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JFK ASSASSINATION SYSTEM

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INTERVIEW AND MEETING SUMMARY

025/10/94

INTERVIEW WITH: William J. Murray, Chief Latin America Division/Narcotics
8813 Postoak Road, Potomac, Maryland 20854, Agency phone: 351-4438,

REGARDING: Cuba/Assassinations

DATE-TIME-LOCATION: Carroll Arms Room 610, August 4, 1975 at 2:00 p.m.

PRESENT: DiGenova, Joseph E.

HAS OR SHOULD BE DIGESTED: _____

FOLLOW UP REQUIRED: _____

MATERIALS SUBMITTED BY INTERVIEWEE(S): _____

EXECUTIVE SESSION: YES NO

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Mr. Murray is currently operating under cover and no one other than his wife and two sons are aware of his agency relationship.

FILE:

Biographical Information:

Mr. Murray joined the agency on August 28, 1950 as a DDO officer. He was assigned to the Far East Division. In December of 1950 he went to the Near East Division where he remained as a Case Officer until February of 1954. He went back overseas in April 1956 as a Western Hemisphere Division Case Officer. On January 9, 1957 he went to San Pedro Sula, Honduras ~~as Chief of Base~~. On approximately January 9, 1960 he went to Havana as a Case Officer. On January 6, 1961, after Trujillo was assassinated, he spent six months as acting deputy chief of station in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. He left there in November of 1961. In January 1962 he went to Monterey, Mexico as Chief of Base where he remained until July 5, 1964. [He was then sent] ~~to Bogota, Columbia as Deputy Chief of Station~~. He returned to the states in 1966 and is currently Chief of Latin American Division for Narcotics.

His January 17, 1975 Memorandum to Colby

His memorandum was written pursuant to a request from DCI Colby for any information that related to current allegations concerning questionable CIA activities. He had never told anyone other than Noel and the Cuban pilot about the matter until then.

According to Murray, the atmosphere in Havana was bombastic. "We were alert to the Cubans' attitude towards us. We knew that the Cuban Security Service was interested in identifying CIA agents in Cuba." Among the people, he said, were those both very friendly and very hostile to the U.S. The opposition to Castro was, at that time, very disorganized.

The Pilot

The pilot was introduced to Murray by the pilot's cousin. General assistance to the CIA by the pilot was offered. The Cuban was aware he had been identified as pro-Castro and anti-U.S. by Castro forces in Havana and he wanted to let the U.S. know that that was an inaccurate characterization. So he requested the rendezvous. He volunteered to help the agency in any way possible and agreed to accept stringent reporting requirements.

On July 18, 1960, after the contact had been established, the Cuban pilot contacted Murray and told Murray that he was to pilot a chartered plane to Prague to pick up Raul Castro Ruz and his official party. He sought instructions from the agency as to what intelligence task he could perform. Murray immediately cabled Headquarters for instructions -- "I sought assistance from headquarters re additional requirements." The Cuban Branch (WH 4) would have

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received his request. He asked for instructions re use of the pilot. Neither the pilot nor Murray suggested or intimated the possibility of assassinating Raul Castro. They were thinking in terms of simple hard intelligence re flight information concerning a denied country. He noted that ~~NOEL~~ was aware of Murray's relationship with the pilot and that all cables were cleared by ~~NOEL~~. On July 20, 1960 headquarters responded with a cable that made Murray "swallow hard" when he received it. "It left me rather surprised to say the least." That cable said that headquarters was seriously considering the "removal" of Cuba's top three leaders. (A blow-up of that July 21, 1960 cable (98941) shows that all authorizing signatures on the cable are those of E. H. Hinkle.)

Murray had never heard such proposals or plans or plots discussed at the Havana station or elsewhere. Indeed, he had not spoken to ~~NOEL~~ or persons above or below ~~NOEL~~ about such things. "Not only was I surprised, but I considered the possibility of this individual (the pilot) executing this type of mission was negligible." But he didn't question the order when ~~NOEL~~ hand-delivered him the cable. ~~NOEL~~, he said, was equally surprised by the statement in the cable. This cable represented "quite a departure from the conventional activities we'd been asked to handle." When the cable was received there was a minimum of time (approximately fifteen minutes) to tell the pilot of the request for action by Headquarters. He met the pilot at a pre-determined spot and spoke to him. He wanted to avoid the use of words like "kill" and "assassinate" and so he "talked in terms of an accident to neutralize this leader's influence." But the pilot understood the meaning "loud and clear." The Cuban was serious, thoughtful and then became imaginative in terms of possibilities. They spoke for 30 to 35 minutes while the pilot drove to the airport.

When he returned to the station, Murray discovered a cable from Headquarters, signed by Tracy Barnes which said to "DROP MATTER." It was, of course, too late to "drop the matter" so all he and ~~NOEL~~ could do was hope that the pilot would not be successful in "accidentally" crashing the plane and killing Raul Castro et al. The combined reaction of Murray and ~~NOEL~~ to this abrupt turn about or flip-flop on the part of Headquarters on such a sensitive matter was one of incredulity. "What's going on in headquarters was our reaction." "It showed inadequate coordination at headquarters prior to release of the first cable." Moreover, such a turn-about was unprecedented in his, Murray's, experience. In his opinion, Hinkle would be the best person to explain the activities surrounding the "removal" cable. Murray also noted that he had no personal contact with J.C. King on this matter and said that ~~NOEL~~ would have done any briefing of King on Cuban matters. He did not know whether ~~NOEL~~ had ever raised the issue of the reversal of position in the two cables with King or any other higher official of the agency.

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