

JFK ASSASSINATION SYSTEM  
IDENTIFICATION FORM

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DATE : 05/16/75  
PAGES : 6  
SUBJECTS : TAYLOR, MAXWELL

ANTI-CASTRO ACTIVITIES

CIA

BAY OF PIGS

ASSASSINATIONS, FOREIGN LEADERS

KENNEDY, ROBERT

DULLES, ALLEN

BURKE, ARLEIGH

EXECUTIVE ACTION CAPABILITY

OPERATION MONGOOSE

CUBAN EXILES

MIAMI

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COMMISSION ON CIA ACTIVITIES WITHIN THE UNITED STATES

Washington, DC 20500

MEMORANDUM

TO : The File  
FROM : David W. Belin  
SUBJECT : Interview with General Maxwell Taylor

Belin: General Taylor, we're here on the 16th day of May 1975 at the offices of the CIA Commission in Washington and I have had an opportunity to review with you certain matters relating to your participation during the Kennedy Administration in matters involving Cuba, and I've asked you a number of questions and we've talked informally and now what I would like to do is to have it in question and answer form. Is that correct?

Taylor: Right.

B: All right. First of all, you might tell me when you came down to Washington to first serve with the Kennedy Administration in 1961.

T: I came down at the end of April at the invitation of the President to chair a group of four in the investigation of the Bay of Pigs--to analyze the causes of its failure and why it failed and whatever lessons that we decided the President--should be called to the President's attention. My colleagues were Bob Kennedy, Allen Dulles and Arleigh Burke. We worked on that report from the--the end--through the end of April and May--as I recall they got a final report to the President somewhat after the middle of June.

B: All right. If we can stop this tape a minute, I think I have a document upstairs which will give us the exact date which it was done. So I'm going to stop the tape now and check to see if it's recording and then I'll be right back down.

I'm going to continue now, General Taylor, and according to the notes I have you report--your memory is very good, by the way, for events that took place nearly fourteen years ago--your report was dated June 13, 1961 by way of a letter sent to President Kennedy, and it refers to an April 22, 1961 letter from President Kennedy to you directing you, together with Robert Kennedy, Admiral Arley Burke, and Allen Dulles as Director of

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Central Intelligence, to undertake a study with regard to the Bay of Pigs, and also certain recommendations. According to this document, President-elect Kennedy--or President Kennedy--first learned about the existence of plans for the overthrow of the Castro Government because of the call on him at Palm Beach by Allen Dulles and Richard Bissell, who was the Deputy Director of Plans of the CIA and who had overall coordinating supervision of the Bay of Pigs operation, and according to your--the document that you prepared which I assume was based upon your study of the facts, that the first formal briefing of President Kennedy was on January 28, 1961 with Vice President Lyndon Johnson, the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, Director of Central Intelligence, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and others present at that briefing. Does that sound like perhaps it might be accurate so far as to what the events were?

T: It sounds correct. Obviously I don't recall specifically the details you mentioned.

B: I also noted that one section which I happened to note had language along the lines of this. It said "We also feel that the occasion offers the President the opportunity to express to his principal assistants and advisers his sense of the need of a changed attitude on the part of the Government and of the people toward the emergency which confronts us. The first requirement of such a change is to recognize that we are in a life-death struggle which we may be losing and will lose unless we change our way and marshal our resources with an intensity--(I can't read my own writing here)--intensity associated in the past<sup>only</sup> in times of war." And then the remaining part of the paragraph it said the Director of Central Intelligence had not participated in it says "To effect this change we must give immediate consideration to taking such measures as announcement of a limited national emergency, the review of any treaties or international agreements which restrain the full use of our resources in the cold war and the determination to seek the respect of our neighbors without the criterion of international popularity and the policy being taken into account the proportioning of foreign aid to the attitudes shown us by our neighbors. In the light of the strained situation in Laos and the potential crisis building up over Berlin, we should consider at once affirmative programs to cope with the threat in both areas. I don't know if you remember that that might have been part of it at all or not?"

T: Well, yes. Again, I don't recall the specific language, but I would say that was rather consistent with our frame of mind. This was not the height--at least one of the high points--in the Cold War and the Khrushchev threat on Berlin was very much on our minds, the question of whether Castro and the

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activities in the Caribbean were related in any way to the pressure being placed on Berlin. All these things were in our mind, plus the fact that we had demonstrated in the Bay of Pigs operations that here in Washington we just had never thought through the problem of utilizing resources from numer--several departments for purposes such as this--the Cold War purposes.

B: Now, during the time that you prepared this paper, were you aware of any assassination plots against the lives of Castro or anyone else that might have been undertaken by the CIA?

T: I was not.

B: Were you ever aware of the existence of any plans to assassinate Castro?

T: I was not.

B: Did you ever have any discussions with either the President or the Attorney General or the Director of Central Intelligence, concerning the possibility or the existence of plans to assassinate Castro--either the possibility or the existence?

T: Certainly not with the President. Now in the case of Bob Kennedy and Allen Dulles we talked about so many things during the Bay of Pigs as one sits around the table, I couldn't say that--that the desirability of the disappearance of Castro or what would happen if he were assassinated in Cuba--that was not raised, I don't recall.

B: You don't recall any specific conversation one way or the other?

T: No.

B: Did you ever have any conversations with McGeorge Bundy or Walt Rostow about it?

T: No. None of those officials. Again, under the same terms as I indicated in the case of Bob and Allen Dulles, that they -- in the course of the daily work, we see men constantly and you're thinking so much about the Cuba problem, I couldn't say that assassination in the abstract--"Wouldn't it be a nice thing if someone bumped Castro off"--that could well have been said, but I just don't recall it.

B: Do you recall the existence of any approval to have the CIA undertake such a --

T: Never!

B: Did you ever hear the phrase "executive action capability" which was defined as a standby capability of assassinating foreign leaders. Did you ever hear  
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T: --that's a code phrase, meaning like you indicate?

B: Well, a phrase called and which refers to the capability of assassinating foreign leaders?

T: No.

B: Now, you also told me that you attended a meeting of the Special Group (Augmented) that occurred on or about August 10, 1962 at the Department of State.

T: I assumed that I did. I don't specifically remember that date or what the agenda might be, but by looking at the documents you have shown me I was the Chairman of the Mongoose aspect of the Special Group and I assume I was there.

B: General Lansdale worked with you?

T: He did.

B: In what capacity?

T: He was in charge of putting together a feasible programs --program or programs--which would include ways and means of restraining Castro. We were very much concerned whether in the ebullience of victory at the Bay of Pigs he might not intensify a campaign already begun as a matter of fact, to infiltrate agents in Latin America, as the saying was, to export Communism to Latin America, so we were thinking of ways and means and programs that might be devised to prevent that.

B: Do you have any recollection of what might have been said at a meeting that might have occurred in August of 1962?

T: No. I couldn't recall any specific meeting. If you had the minutes or something I'm sure it might suggest  
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- B: Do you have any recollection as to whether or not someone at that meeting might have raised the possibility of the liquidation of Castro?
- T: Well, as you say, it might have possibly occurred, it might possibly have occurred, but if it did, I don't recall it.
- B: Do you recall any conversations that might have occurred at any such meeting?
- T: No. Again with the minutes, if you have them, I'm sure they stimulate my memory.
- B: How long did you stay in Washington in your service with the Kennedy Administration?
- T: Well I stayed in the White House as the Military Representative of the President in which capacity I was generally his alter ego if you will for military and intelligence matters. On October 1, 1962 he designated me to become Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and moved out of the White House and gave up the White House-related position.
- B: You took over from General Lemnitzer?
- T: Yes.
- B: And then you remained as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of staff until when?
- T: Until July 1964 when I went to Vietnam as Ambassador.
- B: Do you have any information that you think might in any way be relevant to the investigation of this Commission so far as possible unlawful domestic activities of the CIA is concerned?
- T: No, I really don't, except as I mentioned to you before we started to tape this that there was a mass of Cubans in the United States based generally in the Miami area who certainly had many of them there who would like to see Castro dead and would be--would have been very happy to collaborate with getting him that way. Whether or not, conceivably low-level CIA agents, as is sometimes the case, overzealous subordinates ever encouraged any or talked to them or made any propositions to them, I don't know, but clearly it's a possibility. But I certainly never saw anything in my relations with the senior CIA officials to suggest that they this as a proposition, as something they were recommending or supporting or advising the President to do.

B: Anything else you can think of that might be relevant?

T: No, I don't think--I don't.

B: Any information that you think might be relevant so far as the assassination of President Kennedy is concerned that you don't think is public information now.

T: No. Absolutely nothing on it.

B: Well, we thank you very much for coming down. If you want--if we want to send a copy of the transcript to you for you to see and perhaps initial, to where should we mail it?

T: 2500 Massachusetts Ave., N.W., Apartment 1.

B: And is there a zip code on that?

T: 20008

B: And do you have a phone number there?

T: 483-5050.

B: All right. And thank you very much for your cooperation Sir, and I had better check to see if this actually recorded here.

(END OF TAPE)

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