Waiver. DE ARMAS subsequently furnished the following information which was recorded with his knowledge and consent.

~~(S)~~(u) INGA BETANCOURT VENEZUELA

DE ARMAS departed Utica, New York, in March, 1975 for the purpose of obtaining employment in the Miami, Florida area. He subsequently gained employment as an investigator with a firm named Preventive Security Service. DE ARMAS explained that his grandmother presently resides in Caracas, Venezuela and that he left the United States for Caracas on October 2, 1975 to visit her. At that time he met MARIA ANTOINETTA BETANCOURT, the 26 year old daughter of INGA SEELAND, a Norwegian National currently residing in Cuba and employed as a director of Cuban Motion Pictures, and the ex-wife of RAUL BETANCOURT of Venezuela. D'ARMAS stated that MARIA has been involved in the Leftist Movement in Venezuela along with 4 brothers whose last names are GARCIA-PONCE who are considered the Leftist elite of that country. DE ARMAS pointed out that his primary reason for traveling to Caracas was to place himself in a position where he could be of assistance to the United States Government. He stated that in conversations with MARIA and the GARCIA-PONCE Brothers, they discussed numerous illegal activities including the possibility of drug traffic from Columbia.

DE ARMAS returned to Miami on October 4, 1975 and discussed the overall possibility of establishing contact with the Cuban Government with the FBI, but in view of the vagueness of his statements, there was little response from that agency. He then

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Jm 6/25/97
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7-31-97

CLASSIFIED BY ~~SP-1 J34-2525/756~~
EXEMPT FROM GDS CATEGORY NUMBER 2, 3
DATE OF DECLASSIFICATION ~~ENCLOSURE~~

Subject: Age
CLASS. & EXT. BY 9088 RLS/BA 4/14/81
REASON-FCIM II, 1-2.4.2
DATE OF REVIEW 9-28-81
could not level release as stated by SA 4 JEM/50

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RE: MANUEL LEONARDO DE ARMAS (S)(u)

FLA

ERASTOS FERNANDEZ, whom he described as an Assistant to the President of Venezuela and a CIA source (S) This information came to his attention from a MINOLTA FERNANDEZ, whom DE ARMAS described as a functionary of the Venezuelan General Counsel in Miami, and also from one RICARDO MORALES NAVARETTE, who functioned out of Caracas. However, DE ARMAS claimed that VENEZUELA the information concerning this individual is common knowledge COBA in certain circles. A second individual, ORLANDO GARCIA VASQUEZ, was described as a Cuban National in charge of the personal security of the President of Venezuela and (also a CIA source) (S) and apparently in charge of security for high levels of Venezuelan Government in general. VASQUEZ, according to DE ARMAS, established a cover for NAVARETTE in Venezuela who is also working for [redacted] the FBI (S) When asked how he knew this, DE ARMAS claimed that information is well known in Miami among Cuban emigre groups as well as in Cuba itself. He claimed that VASQUEZ has been a target of the Cuban Government for the last fifteen years. (S)

The tape was completed to the satisfaction of his Cuban Intelligence corroborators and he described the finished product as a "bombshell". The tape was then submitted to FIDEL CASTRO for review and approval. CASTRO reviewed the film prior to its submission to the Political Bureau and after CASTRO's review it was sent back to their group for revision. A number of cuts were made in the video tape which is apparent when viewed in that the tape in part lacks continuity. (S)(u)

Reference to ERASTOS FERNANDEZ and ORLAND GARCIA VASQUEZ was deleted from the video tape. The purpose of these cuts was to avoid any stress in Venezuelan-Cuban relations. PASCUAL (S)(u) who appears to have been the case officer handling DE ARMAS, told DE ARMAS that CASTRO desired to speak to him after reviewing the tape. DE ARMAS was placed on standby to await a summons from CASTRO for interview. About 2 o'clock a.m. the following morning DE ARMAS received a telephone call from PASCUAL (S)(u) informing him that he would be right over to his hotel room and that CASTRO was ready for his interview. At about 2:30 a.m. PASCUAL (S)(u) picked him up and drove him to the Plaza of the Revolution. They entered the building directly behind the statute of JOSE MARTIN and proceeded to a fifth floor office occupied by CASTRO. (S)(u)

DE ARMAS' interview with CASTRO was brief and to the point. CASTRO was sympathetic towards DE ARMAS' position but spoke as if the impetus for the press conference came from

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(S)(M)

DE ARMAS and that for his own reasons CASTRO wanted a number of revisions made in the tape. CASTRO's attitude implied that he was permitting the DE ARMAS news release and pointed out that that release was purely voluntary on DE ARMAS' part. (S)(M)

DE ARMAS recalled, that again on his own, he made a statement at the beginning of the press conference in which he remarked that the statements he was making were voluntary. His interview with CASTRO lasted for approximately twenty minutes and he expressed a completely willing and positive attitude to CASTRO in the release of the press conference. He did not object in any way to the revisions which CASTRO had found necessary. DE ARMAS' impression from his interview with CASTRO was that CASTRO attempted to convey the impression to him that he or the Cuban Government were doing DE ARMAS a favor in permitting him to make the press release. (S)(M)

At this point in the interview, DE ARMAS explained that he did not feel that the information that he furnished in the press release was of any great damage to the United States Government in that it contained many obvious untruths and misinformation. As an example, he purposely identified Mr. FRED DUNCAN as an employee of the CIA when he is actually an employee of DEA. He reiterated that his motivation throughout all of this activity was to ingratiate himself with the Cuban Government in order to place himself in a position whereby he could be of assistance to the United States Government. DE ARMAS accepted full responsibility for all of his actions as noted throughout this entire affair. (S)(M)

DE ARMAS noted that he had made some comments concerning one FELIX MARTINEZ whom he identified as a Cuban exile who left Cuba sometime during the revolution and is connected with the Anti-CASTRO news media. DE ARMAS did not know MARTINEZ and was simply briefed on his activities by Cuban Intelligence, which information was reflected in his news release. He also referred to a POLIEO (phonetic) in the same context. He recalls having identified MARTINEZ and POLIEO as [redacted] He referred to RICARDO NAVARETTE, mentioned above, [redacted] in Venezuela, which information was not deleted from the press release. NAVARETTE, according to DE ARMAS, was a State witness in the case of DR. ORLANDO BOSCH. (S)(M)

DE ARMAS stated that the press release contained comments concerning the FBI in Miami, Florida, and specifically about an individual named DWYER who is well known in Miami and who is [redacted] (S)(M)

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RE: MANUEL LEONARDO DE ARMAS (S)(u)

In regards to the ROLANDO MASFERRER murder, DE ARMAS claimed that Abdala considered MASFERRER as an obstacle to its efforts and had formulated plans for his assassination. The possibility of planting C-4 plastic explosive in his automobile was explored. After a number of discussions, of which DE ARMAS was privy, someone in Abdala made the statement to forget about the plans to kill MASFERRER. DE ARMAS stated that shortly thereafter MASFERRER was killed when his automobile was bombed. After the bombing, Mr. ROBERT MILLS of the FBI Miami, approached DE ARMAS and inquired as to any information he may have as to the bombing and whether he was personally involved in it. DE ARMAS advised MILLS of the discussions within ABDALA concerning the possible assassination of MASFERRER but denied any direct knowledge of MASFERRER's murder. (S)(u)

Cuban Intelligence were aware that DE ARMAS was affiliated with Abdala and they also believed that he had direct knowledge of the MASFERRER killing. As a result, during his debriefings, DE ARMAS attributed the receipt of plastic explosive C-4 from BOB MILLS [whom he purposely identified as a CIA Officer] (S) Then he claimed that he gave (u) the explosives to Abdala with the implication that Abdala was responsible for MASFERRER's murder. (S)

DE ARMAS claimed that an individual named MAX LESNICK, although claiming to be an anti-Castro Cuban in the Miami, Florida area, is a close personal friend of CASTRO and RAUL CASTRO. He is the director of an anti-Castro magazine yet the feeling in Havana is that he may be working for CASTRO. (S)(u)

The bombing of WQBA Broadcaster EMILIO MOULION was also discussed with DE ARMAS. DE ARMAS claimed that shortly after furnishing his press release he was naturally branded as a traitor by the Cuban Community in Miami. MOULION took the position publicly that the full story concerning DE ARMAS had not come to light and thereafter statements concerning his treason were unfounded at the time. About 3 days after his defense of DE ARMAS, his automobile was bombed with the result that MOULION lost both his legs. DE ARMAS had no knowledge of the bombing of MOULION's car. However, the official Cuban sentiment is that the bombing was performed by FILIPPO RIVERIA's group. The Cuban Government is elated over this because RIVERIA who has always been one of the leaders of the anti-Castro movement in Miami, had now resorted to radical terrorist action, fearful as many other anti-Castro Cubans are, that the United States will resume diplomatic relations with Cuba, thereby recognizing the Castro Regime. DE ARMAS stated that Cuban Intelligence, specifically [MOISES and MIKI] (u) claimed that (S) FILIPIO RIVERIA's group was responsible for the MOULION bombing. (S)

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RE: MANUEL LEONARDO DE ARMAS (S)(M)

Cuba
Florida
DE ARMAS also stated that Cuban Intelligence considered RAMON ORZCO CRESPO instrumental in the bombing of the Cuban fishing vessel off the Bahamas which precipitated his press conference. DE ARMAS explained that all of the information concerning the above bombing was forthcoming from conversations with Cuban-Intelligence officers during his stay in Cuba. DE ARMAS disavowed any knowledge or participation in any of the above described bombings or other bombings related to Cuban matters in the US or abroad. He placed a great reliance in the opinions of Cuban Intelligence and attributed that to what he considered to be an extensive agent network working in Miami for the CASTRO Government. He advised that that network furnishes the Cuban Government feedback from Miami on its various operations within a matter of days. (S)(M)

Concerning ORLANDO BOSCH, the Cuban Government feels that the United States in some way is protecting him, and considers the Dominican Republic as being dominated by the United States. (S)(M)

DE ARMAS felt that he had accomplished his objective of placing himself in a position of trust within Cuban Intelligence circles. He wished to make this a matter of record with American Intelligence as well as to place himself at their disposal. His only desire is that he be advised as quickly as possible as to his possible utilization by the United States Government. He stated that he was not directed by Cuban Intelligence to perform any acts other than those noted above on their behalf. The Cuban Intelligence officers that he identified never identified themselves as being with the DGI but only described themselves as being with Cuban Intelligence. DE ARMAS was never shown any credentials or other documents which would identify them as such. (S)(M)

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