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DATE : 03/17/1975
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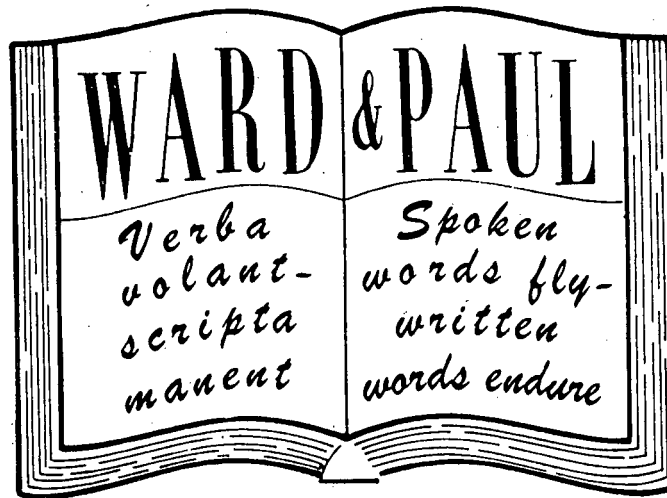
ON CIA ACTIVITIES

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Monday, March 17, 1975

Washington, D. C.

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TESTIMONY OF:

PAGE

Clark M. Clifford

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Laurence R. Houston

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1 the next eight years of President Eisenhower's Administration.
2 There were some strengthening acts, as far as unification
3 were concerned, under President Eisenhower which I think were
4 exceedingly desirable. I do not know of any legislative
5 action during those eight years regarding the intelligence
6 community.

7 Then my next relationship to this subject came in
8 the spring of 1961. President Kennedy was then President,
9 and he phoned and asked that I come over. And I went over
10 at once. It was just after the Bay of Pigs, and in all of
11 the years I had known him I had never seen him as serious as
12 he was on that occasion. The substance of his comment was
13 that he had just had a major disaster and he said that the
14 reason for the Bay of Pigs being such a catastrophe was one,
15 he said -- and this is in effect -- I made the wrong decision;
16 two, I made it because I had the wrong advice; three, I got
17 the wrong advice because the facts upon which the advice was
18 based were wrong; and the facts were wrong because our
19 intelligence was faulty.

20 He indicated that he had been informed that as soon
21 as the invading group reached the shores of Cuba that the
22 people would rise up against Castro, they would be down on the
23 beaches tossing roses at our men, and then they would
24 triumphantly march through the streets of Havana. Well, it
25 was a real tragedy, and he said that I cannot endure another

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1 one. He said I could not survive another disaster of this
 2 kind. So he said I am creating an intelligence board, and
 3 he had already talked to Jim Killian of MIT and he said I am
 4 making him the head of the board and I have gotten some
 5 scientists and some military men and others, and I want this
 6 board first to investigate, I want them to investigate all of
 7 the foreign operations of the CIA, and I want you to recommend
 8 changes that will improve that operation.

9 So that the Vice President can pick up the theme,
 10 I had gone through, Governor, the earlier phases of my
 11 experience with the intelligence operation, and then I had
 12 gotten through down to the fact that I was away for a
 13 number of years during the Eisenhower Administration, and now
 14 I had gotten down to the spring of 1961 when President Kennedy
 15 called and told about the disaster that had befallen him at the
 16 Bay of Pigs. And he said that I must not have that happen
 17 again. He said I was startled and shocked at the fallacies
 18 in the intelligence information that we received, and I want
 19 to take whatever steps I can to improve it.

20 So he appointed the President's Foreign Intelligence
 21 Advisory Board, which you are thoroughly familiar with because
 22 of your service upon it. We met at the time, met with him,
 23 and he told us of the seriousness which he attached to the
 24 function of the Board. He issued a directive at the time to
 25 the military services and to the CIA and other government

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1 great contributions to that. We had two very fine men, Dr.
 2 William Baker of the Bell Laboratories, and Dr. Ben Lamb
 3 of Polaroid. They worked very closely, and the Board
 4 encouraged them, got all the money from the President that they
 5 needed. We improved that a lot. We also got a great deal of
 6 information in what is known as SIGINT, COMINT, ELINT and
 7 RADINT -- signal intelligence, communications intelligence,
 8 electronics intelligence and radar intelligence. The NSA has
 9 spotters all through the world and they pick up all of the
 10 radio signals that go out, and when the Soviets launch a
 11 test missile we follow it from its inception, we follow its
 12 whole flight, we determine whether it was successful or not.

13 We know down to the day almost the degree of success
 14 that the Russians have had in MIRVing their missiles. All of
 15 that is very valuable. I remember being in [redacted] one time
 16 and going into a room and here sat three hundred [redacted]
 17 all of them with those great puffy earphones on, and all they
 18 were doing was monitoring any kind of signal that came out of
 19 China. And it is very good. You pick up troop movements,
 20 you pick up plane flights, you pick up missiles tests. None
 21 of it is quite as good, of course, as having the Deputy
 22 Premier being a CIA operative, but we are pretty well going
 23 to have to give up that thought. We thought, the Board did,
 24 that we could penetrate Cuba, and we gave a lot of time to
 25 that. At no time did I ever hear anybody suggest that Castro

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1 was going to be assassinated, or that there was any planeto
2 assassinate Castro. But we were concerned about Cuba.
3 President Kennedy was concerned about Cuba. We wondered
4 whether or not there might be something going on between
5 Cuba and the Soviet Union as later did. And I guess, I think
6 I can remember six or seven teams who were wonderfully well
7 trained and sent to Cuba at various times, landed at various
8 locations, and every one of those teams were rolled up. Not
9 one of them endured. And the reason is that Castro set up an
10 extraordinarily effective counterintelligence system. That
11 is, he has a head of Counterintelligence, and in each
12 province, he has a deputy, and under that man in each town or
13 each city or hamlet there is another top man and then in each
14 block there is a man, or in each precinct, and then in each
15 block, and if the block is a large block, even down to two
16 or three sections, and their main job is intelligence.

17 It exists in the towns, it exists out in the country,
18 and if a stranger puts his face in Cuba today, in twenty-four
19 hours I think this person is apprehended and he is brought in
20 for interrogation.

21 So, we have to find other means and other means were
22 found. You will remember that Cuban-U.S. confrontation that
23 came later, and the presence of the Soviet offensive missiles
24 in Cuba being discovered by our satellite type intelligence.
25 We photographed ships at sea with devices on their deck, very

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carefully covered, and we covered the unloading of them, we kept flights going all of the time, because cloud covers sometimes interfere with it, until we had absolutely irrefutable evidence that the Soviet Union had offensive missiles in Cuba.

Thereafter, it seems to me that the Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board maybe the last two or three years I was on it, it seemed to me we had done about what we could do to take care of the large areas of important operations, and then I thought to some extent, the last two or three years, that our efforts did not produce much. I left the Foreign Intelligence Board at the beginning of 1968 when I went over to the Pentagon.

MR. BELIN: That was to become Secretary of Defense?

MR. CLIFFORD: Yes. And there in the Pentagon I had some contact with the intelligence community, not too much. That is handled mainly by the Deputy Secretary of Defense. He gets the daily briefings and then sifts them through and informs the Secretary of those items that are of immediate moment. I did set a meeting a week with a representative of the CIA and he came over, we had a set time, Thursday mornings at 10:00 o'clock, and he came over and we kept that every time I was in town, and I got an hours briefing, so that I kept up closely with that. I felt that was reasonably valuable.

We were not getting good intelligence from Vietnam.

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that you never heard of any attempt at assassination plots that might be planned by the CIA if any were planned?

MR. CLIFFORD: No, at no time. We had something of a joke on the Board. Ambassador Robert Murphy, for whom we all had the greatest respect and a great fondness, wondered why the CIA could not do in Ho Chi Minh. He did not think it would be too difficult a task, and every now and then he brought it up and said, I can't understand why that can't be done, but it was something of a humorous bit after awhile, but that's the only time I ever remember it coming up, and on no serious occasion did the Board ever suggest action of that kind, nor were we ever informed that any effort of that kind was made, nor was it even being considered.

When the teams were sent to Cuba over a period of some two years and were rolled up, their function was not to commit any assassinations. Their functions were to make an effort to establish an intelligence base in Cuba that would be effective and help us to know what was going on in Cuba, being only 90 miles from our shore.

MR. BELIN: But you indicated earlier that sometimes in the intelligence community that the people who were supervising know what the people who are being supervised tell them. Is that a fair characterization of what your earlier statement was?

MR. CLIFFORD: I think so. I think we knew then that

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