

Agency Information

AGENCY : WILDEROTTE
RECORD NUMBER : 178-10004-10091

RECORD SERIES : ASSASSINATION-RELATED MATERIALS

AGENCY FILE NUMBER : RPT. ON INVEST. OF CIA INVOLVE..FOREIGN LEAD.

Released under the John F.
Kennedy Assassination
Records Collection Act of
1992 (44 USC 2107 Note).
Case#:NW 54214 Date:
09-11-2017

Document Information

ORIGINATOR : ROCK
FROM : BELIN, DAVID
TO :

TITLE : SUMMARY OF FACTS, INVEST. CIA INVOLVE. IN PLANS TO ASSASS...LEADERS

DATE : 05/30/1975
PAGES : 83

SUBJECTS :

ORGANIZED CRIME
ASSASSINATIONS, FOREIGN LEADERS
ROCKEFELLER COMMISSION
ANTI-CASTRO ACTIVITIES
BELIN, DAVID
CIA
CUBAN EXILES

DOCUMENT TYPE : REPORT
CLASSIFICATION : Top Secret
RESTRICTIONS : 1C
CURRENT STATUS : Redact
DATE OF LAST REVIEW : 08/06/1993

OPENING CRITERIA :

COMMENTS : Later draft can be found at 1781000310355.

~~TOP SECRET~~

SUMMARY OF FACTS --
INVESTIGATION OF CIA INVOLVEMENT IN PLANS TO
ASSASSINATE FOREIGN LEADERS

The following is a summary of facts gathered by the Executive Director of the CIA Commission concerning possible CIA involvement in plans to assassinate foreign leaders.

The Executive Director requested complete access to papers of the National Security Council including papers of the Forty Committee and its predecessors and papers of any special groups or special operating groups. Such access was not granted. Also, time did not permit examination of documents that might be available in the Eisenhower, Kennedy or Johnson presidential libraries. Consequently, the investigation is not complete with regard to the question of who, if anyone outside the CIA, authorized or directed the planning of any assassination attempts against foreign leaders. However, with particular reference to the plans directed against Fidel Castro, the investigation is sufficiently complete to show that plans were undertaken by the CIA.

President Ford has announced that assassination is not and should never be a tool of American foreign policy. The Executive Director concurs and believes that it is against the constitutional and moral principles for which this nation stands for there to be any direct or indirect participation of any agency of the United States Government in any plans involving the assassination of any person in peacetime.

Photocopy from
Gerald Ford Library

~~TOP SECRET~~

178-10004-10091

A. The Scope of the Commission's Investigation

The first knowledge that the Commission had concerning possible involvement of the CIA in assassination plans directed at foreign leaders was when the CIA informed the Commission staff at the outset of the Commission's work, in response to an overall staff request for possible unlawful activities of the CIA, that such plans existed. The Commission staff was told that there was no evidence of murders or plots for murder against persons in the United States carried on by the CIA. However, the Commission staff was told that there had been discussion of plans for assassination attempts involving overt acts occurring within the boundaries of this country with regard to attempts on the life of Cuban Premier Fidel Castro.

Although there was some question whether or not an assassination plan aimed at a foreign leader fell technically within the charter of the Commission, even though overt acts may have taken place in this country, the Commission and its staff determined that because of the nature and seriousness of the matters involved, the doubts would be resolved in favor of undertaking an investigation of the facts. Only after such investigation could the Commission make an informed decision as to its jurisdiction.

Photocopy from
Gerald Ford Library

Furthermore, the Commission and its staff felt that it was also important to proceed in this area because it related to the charges to the Commission and the President's executive order directing the Commission to "determine whether existing safeguards are adequate to prevent any activities which violate the provisions of 50 U.S.C 403" and also related to the charge by the President that the Commission should "make such recommendations to the President and to the Director of Central Intelligence as the Commission deems appropriate."

On the basis of its investigation, the Commission has determined that agents of the CIA were involved in planning in this country with certain citizens and others to seek to assassinate Premier Castro. The Commission has also determined that the CIA was involved in shipping arms from this country to persons in the Dominican Republic, who sought to assassinate Generalissimo Trujillo (who himself had been involved in an attempt to assassinate the President of Venezuela.)

The Commission has not found evidence of any other attempts to assassinate any other foreign leader which had significant overt activities within the United States. However, the nature of the activity and the degree of secrecy and compartmentation within the Agency is such that it is difficult to find any evidence of this kind unless specific facts are brought to the attention of an

Photocopy from
Gerald Ford Library

investigating body. With regard to activities outside of the United States, the Commission has not found any evidence of CIA participation in plans to assassinate foreign leaders, except as described in the next four paragraphs. However, the investigation of the Commission in such areas, which had no domestic aspect which might bring it within the Commission's jurisdictional mandate under the President's Order, has not been extensive.

In the course of the first stage of its investigation to determine its jurisdiction, the Commission made a preliminary investigation of charges that the CIA was involved in the death of Patrice Lumumba, who was killed in early 1961. The Commission has not found any evidence that the CIA participated in that killing, although there is evidence that prior to Lumumba's death some CIA personnel and others discussed the possibility of undertaking a plan to assassinate Lumumba.*

*In an affidavit, C. Douglas Dillon, a member of this Commission, stated that while he served as Under Secretary of State from June 1959 until early January 1961, he heard no discussion of assassination attempts against anyone, except discussions which occurred in late July or early August of 1960 at a meeting at the Pentagon which covered a great variety of matters in which "...a question regarding the possibility of an assassination attempt against Lumumba was briefly raised. The CIA representative indicated that the Agency did not undertake this sort of operation. This ended consideration of this subject."

Photocopy from
Gerald Ford Library

According to Richard Bissell, who was the CIA Deputy Director of Plans at the time, he was aware of discussion of plans within the Agency concerning the possible assassination of Patrice Lumumba and that "a case officer was directed to look into the possibilities. He reported back in a matter of weeks and convinced me that this was probably unfeasible, and probably an undesirable course of action. According to the case officer, who is now retired, Bissell asked him to go to the Congo and there murder or arrange for the murder of Lumumba, and the case officer said that he told Bissell that he refused to be a party to such an act.* Bissell said the Agency had nothing whatsoever to do with the death of Lumumba.

Bissell also testified that there was discussion within the Agency of the possibility of an attempt on the life of President Sukarno of Indonesia which "progressed as far as the identification of an asset who it was felt might be recruited for this purpose. The plan was never reached, was never perfected to the point where it seemed feasible." He said the Agency had "absolutely nothing" to do with the death of Sukarno.

*The case officer gave this information in an oral telephone conference at which time an appointment was arranged for the taking of his testimony before a member of the Commission staff and a court reporter. The case officer failed to keep his appointment.

Photocopy from
Gerald Ford Library

With regard to both plans, he stated that no assassination plans would have been undertaken without authorization outside the Agency, and that no such authorization was undertaken for plans against either Lumumba or Sukarno.

Since the Commission found no aspects to bring the Sukarno and Lumumba matters within the scope of its investigative authority, no further investigation in these two areas was undertaken. However, the Commission did find sufficient domestic aspects in the Castro and Trujillo plans for the Commission to undertake an investigation. The President concurred in the approach of the Commission to interpret its authority so that the Commission would (1) ascertain whether the charges of assassination plots have a basis in fact and involve unlawful domestic CIA activities and (2) determine whether existing safeguards would prevent activities of that nature in the future regardless of whether they might involve domestic or foreign conspiracy.

The following is a summary of facts pertaining to CIA participation in assassination plans to assassinate Premier Fidel Castro. The facts have been developed through a review of the internal investigation of the CIA, examination of documents, and interviews and testimony.

Photocopy from
Gerald Ford Library

B. Participation of CIA Personnel in Plans to Attempt to assassinate Fidel Castro

An analysis of the involvement in the CIA in plots to attempt to assassinate Fidel Castro illustrates the development of larger schemes out of smaller schemes, and also illustrates how important it is to have adequate internal and external controls on the Agency.

The initial CIA schemes relating to Fidel Castro were an outgrowth of large-scale plans by the United States Government to attempt to change the government of Cuba. There had been great dissatisfaction with the government of Cuban leader Batista. As Castro's influence increased, attempts were made to persuade Batista to resign and turn over the reins of government to a group that was more attuned to the needs and desires of the Cuban people, particularly in areas of democratic government and social reforms. According to an interview with the former Chief of the CIA Western Hemisphere Division, an unofficial ambassador from this country approached Batista in December 1968, asking that he resign and turn the reins of government to new leadership. This request was refused.

Fidel Castro shortly thereafter took over the Cuban government. There was great concern on the part of American leadership about the presence of a government so closely aligned with the Soviet Union barely ninety miles from American shores.

Photocopy from
Gerald Ford Library

Therefore, the CIA, with appropriate authorization, undertook the development of an operation in support of Cuban exiles seeking to overthrow the Castro Government, the culmination of which became the Bay of Pigs disaster in April 1961.

As the plans for the attempted overthrow of the Cuban government were developed, one of the considerations related to Fidel Castro as the dominant figure.

There has also been testimony before the Commission that at the request of the CIA the Air Force provided a plane in late 1959 or early 1960 which was used to fly two Cuban exiles into Cuba. The witness was unable to provide the Commission with names of these two Cuban exiles or names of any CIA personnel which he said were involved. However, at the time of the events the witness was an Air Force officer who had liaison functions between the Department of Defense and the CIA. He testified that he believes a plane was provided and that the two Cuban exiles were to carry with them one or more rifles with telescopic sites to be used in an attempt to assassinate Fidel Castro.

The Commission sought to investigate this matter. In a "Memorandum for the Record" dated May 15, 1975, the CIA admitted that in reviewing its files relating to Cuban operations during the period 1959-1961: "a number of

Photocopy from
Gerald Ford Library

documents were found that referred to the intent on the part of some of the Cuban teams operating inside Cuba to attempt to assassinate Castro....Additionally, the files indicate that there was considerable interest in procurement of Helio Courier (the civil version of the L-28), but there is no definite indication that they were intended for Cuban operations. Also, there is mention of the air drop of Springfield rifles with telescopic sights."

1. 1960-61 and the Phase I Plans

The Phase I plans involved the preparation of poison botulism pills by the CIA, the delivery of those pills to organized crime figures who in turn were to get the pills delivered to contacts they had in Cuba, who in turn were to get the pills into the hands of someone who could place them in a beverage to be drunk by Premier Castro.

a. When the Plans Began

There is some disagreement about exactly how the Phase I plans began. The two people in the CIA who were the most intimately involved were Richard Bissell, Deputy Director of Plans, who was the person in the CIA who had direct responsibility for the Bay of Pigs operation, and Colonel Sheffield Edwards, the Director of the Office of Security of the CIA.

According to Richard Bissell, the plans relating to Fidel Castro started in "the very beginning of 1961" when he said he became aware "of the possibility that an assassination attempt might be planned using Mafia resources, or

Photocopy from
Gerald Ford Library

syndicate resources. My very uncertain recollection is that I first heard of this possibility from Shef Edwards."

According to Sheffield Edwards, his first contact with these plans "was about the time of the Bay or Pigs." He said he did not "remember exactly" if it was before or after the Bay of Pigs, but when asked whether or not it was in the Eisenhower Administration or the Kennedy Administration for purposes of determining the time of the inception of the plan, he said that "It was in the Kennedy Administration."

Whereas Bissell testified that he "first heard of this possibility (of using Mafia or syndicate resources) from Sheffield Edwards," Edwards testified that his first contact was a request by Bissell who asked Edwards "if I had any assets...that would be available into the syndicate."

Although oral testimony of both said that this began in the early stages of the Kennedy Administration, there is documentation which indicates that these conversations took place in the latter part of 1960 during the Eisenhower Administration. This documentation includes a May 14, 1962 "Memorandum for the Record" entitled "Arthur James Balletti et al--Unauthorized Publication or Use of Communications." The opening sentence of the memorandum states: "This memorandum for the record was prepared at

Photocopy from
Gerald Ford Library

the request of the Attorney General of the United States following a complete oral briefing of him relevant to a sensitive CIA operation conducted during the period approximately August 1960 to May 1961." The oral briefing actually occurred in the offices of the Attorney General of the United States, Robert Kennedy, on May 7, 1962, and Attorney General Kennedy received a copy of the May 14, 1962 memorandum for the record.

Attending the oral briefing were three people: Attorney General Kennedy, Sheffield Edwards, and Lawrence Houston, General Counsel of the CIA. The memorandum itself was prepared by Sheffield Edwards and continued after the opening sentence: "In August 1960 the undersigned was approached by Mr. Richard Bissell, then Deputy Director for Plans of CIA, to explore the possibility of mounting this sensitive operation against Fidel Castro. It was thought that certain gambling interests, which had formerly been active in Cuba, might be willing and able to assist and further, might have both intelligence assets in Cuba and communication between Miami, Florida and Cuba."

The memorandum then related that an intermediary who was known to the CIA was approached by Colonel Sheffield Edwards "and asked to establish contact with a member or members of the gambling syndicate to explore their capabilities." The approach was to be made "...to the syndicate as

Photocopy from
Gerald Ford Library

appearing to represent big business organizations which wished to protect their interests in Cuba." The contact was made with a "syndicate" member who "showed interest in the possibility and indicated he had some contacts in Miami that he might use." The syndicate member supposedly told the CIA intermediary that the syndicate person "was not interested in any remuneration but would seek to establish capabilities in Cuba to perform the desired project."

The memorandum continued: "Towards the end of September" 1960 contact with another syndicate member from Chicago, Sam Giancana, was made, and in turn an arrangement was made through Giancana for the CIA intermediary and his contact "to meet with a 'courier' who was going back and forth to Havana. From information received back by the courier the proposed operation appeared to be feasible and it was decided to obtain an official Agency approval in this regard. A figure of one hundred fifty thousand dollars was set by the Agency as a payment to be made on completion of the operation and to be paid only to the principal or principals who would conduct the operation in Cuba."

The CIA intermediary reported that Giancana and the other contact "emphatically stated that they wished no part of any payment. The undersigned (Sheffield

Photocopy from
Gerald Ford Library

Edwards) then briefed the proper senior officers of this Agency of the proposal. Knowledge of this project during its life was kept to a total of six persons and never became a part of the project current at the time for the invasion of Cuba. There were no memoranda on the project nor were there other written documents or agreements. The project was duly orally approved by the said senior officials of the Agency."

The memorandum continued that during the period from September 1960 to 1961, "efforts were continued" by the CIA intermediary and the Mafia personnel "to proceed with the operation. The first principal in Cuba withdrew and another principal was selected as has been briefed to the Attorney General. Ten thousand dollars was passed for expenses to the second principal. He was further furnished with approximately one thousand dollars worth of communications equipment to establish communications between his headquarters in Miami and assets in Cuba. No monies were ever paid" to the syndicate personnel. There was expense money paid to the CIA intermediary. The memorandum stated that "After the failure of the invasion of Cuba word was sent through" the CIA intermediary to the syndicate personnel "to call off the operation" with the further direction that the syndicate person "was

Photocopy from
Gerald Ford Library

told to tell his principal that the proposal to pay one hundred fifty thousand dollars for completion of the operation had been definitely withdrawn." Only two copies of the memorandum were prepared -- one for the Attorney General and one to be retained by the CIA.

b. Factual Background--Preparation of May 14, 1962 Memorandum for Attorney General

The factual situation underlying the preparation of the May 14, 1962, memorandum was that sometime in the fall of 1960 Sam Giancana asked the CIA intermediary to arrange for putting a listening device in the room of an entertainer who at the time was in Las Vegas and who Giancana thought was having an affair with another entertainer, who was reputed to be Giancana's mistress.

According to the Phase I CIA case officer, the request by Giancana came at a crucial time when plans were underway for Phase I. Giancana supposedly stated that if he did not get help to install the listening device, he would have to go to Las Vegas himself. The case officer said "this would have interrupted the project at a very critical time," and therefore he sought the assistance of the CIA intermediary to get a private detective agency to undertake the installation of the listening device.

Photocopy from
Gerald Ford Library

The CIA intermediary passed the request over to another private investigator, who in turn contacted Arthur James Balletti (the name of the subject of the May 14, 1962 memorandum for the record given to Attorney General Kennedy.) Instead of putting a listening device in the room, Balletti put a listening device on the telephone. The listening device was discovered and Balletti was arrested by the sheriff of Las Vegas, Nevada. At the time of the incident, the CIA did not know of the specific proposed wiretap.

According to the Agency investigation by the Inspector General's Office in 1967, Edwards had once told the Agency intermediary that if the intermediary ever got in trouble he could say to the FBI that he was working on an intelligence operation being handled by the Agency. An FBI memorandum on that matter stated that the intermediary claimed the telephone tap was ordered on behalf of the Agency's effort to obtain intelligence through hoodlum elements in Cuba. The Agency investigation file also states that a March 23, 1962 FBI memorandum confirmed a meeting with Sheffield Edwards in which Edwards told the FBI that the intermediary was involved in a sensitive project and that the CIA would object to prosecution because it would necessitate CIA information and it could embarrass the United States Government. Subsequently there

Photocopy from
Gerald Ford Library

was a meeting between Sheffield Edwards and Sam Papich, the FBI liaison with the Agency, in which Edwards advised Papich that it would not be in the national interest to prosecute. At the time of that meeting, those who had initially authorized the assassination plans (Allen Dulles and Richard Bissell) were gone and no one else in authority (including Richard Helms, who replaced Bissell) had been "cut in on the operation." Thereafter, Sheffield Edwards briefed Lawrence Houston, who in turn briefed General Carter, McCone's Deputy Director of Central Intelligence.

General Carter, who is now retired, lives in Colorado. When interviewed by a member of the Commission staff by long distance telephone, General Carter said that he had no recollection of this.

According to Sheffield Edwards, prior to briefing Attorney General Robert Kennedy, he briefed Lawrence Houston, General Counsel for the Agency. Edwards said that there was nothing that he knew about the plan to assassinate Castro that he didn't tell Attorney General Kennedy and that the briefing lasted "about a half an hour, at least." He said that he told Attorney General Kennedy everything, and that after the briefing was completed Robert Kennedy had no comment to him but Robert

Photocopy from
Gerald Ford Library

Kennedy "cautioned Larry Houston to the effect that he was to know about these things. Words to that effect." When asked whether or not the Attorney General had told Colonel Edwards that "you shouldn't do this at all," Colonel Edwards replied "No." When asked whether or not the Attorney General in any way said "that he disapproved of whatever was done in the past," Colonel Edwards said "No."

Lawrence Houston testified, "I was briefed on this subject after it was dropped. I was not party to nor was I asked in advance about it....By the time I heard about it, I think it had been terminated some little time, but there were personalities involved...who were both regarded as part of the Mafia organization, and these were people" that the CIA intermediary "had introduced to us. They had former gambling interests in Havana, and at one time thought they may be able to take action against Castro. After it fell through, my recollection is that they had potential criminal indictments" against the Mafia people "and it seems to me that the bug in the Las Vegas hotel was involved more peripherally, but I cannot remember the details."

Houston also testified that he told Edwards "that I thought the only thing to do was to go and tell the whole story to the Attorney General. So with the

Photocopy from
Gerald Ford Library

approval of the Director at that time-- , well, it was '63, it must have been McCone. We went down to brief Mr. Kennedy on the full story" that the Agency "had set up a project with its aim the demise of Castro, that the project had fallen through, that these following people were involved, and we gave them the names, and this is what made him unhappy, because at that time he felt he was making a very strong drive to try to get after the Mafia. And so his comment was to us that if we were going to get involved with the Mafia, in the future at any time, to make sure you see me first."

(This is the only evidence in the record to show that John McCone knew about the existence of any specific assassination plan in 1962. There is evidence in the CIA files to show that the actual person with whom the matter was discussed was the Deputy Director of Central Intelligence, and this evidence is supported by an August 16, 1963 memorandum from Helms to McCone, which will be discussed in the Phase II portion of this report.)

c. FBI Memoranda Concerning CIA Assassination Plans

According to a May 22, 1961 FBI memorandum entitled "Arthur James Balletti, et al":

"On May 3, 1961, Colonel Sheffield Edwards, Director of Security, Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) furnished the following information.

Photocopy from
Gerald Ford Library

"Colonel Edwards advised that in connection with CIA's operation against Castro he personally contacted Robert Maheu during the fall of 1960 for the purpose of using Maheu as a 'cut-out' in contacts with Sam Giancana, a known hoodlum in the Chicago area. Colonel Edwards said that since the underworld controlled gambling activities in Cuba under the Batista government, it was assumed that this element would still continue to have sources and contacts in Cuba which perhaps could be utilized successfully in connection with CIA's clandestine efforts against the Castro government. As a result, Maheu's services were solicited as a 'cut-out' because of his possible entree into underworld circles. Maheu obtained Sam Giancana's assistance in this regard and according to Edwards, Giancana gave every indication of cooperating through Maheu in attempting to accomplish several clandestine efforts in Cuba. Edwards added that none of Giancana's efforts have materialized to date and that several of the plans still are working and may eventually 'pay off.'"

The memorandum then went into the Balletti situation and reported that Colonel Edwards had no knowledge of the wire tap.

The memorandum concluded with the following paragraph:

Photocopy from
Gerald Ford Library

"Colonel Edwards advised that only Mr. Bissell (Deputy Director of Plans, CIA) and two others in CIA were aware of the Giancana-Maheu activity in behalf of CIA's program and that Allen Dulles was completely unaware of Edwards' contact with Maheu in this connection. He added that Mr. Bissell, during his recent briefings of General Taylor and the Attorney General in connection with their inquiries into CIA relating to the Cuban situation told the Attorney General that some of the CIA's associated planning included the use of Giancana and the underworld against Castro."

Subsequently, on March 6, 1967, J. Edgar Hoover sent to the Attorney General a letter with an accompanying March 6, 1967, FBI memorandum entitled "Central Intelligence Agency's Intentions to Send Hoodlums to Cuba to Assassinate Castro". The memorandum referred to the Balletti wiretap matter and stated that the FBI "checked matter with CIA on 5/3/61 and learned CIA was using Robert Mahue as intermediary with Sam Giancana relative to CIA's 'dirty business' anti-Castro activities.

"By letter 5/22/61 we furnished former Attorney General Kennedy a memorandum containing a rundown on CIA's involvement in this. The originals of the letter and memorandum were returned to us for filing purposes. A copy of that memorandum is being attached to instant letter being sent to Attorney General.

Photocopy from
Gerald Ford Library

"On 5/9/62 Kennedy discussed with the Director a number of matters, including admission by CIA that Robert Mahue had been hired by that Agency to approach Sam Giancana to have Castro assassinated at a cost of \$150,000. Kennedy stated he had issued orders that CIA should never undertake such steps again without first checking with Department of Justice and stated because of this matter it would be difficult to prosecute Giancana or Robert Mahue then or in the future." /

The memorandum continued that the FBI had learned on June 20, 1963 that the CIA contacts with the Mafia had "continued up until that time when they were reportedly cut off." The FBI memorandum also stated that it appeared that one Mafia member involved in the plans "is using his prior connections with CIA to his best advantage."

A contemporaneous FBI memorandum dated March 6, 1967 stated that Robert Kennedy following his briefing in May of 1962 informed the FBI on May 9, 1962 about the briefing. "He (Robert Kennedy) indicated that a few days prior thereto he had been advised by CIA" that an intermediary had been hired by CIA to approach Sam Giancana with a proposition of paying \$150,000 to hire some gunman to go into Cuba and kill Castro. The memorandum further continued that "Mr. Kennedy stated that upon learning CIA had not cleared its action in hiring (the intermediary) and Giancana with the Department of Justice he issued orders that CIA should never again take such steps without checking with the Department of Justice.

Photocopy from
Gerald Ford Library

"Mr. Kennedy further advised that because of this matter it would be very difficult to initiate any prosecution against Giancana, as Giancana could immediately bring out the fact that the United States Government had approached him to arrange for the assassination of Castro."

d. Statements of Colonel Edwards re May 7, 1962 Briefing

When Sheffield Edwards and the CIA's General Counsel briefed Robert Kennedy on May 7, 1962 concerning the Phase I assassination efforts by the CIA, there is no evidence to indicate that during that briefing Robert Kennedy told the CIA personnel that he already had known of this information because of prior information received from the FBI.

Colonel Edwards confirmed the statement in the March 6, 1967, FBI memorandum that Attorney General Kennedy stated that the CIA should never undertake the use of Mafia people again without first checking with the Department of Justice because it would be difficult to prosecute such people in the future.

e. Statements of Colonel Edwards re Knowledge Inside CIA

According to Edwards the CIA people that knew about the plans while they were going on were himself, his case officer, Bissell, Allen Dulles, Director of Central Intelligence until November 1961, and General Cabell, Deputy Director of Intelligence during this period of time. Both Dulles and Cabell are now dead.

Photocopy from
Gerald Ford Library

f. Refusal to Testify of Robert Maheu, CIA Intermediary

Robert Maheu, the CIA intermediary, refused to be interrogated by the Commission staff. His attorney, Morton Galane, told the Executive Director of the Commission that he (Galane) had advised his client to exercise his constitutional rights and not answer any questions other than his name, address, and the fact that he had undertaken work for the CIA.

g. The Carrying Out of the Plan

The following facts primarily come from interrogation of Colonel Edwards and the Phase I case officer:

The particular means by which the plans were to be carried out was "by placing botulism pills in his food."

The syndicate personnel were to get the pills to a person in Cuba who would have access to Castro.

Supposedly, the reason pills were used was that the syndicate personnel could not recruit personnel to undertake the assassination through gunfire because the chance of survival and escape was small. However, the case officer felt that it was the Agency itself that desired to have pills used rather than gunfire.

Colonel Edwards said that he, himself, checked out the pills on some guinea pigs "because I wanted to be sure they worked."

Photocopy from
Gerald Ford Library

Corroboration of the Phase I plans was also made by another retired medical officer who was familiar with the preparation of the pills inside the Agency.

Edwards said he did not know of any plans other than those that involved the use of these botulism pills.

Edwards did not have any first-hand knowledge about whether or not the pills ever got to Cuba.

According to the Phase I case officer, he delivered the pills to the syndicate member and was subsequently advised by the syndicate member that the pills were in Cuba, but the case officer had no direct knowledge of his own that the pills actually got there.

Richard Bissell said he did not have any personal recollection as to whether or not poison pills of any kind were ever delivered into Cuba.

There may actually have been two passages of pills to Cuba in the first part of 1961. The first passage was in late February or March from the syndicate through their courier to a Cuban who supposedly had a position in the Cuban Prime Minister's office where he had access to Fidel Castro. According to the interview of Sheffield Edwards with the Executive Director, the Cuban asset "got scared" and did not try to pass the pill. Pills were subsequently delivered to another "asset" who was in a position to slip the pills to

Castro at a restaurant where the asset worked. This took place in the March-April 1961 period. Fidel Castro ceased visiting that particular restaurant at approximately the same time the pills purportedly arrived. The case officer said it was his recollection that there were two passages of pills to Cuba, the second one which was made to someone who had access to a restaurant which Castro frequented. After the second attempt failed, the case officer said the pills were returned to the CIA.

h. How the Plans Got Started

There is inconsistency between the testimony of Richard Bissell and Colonel Edwards concerning how the plans got started.

According to Bissell the original approach was made to the Agency" by the syndicate personnel because "they had their own very strong motivations for carrying out this...they had been powerful under Batista in Cuba, and they had a very lucrative set of interests for the syndicates, and they had been in effect been thrown out, and so they had the strongest sort of reasons for anti-Castro sentiment on their own." Bissell said he first learned about this from Sheffield Edwards and that he had also talked with Allen Dulles about the matter.

Photocopy from
Gerald Ford Library

Whereas Bissell testified that he "first heard of this possibility (of using Mafia or syndicate resources) from Sheffield Edwards," Edwards testified that his first contact was a request by Bissell who asked Edwards "if I had any assets...that would be available into the syndicate."

When asked about the inconsistency between his own testimony and that of Sheffield Edwards concerning whether or not Edwards approached Bissell first or Bissell approached Edwards first, Bissell stated that "it is possible that my recollection is wrong,...I think I will stand on that as my recollection...but I seem to remember rather clearly that it was from him (Edwards) that I first learned of the possibility of this operation, and that he came to see me for this purpose rather than my sending for him. Now, could I just say that I had several conversations with Shef Edwards on this matter, and it is very possible that I, that in a subsequent conversation I did take the initiative and send for and discuss it with him."

The case officer stated that he believed it was Bissell who first approached Edwards about making the contacts with a CIA intermediary. The case officer further stated that although he ultimately became aware of the fact that the people contacted by the CIA intermediary were "syndicate"

members, initially neither he nor the intermediary knew this to be the fact. Rather, he said he thought these people whom the intermediary contacted were gangster-type people who were not necessarily members of the syndicate.

i. Possible White House Direction or Approval of Plans

(1) The Testimony of Richard Bissell

recollection" Bissell stated that he had "no clear /of any discussion with anyone in the Eisenhower Administration concerning any possible plan to assassinate Castro," but there could have been. He said that if it would have occurred at all during the Eisenhower Administration, "it would have been with Gordon Gray." Gray testified that there were no such conversations that occurred.

Bissell testified that although "my recollection of this is far from clear... I am satisfied that very early in the Kennedy Administration I did participate" in conversations with someone in the White House concerning the planning of what was called an executive action capability, which was defined in substance as a capability of the Agency to carry out assassinations, if required. When asked with whom these conversations occurred, Bissell said "I am almost certain it was either Walt Rostow (Deputy Assistant to the President for National Security) or McGeorge Bundy (Presidential Assistant for National Security), or probably the former, and possibly both."

Photocopy from
Gerald Ford Library

When asked to state what specifically was discussed in these conversations, Bissell said: "My recollection, which isn't too specific, is that this was a discussion of the desirability of developing such a capability within the CIA that presumably would be a small, special unit, and highly compartmented from the rest of the organization."

Bissell said that he had no specific knowledge but that he "had a great deal of confidence that the two gentlemen whose names I have mentioned, would not have discussed this discussed with me or encouraged any course of action that they were not confident the President would approve." When asked whether or not he had any discussions with any official in the Eisenhower Administration concerning the development of an executive action capability, Bissell replied, "not to my recollection, and I think I am almost sure that I did not."

Later in his testimony Bissell said that the possibility of using syndicate people to carry out an assassination attempt against Castro "was discussed by me, again I think probably with Walt Rostow. It may possibly have been discussed directly with McGeorge Bundy, but I suspect that it was through Rostow, who was then Bundy's assistant and on his staff. My impression, but again I must emphasize that this is uncertain impression, was that I was encouraged to go

Photocopy from
Gerald Ford Library

ahead with the investigation and planning of this operation, and by investigation I mean simply to find out what would be involved to make some assessment of the likelihood of success, and other aspects of the matter."

According to Bissell, he was "vague as to the final outcome of that attempt." He said that he had "no recollection of a specific authorization that it should go forward. I believe, however, that we probably did move to be in a position to carry it out, or authorize it, if authorization were received." He said that he believed "my own recollection of the final stages of the plan is vague" because the plan involved "furnishing probably some money and such items as pills or other devices through a number of cut-outs or intermediaries to a group which we ourselves, of course, did not, in any direct sense, control. This was not an operation of such a character that the communications would run through Agency channels, or that authorization on the spot would be by Agency personnel, or that the Agency could precisely and tightly control it."

(2) The Testimony of Gordon Gray

Gordon Gray testified that he had no conversations with Richard Bissell or anyone else pertaining to assassination plans.

(3) The Testimony of Walt Rostow

Walt Rostow testified that he did not

Photocopy from
Gerald Ford Library

have any recollection of having any discussions with Bissell pertaining to any attempt at assassination plots.

(4) The Testimony of the Phase I Case Officer

The case officer stated that he had been told that the project had been approved by Allen Dulles, Director of Central Intelligence, but he (the case officer) had no knowledge of whether or not there had been any discussion or approval from the White House.

(5) The Testimony of Colonel Edwards

Edwards said that he believed the plans were developed by Bissell and that he was "sure that there were not" any people in the White House that knew about these plans. He also said that he did not know of any attempt of plans to assassinate people other than Fidel Castro.

(6) The Testimony of McGeorge Bundy

McGeorge Bundy said that he was never aware any "actual decision" to go about seeking to assassinate any foreign leader. However, he said that he did "have a vague recollection of the existence or the possible existence of contingency planning in this area. I am sorry to say I cannot help you much with details about it because I can't fish them out of my memory, but I could not exclude that there were contingency plans, and a contingency capability of some sort, or plans for such a capability at some time."

Photocopy from
Gerald Ford Library

He said that he did not know of any case where plans went beyond the contingency stage "and I know of no such authorization or any involvement by anybody in the White House staff or anybody else, for that matter."

When asked whether or not he ever heard any discussion concerning a plot or plan to assassinate Cuban leaders, Bundy replied, "Not that I can remember...I certainly cannot exclude the possibility that you could have had the kind of discussion in which one or another individual would have said it would be, that there is a possibility that thus and such a Cuban group, if landed and infiltrated, might have as one of its missions the following, which might have included an attack on one or another Cuban leader. I do not have any direct recollection that that did happen, but I cannot exclude that it did happen."

Bundy testified that he did not know of any decision to go ahead and actually undertake a plan of assassination. "That contingent capability may have been authorized in this field I cannot exclude, although I have no direct recollection of it. It is the decision to go ahead that I am sure I do not remember."

Bundy said that he would have been "surprised" if any effort to assassinate a foreign leader had been undertaken without his approval as the President's Assistant for

Security Affairs, and said that he himself would "not have authorized anything of that kind without much higher authority than my own. I could not exclude that there would be communication with the President by other channels. Neither President Kennedy nor President Johnson always used any one channel."

There was direct access of the Director of Central Intelligence to the President, according to Mr. Bundy. He said that based upon his experience, "I would not have expected...the Agency would have undertaken anything like an attack on the life of a foreign leader without direct order from higher authority "...It did not happen in the time I was there...but I can conceive of the President saying to somebody, I do not want to make this decision but giving some indication of the kind of decision he wanted made."

After Mr. Bundy completed his testimony before the Commission, he contacted the Executive Director the next morning and volunteered that in thinking about some of the interrogation overnight "I have had a vague recollection, which I cannot pinpoint in time, that there was discussion that I knew about at some time of a proposal or scheme or project" in relation to the Castro regime "that did involve poison, and the characteristic that sticks in my memory is that it would have involved a rather large scale use of poison and, as I recollect it, it never came anywhere near approval." Proposals under the overall plan with regard

Photocopy from
Gerald Ford Library

to Cuba "which did come from time to time (mostly not with respect to assassination) were reviewed in the first instance for practicalibility and only after that for wisdom or political rightness, and I recall no proposal for liquidation that ever got past the first stage to the second."

A memorandum of the interview with the Executive Director was prepared the next morning to record these additional comments. In this memorandum which was signed by Mr. Bundy and sworn to before a notary public in the form of an affidavit, Bundy said that "I simply have no recollection of plans" that "existed in January or February 1961" which involved the attempted poisoning of any Cuban leader. "I believe my memory tells me in a more general way that my knowledge of a scheme or idea of using poison probably relates to the year 1962."

Bundy further stated: "I am absolutely certain that I never knew of or believed that there was any authorization to go ahead with an effort to liquidate Castro, or any other Cuban leader."

With reference to his testimony concerning an executive action capability, Bundy said that "I recall the words 'executive action capability' more clearly today than I did yesterday...but I do not have any recollection as to what I knew about that or who requested it or how much was done under it. I don't recall having any particular continuing

Photocopy from
Gerald Ford Library

interest in or information about that particular activity" which was "something like" a "plan to have some kind of stand-by capability for action against individuals."

(7) Documents of the National Security Council

The Commission requested complete access to papers of the National Security Council, including documents of the predecessors of the Forty Committee, documents of the Special Group, or Special Operations Group, and any other documents which might pertain to the possibility of assassination of Premier Castro. Complete access was not granted. The Commission did not have time or staff to undertake an examination of documents in the Eisenhower, Kennedy or Johnson presidential libraries. The National Security Council in response to the request for access by the Commission Council files on Cuba and the Dominican Republic for the period 1959-64, delivered to the Commission what it said was all of its documents which pertained to the question of possible assassination attempts on the life of Castro or Trujillo. One of these documents was an excerpt from a paper on "United States Policy Toward Cuba" dated May 4, 1961 and prepared for discussion by the National Security Council at its meeting on May 5, 1961.

→ (Paragraphs No. 79 and No. 80 from this excerpt are as follows:

Photocopy from
Gerald Ford Library

79. Castro. A political vulnerability of the regime lies in the person of Castro himself. It is not clear whether the regime could continue to operate for long without him. There is no question that the bureaucracy operates relatively freely, and probably makes many decisions without consulting Castro. However, it is equally certain that the Castro personality and his appeal to the Cuban people is an important element in maintaining popular support for the regime. If Castro were removed from the scene the regime might collapse for lack of this central rallying point. On the other hand, the bureaucracy may now be so firmly entrenched that it could function independently--although admittedly without the degree of popular support now enjoyed. Further, by using Castro as a martyr it might be possible to generate at least a temporary support for his successor.

80. A further possibility attendant upon the death of Castro would be the attitude of the PSP. The party would like to assume a more open and dominant role in the Cuban Government. Castro's death might force or encourage the party into a precipitate move to seize power. If this happened it would probably have an adverse reaction on Latin American opinion, though principally at the government level.

(8) General Maxwell Taylor

General Maxwell Taylor, who was referred to in the May 22, 1961 memorandum, when interviewed by the staff said that he had no knowledge of any assassination plans directed against Castro.

(9) June 13, 1961 Taylor Report

According to the June 13, 1961 paper, Allen Dulles and Richard Bissell briefed President-elect Kennedy in November 1960 at Palm Beach. The Taylor paper was

prepared pursuant to an April 22, 1961 direction by the President to Taylor, Attorney General Robert Kennedy, Admiral Arley Burke and Allen Dulles for an overall analysis and study of governmental practices for military, paramilitary, guerrilla and anti-guerrilla activity with special attention "to the lessons that can be learned from recent events in Cuba." There is nothing in the June 13, 1961 Taylor report which specifically discusses assassination.

However, during the time the study was being undertaken the aforementioned May 22, 1961, FBI memorandum was prepared and sent to Attorney General Kennedy.

j. Termination of Phase I Plan

After the Bay of Pigs operation in April 1961, according to Sheffield Edwards "the plan, as I recall, petered out." Edwards said that he did not become involved with any other person, after the Bay of Pigs invasion, to try to get the pills into Cuba.

k. Relationship of Phase I Plan with Bay of Pigs

Sheffield Edwards, himself, thought that these plans were developed in connection with the Bay of Pigs, and it was Bissell who was in charge of the overall coordination of the Bay of Pigs operation. Bissell denies that these plans were part of the Bay of Pigs planning. He testified that he was "quite clear" that the plans for attempted assassination of Fidel Castro were not developed as a part of the Bay of Pigs operation.

Photocopy from
Gerald Ford Library

1. Knowledge of Phase I Plans Inside Cuba

Bissell also felt that to the extent individuals in the Cuban exile community in Miami may have been involved, "our belief was that Castro was extremely well informed on what was going on."

Bissell stated that he did not think the actual attempt was ever made, although it is physically possible that the poison pills did reach Cuba. He also said that although he did not remember having any evidence that Castro knew of these attempts, "it is perfectly possible that, with some time lag, Castro would have come on some evidence of this operation."

m. Other Plans during Phase I

While the Phase I plans were underway, the Agency received confirmation from contacts in Cuba concerning possible assassination attempts inside Cuba against Castro. Most of these contacts took place in the first part of 1961 immediately preceding the Bay of Pigs landing. In particular, there were several cables received referring to a possible assassination attempt against Fidel Castro on April 9, 1961, during a public appearance at the Sports Palace in Havana. There were also messages received from dissident Cubans inside Cuba in the first few months after the Bay of Pigs invasion. In some of these messages there were references to trying to kill Castro. None of these possible assassination attempts from dissidents inside Cuba appear to have been coordinated with the Phase I plans.

2. 1962-63 and the Phase II Plans

In late 1961 or early 1962, which was shortly after the Cuban missile crisis, Deputy Director for Plans, Richard Bissell, recalled asking a new case officer "to take over a part of our reviving effort against Castro and the Castro Administration...I probably urged him to look into this plan...which had been the subject of active attention nearly a year before. I have no recollection of authorizing him to revive it, except to look at it as a plan, or to proceed with any action along those lines." According to the case officer, he knew of no other plan to assassinate any other foreign leader except Castro.

a. The Testimony of the Phase II Case Officer

The case officer said that he had a conversation with Richard Bissell, which he believed took place in the latter part of 1961 or early 1962, in which Bissell told him in substance that someone in the White House had raised the question whether or not the Agency should develop what was called an "executive action capability", which was a capability of assassination or liquidation of leaders of foreign countries. The case officer said that Bissell briefed him that an operation against Castro "had been mounted" and "that it had been handled through Sheffield Edwards."

Photocopy from
Gerald Ford Library

The case officer said he was then briefed by Edwards on the operation that had been previously conducted. This testimony was corroborated by Colonel Edwards. Both Edwards and the case officer stated that Edwards did not have any further contact with any subsequent phase after Phase I. ~~va~~ Colonel Edwards put the Phase II case officer in contact with the case officer who had been involved with Phase I for a briefing. The Phase II case officer then took over this entire operation for the Agency.

The Phase II case officer stated in a recorded interview that after he was briefed by the previous case officer and discussed the matter with Sheffield Edwards, he then discussed the matter with Richard Helms. The Phase II case officer took over the direct contact with the Mafia personnel, which to the best of his recollection occurred "about early April 1962."

Photocopy from
Gerald Ford Library

The Phase II plans involved two possibilities of assassination: rifle fire and the use of poison pills. Delivery of funds for the acquisition of rifles and handguns plus some medicinal drugs and anti-biotics took place in the summer of 1962. According to the case officer, it was somewhat less than \$5,000. The money was delivered to the Mafia contact, and the case officer received a report from the Mafia contact that the Cuban contact had called to report that the arms and poison pills had gotten into Cuba.

The case officer stated that during the period of time he was involved with the overall operation, he felt he was dealing with a very volatile situation that "in the aftermath of the Bay of Pigs failure" was the kind of an operation that the Government, the Agency or anybody else could not afford to have surface. "...It was quite obvious that there was an explosion potential here--an explosion not in the technical sense--a flap potential, if you will, but it took some time to find out just what could be done and how it could be done, to try to sanitize the possible repercussions of this." In 1975 the case officer stated that very shortly after taking over the operation he reached a tentative conclusion that the plan had little chance of success and he decided to "wind down" the plans gradually. The winding down was completed in the Spring of 1963 and in June 1963, the case officer went abroad to another position wholly unconnected with the Cuban operation.

When asked why the operation did not meet with success, the case officer said "I don't know if I have any valid opinion why. There are a great many things that could have happened. It wasn't tried, it was choked off, it was penetrated from the start--at least on the Cuban end--that is the end in Cuba. When I say I have no personal knowledge of this, I am aware that Castro has claimed there were a number of attempts on his life. I am aware that he has blamed those on the U.S. in general and the CIA in particular. But I have no personal knowledge of facts which would prove that there was ever actually, if you will, a shot fired or any poison administered, or any other attempt other than in the inchoate stage."

The case officer also stated that "given the capabilities of Castro's security apparatus and the general seive-like character of the community in exile and the number of people who knew at least something about this particular incident or operation, before I had any connection with it, or later as a result of things that occurred before I had any connection with it, I think and thought at the time that it was conceivable that it had been penetrated. I cannot honestly state that I had at that time any firm reason to believe that Castro was aware of this operation."

Photocopy from
Gerald Ford Library

b. The Testimony of Colonel Edwards re Knowledge of Phase II

According to Colonel Edwards, at the time of the May 7, 1962 briefing of Attorney General Kennedy, he did not know that the new case officer whom he had earlier briefed was undertaking another plan along the lines of Phase I and therefore he didn't tell the Attorney General at the time of the briefing that there was a Phase II plan underway.

c. The Testimony of Richard Bissell re Authorization of Phase II

Bissell stated that he had no recollection of authorizing the case officer to revive the plan except to look at it as a plan or to proceed with any action along those lines.

d. Knowledge of John McCone, Director of Central Intelligence re Phase II

The Phase II case officer stated that sometime prior to August 1962, he had a conversation with Richard Helms, who had succeeded Richard Bissell as Deputy Director of Plans. The case officer said that the question was raised whether or not the new Director of Central Intelligence, Mr. McCone, should be briefed of the operation. "I did recommend to Mr. Helms that since this 'operation' and the possible repercussions from it all stemmed from actions which had taken place long before either Helms or myself had had any personal connection with it, and before John McCone had had any connection whatever with the Agency, and since the

decision had been made at that time that this should be sanitized, tied off and terminated as soon as practically feasible, I saw no reason why the new DCI should be briefed on it, and I strongly recommended that he not be."

The case officer said that to the best of his knowledge McCone at no time in 1962 knew of the fact that Phase II of the operations were underway.

John McCone testified that he first learned about Phase II when he was first interviewed by the Executive Director of the CIA Commission in April, 1975, and McCone further stated that the only knowledge he had of Phase I was knowledge he received on August 16, 1963 upon receipt of a memorandum from Richard Helms together with a copy of the May 14, 1962 memoranda of the record delivered to Attorney General Kennedy.

Helms said that although he had no recollection of any discussion with the case officer not to tell the Director of Central Intelligence, Mr. McCone, in 1962 about the existence of plans, "I have no reason to cavil" that this was the fact.

e. The Testimony of Richard Helms

Helms was then asked whether he remembered any discussions with the case officer concerning the furnishing of either arms or poison pills to Cuban exiles to have them and try and carry out any assassination plans. Helms

Photocopy from
Gerald Ford Library

replied "I don't have any question that we tried to line them in Cuba, to bring down this government or to kill anybody they could lay their hands on." But he did not recall that "a specific project was approved which was designed for a man to go to point B and actually shoot or poison or do something to Castro."

Helms testified before the Commission that "he was not aware of the CIA ever having assassinated any foreign leader. I certainly never authorized the execution of any such operation while I was Director or Deputy Director and when I was Deputy Director for Plans I don't remember it coming forward. I certainly never recommended such an action to the then Director."

f. The Testimony of the Phase II Case Officer re "Executive Action Capability"

The case officer said that he had a conversation with Richard Bissell, which he believed took place in the latter part of 1961 or early 1962, in which Bissell told him in substance that someone in the White House had raised the question whether or not the Agency should develop what was called an "executive action capability", which was a capability of assassination or liquidation of leaders of foreign countries. The case officer said that Bissell briefed him that an operation against Castro "had been mounted" and "that it had been handled through Sheffield Edwards."

Photocopy from
Gerald Ford Library

g. The August 10, 1962 Meeting of the
Special Group (Augmented)

The Phase II case officer said that he was at a meeting of what was known as the "Special Group (Augmented)" at the State Department in August 1962, when someone brought up the possibility of "liquidation" of Castro. John McCone was at that meeting and according to the case officer, John McCone "got rather red in the face" and made a remark which "was a clear effort to stop any such proposals, suggestion or any discussion thereof at that meeting within that forum immediately."

John McCone testified that he was at that meeting at the State Department which took place on August 10, 1962. The Special Group (augmented) was a group of senior people in the Administration who were involved in overall planning with operations directed against Cuba. Included in that group were the Secretary of State, Dean Rusk, the Secretary of Defense, Robert McNamara, the Attorney General of the United States, Robert Kennedy, the Assistant to the President for National Security, McGeorge Bundy, and General Lyman Lemnitzer (who is a member of the Commission). The coordinating officer of the Special Group (Augmented) was Brigadier General Edward Lansdale. (Robert Kennedy was not present at the August 10, 1962, meeting.)

Photocopy from
Gerald Ford Library

The CIA case officer who was in attendance at that meeting under date of August 14, 1962, prepared a memorandum for the Deputy Director of Plans, who was Richard Helms, in which he attached a copy of an August 13, 1962 memorandum prepared by General Lansdale. The CIA case officer's memorandum to Helms said:

1. Action. None. This memorandum is for your information.
2. Reference is made to our conversation on 13 August 1962, concerning the memorandum of that date from General Lansdale. Attached is a copy of this memorandum, excised from which are four words in the second line of the penultimate paragraph on page 1. These four words were "including liquidation of leaders."
3. The question of assassination, particularly of Fidel Castro, was brought up by Secretary McNamara at the meeting of the Special Group (Augmented) in Secretary Rusk's office on 10 August. It was the obvious consensus at that meeting, in answer to a comment by Mr. Ed Murrow, that this is not a subject which has been made a matter of official record. I took careful notes on the comments at this meeting on this point, and the Special Group (Augmented) is not expecting any written comments or study on this point.
4. Upon receipt of the attached memorandum, I called Lansdale's office and, in his absence, pointed out to Frank Hand the inadmissibility and stupidity of putting this type of comment in writing in such a document. I advised Frank Hand that, as far as CIA was concerned, we would write no document pertaining to this and would participate in no open meeting discussing it. I strongly urged Hand to recommend to Lansdale that he excise the phrase in question from all copies of this memorandum, including those disseminated to State, Defense, and USIA. Shortly thereafter, Lansdale called back and left the message that he agreed and that he had done so."

Photocopy from
Gerald Ford Library

The attached Lansdale memorandum under date of August 13, 1962 had excised from it a phrase. The blank space was the approximate size of the phrase, "including the liquidation of leaders".

(1) Interrogation of Robert M. McNamara

According to Robert M. McNamara, he had no recollection of being present at the August 10, 1962 meeting. "I'm not suggesting I wasn't, but I have no recollection of it. I do seem to recall that there was such a group, I doubt very much if I was a member of it." He said that he "might have been a participant" at one or more meetings. When asked whether or not he heard anyone discuss the possibility of assassinating Castro or any other foreign leader, McNamara replied: "No. I should interject here another point I made earlier, as I have no notes--I did not take notes of any meetings I attended with rare exceptions, and I have no other basis for refreshing my memory and my memory of those years is very bad. I'm not saying this to in any way qualify what I'm saying except that it is a fact that my memory is poor in relation to the period."

McNamara stated that "I am almost certain that were an assassination contemplated, which seems to me...extremely unlikely, if it were contemplated or any action been taken to move in that direction, it would have had to receive the approval of not just Mr. Bundy but other officials at that

same level, including my deputy, I think, and my deputy never would have approved anything like that without discussing it with me." Secretary McNamara said that he "couldn't imagine anything relating to a CIA operation that was known to the President and was not known to Mr. Bundy. I can imagine something with respect to CIA known to Mr. Bundy, not known to the President either because they were not that important or conceivably because it was thought desirable to protect the President from certain knowledge...I can't imagine Mr. Bundy himself supporting assassination. I can't imagine him supporting assassination of a foreign leader, without mentioning it to the President, even though to do so would by that action involve the President. I say I can't imagine him supporting assassination of a foreign leader without the President's knowledge because it is the President who would pay if that action were undertaken and it ever became known. Mr. Bundy recognized, more than the rest of us, the importance of protecting the presidency as well as the particular president, and particularly protecting his ability to govern."

(2) The Testimony of John McCone

John McCone testified that he was present at the August 10, 1962 meeting. He said that he objected to the discussion of liquidation of leadership as a possibility of consideration and he later talked with Secretary McNamara and expressed the same view, and he said

Secretary McNamara agreed. John McCone testified that at the time of the August 10, 1962 meeting he did not know of the existence of Phase I of any assassination plans nor did he know that at the very time the meeting was going on Phase II was a continuing plan in the CIA.

(3) The Affidavit of General Lemnitzer

Lyman Lemnitzer, now a member of this Commission, was also present on the August 10, 1962, meeting. In an affidavit he declared that he has no recollection of the question of liquidation of Castro or other Cuban leaders being discussed.

(4) The Testimony of General Lansdale

General Lansdale said that the possibility of assassination may have been discussed at that meeting. He also said that it was possible that the excised phrase from his memorandum was "including liquidation of leaders," but he stated that this was merely a matter of considering a possibility, one of several alternatives.

Lansdale had no specific recollection of the August 10, 1962, meeting although he said that "it is quite possible" that he might have attended that meeting. He also had no specific recollection of his memorandum dated August 13, 1962, and the words whited out. When asked whether or not those words might have been "including liquidation of leaders" Lansdale replied "I doubt it. I just don't recall anything at all on liquidation of leaders."

Photocopy from
Gerald Ford Library

(5) Interrogation of General Taylor

General Taylor said he had no recollection of an assassination being discussed, although he said that it might have been. General Taylor was at the meeting.

(6) Additional Testimony of General Lansdale

According to Lansdale, during 1960 he was Deputy Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Special Operations. He said he had no knowledge of any discussion of possible plans for the assassination of any foreign leaders.

In 1961 Lansdale was appointed by Secretary McNamara as Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Special Operations. Lansdale said that he had a discussion with President Kennedy. "I do not recall exactly on that. He asked me if I would think about the situation in Cuba and if I could come up with any suggestions or recommendations from such a study. It was a rather vague assignment by him, but it was to be done for him personally."

Lansdale "suggested an intermediary" to whom he would report and Lansdale said the President "appointed his brother, who was the Attorney General."

According to Lansdale, he made an initial series of recommendations in late 1961 or early 1962, in writing, addressed to the President, "to see if there was a possibility of using Cuban refugees to help them get their political thinking together to see if there would be any

Photocopy from
Gerald Ford Library

feasibility of a revolution in Cuba." He says he thinks he gave the written report to the Attorney General for delivery to the President and that he later saw the paper "in the files of the President...he received it and he had possession of it."

During the first part of 1962 there were discussions about Cuban exiles possibly going back inside Cuba to harass the regime. Lansdale stated that the possibility of these exile groups trying to assassinate Castro "might will have been mentioned." However, he said that "I don't recall a single instance of any serious action being undertaken" on any plan for assassination. He went on to say that whatever discussions took place concerning assassination related to possibilities rather than actualities.

Lansdale said that if there were directions to submit papers, it was an authorization for submitting papers and not an authorization for necessarily carrying out the action. Lansdale admitted that "there might well have been" a request for the CIA to come up with, as a possibility, a plan for liquidation of leadership.

If that request was made, he said it could have been one of his requests and that he "quite probably would have discussed it with the Secretary of Defense" and "possibly the Attorney General with whom I was in contact."

Photocopy from
Gerald Ford Library

Lansdale said that at no time during 1960, 1961, 1962 or 1963 did he have any knowledge of the existence of any plans for the assassination of any Cuban leader or any other leader.

Lansdale testified that he never heard any discussion of "executive action capability."

h. Additional Interrogation of General Taylor

General Maxwell Taylor said that he was not aware of the existence of any plans to assassinate Castro. He said he did not have any discussions with the President concerning the possibility or the existence of the plans to assassinate Castro. However, "...in the case of Bob Kennedy and Allen Dulles, we talked about so many things at the time of the Bay of Pigs as we sat around the table I couldn't say--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." He said he didn't recall any conversations about assassination with McGeorge Bundy or Walt Rostow. "I couldn't say that discussion 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."

Taylor said that he never knew of any authorization for the CIA to undertake any assassination. He also said he had no knowledge of the phrase "executive action capability" or any proposal for the CIA to develop a general standby capability to assassinate foreign leaders.

i. Additional Testimony of Richard Helms

Richard Helms, now Ambassador to Iran, also testified that "there was a flat-out effort ordered by the White House, the President, Bobby Kennedy who was after all his man, his right hand in these matters, to unseat the Castro government, to do everything possible to get rid of it by whatever device could be found and that was the reason for mounting this large operation in Miami to work on this very problem. And the Bay of Pigs was a part of this effort and after the Bay of Pigs failed, there was even a greater push to try to get rid of this Communist influence 90 miles from the United States shores.

"The business about the assassination of Castro, I have read about this in the papers. I have heard about it from associates. It has been kicked around whether this was a viable proposition or not. I have no doubt it was written into various plans as one of many options but I don't recall any successful effort that was made in this direction and since Castro is alive and apparently well in Havana, the extent to which this was serious I have never ascertained."

Ambassador Helms said he did not "recall ever having heard anything about poison pills or any of that". He did recall that "at some juncture" a decision was reached "that it would be advisable to brief Robert Kennedy as the Attorney General." about "various things that the Agency

Photocopy from
Gerald Ford Library

had had to do" with certain Mafia members. He did recall that the Phase II case officer had taken over the plans but that he did not "recall any special basis being used to try to get them to do an assassination."

← He said that he did not recall "any plans that were approved or that were viable specifically directed at eliminating Castro, but that there were conversations about it, I haven't the slightest doubt."

→ In response to a question concerning "Who might have been the driving forces from the White House in efforts to do something about Castro" Helms responded, "Well, the principal driving force was the Attorney General, Robert Kennedy. There isn't any question about this. Involved in this was a group of individuals who were sort of hired and pulled together by Kennedy and Rusk and McNamara and McGeorge Bundy and all those people to get on with this job and as I sit here and start to think about this, Califano was one of them. It seems to me Lansdale, who had been successful in this kind of operation out in the Far East was brought in for a while."

j. Knowledge of John McCone

→ According to John McCone, the first time he learned about the existence of assassination plans was on August 16, 1963, when he was given a copy of the May 14, 1962 "Memorandum for the Record" prepared for Attorney General Robert Kennedy.

Photocopy from
Gerald Ford Library

→ The particular events underlying the disclosure to Director John McCone started on the evening of August 15, 1963. Stanley J. Grogan, an assistant to the Director in charge of press relations, received a telephone call at his house from a man who said he was Sandy Smith, a reporter for the Chicago Sun-Times. According to a memorandum for the record prepared on August 16, 1963 by Grogan, Sandy Smith "said he was working on a story as a follow-up to the revelations by Joe Valachi, who is under close guard at Ft. Monmouth, New Jersey, who had named a man Giancana as the head gangster in Chicago. The man in Chicago recently went to court to have the FBI cease surveillance of him and his house and lost the decision.

→ He said the Chicagoan reportedly at one time was used by CIA to find out what was going on in Cuba, but provided no information of value. Smith said he stated this to the Department of Justice and they would neither confirm or deny."

→ The next morning the front page of the Chicago Sun-Times contained a story by Sandy Smith with a headline "CIA Souped Giancana Help for Cuba Spying". The story started with the following paragraphs: "A fantastic tale of attempted Cuban espionage involving Chicago gang boss Momo Salvatore (Moe) Giancana and the Central Intelligence Agency was revealed Thursday to The Sun-Times.

Photocopy from
Gerald Ford Library

It was a weird gangland spy case in which, government official said, CIA agents contacted Giancana in an effort to obtain Cuban intelligence after the Fidel Castro regime came into power in 1959.

"What the CIA accomplished--if anything--by negotiating with the 53-year old Chicago rackets chief is one of many unexplained mysteries of the matter."

On August 16, 1963, Richard Helms gave to John McCone a memorandum dated August 16 under the subject "Sam Giancana" which stated: "Attached is the only copy in the Agency of a memorandum on subject, the ribbon copy of which was sent to the Attorney General in May 1962. I was vaguely aware of the existence of such a memorandum since I was informed that had been written as a result of a briefing given by Colonel Edwards and Lawrence Houston to the Attorney General in May of last year."

Richard Helms, when interrogated by the Commission staff, testified he did not have any recollection of the specific events. However, when he was shown his memorandum of August 16, 1963, addressed to John McCone, the Director of Central Intelligence, he remembered that he had delivered that memorandum to Mr. McCone. Helms did not recall whether or not he had seen the May 14, 1962 memorandum for the record sent to the Attorney General before the date he sent it to John McCone on August 16, 1963.

Photocopy from
Gerald Ford Library

As previously noted, Lawrence Houston testified that when he first learned about the Phase I operation, which he said was in 1962 shortly before the May 7, 1962, briefing of the Attorney General, he told Colonel Edwards "that I thought the only thing to do was to go and tell the whole story to the Attorney General. So with the approval of the Director at that time-- , well, it was '63, it must have been McCone." According to the CIA Inspector General investigation in 1967, the actual person with whom Houston discussed the matter was the Deputy Director of Central Intelligence, General Carter. However, General Carter had no recollection of any discussion of assassination plans in the long distance telephone interview in which hypothetical questions were asked relating to newspaper charges.

3. Phase III -- Miscellaneous 1963 Schemes

According to the 1967 Inspector General investigation report, during 1963 several miscellaneous schemes were developed inside the Agency for possible use against Fidel Castro. Helms testified he was vaguely aware of some of these schemes, which he called "hairbrained".

There was no showing that any of the schemes extended beyond the discussion stage. One of these schemes involved discussions inside the CIA about trying to have General Donovan, who was negotiating with Fidel Castro for the release of the Bay of Pigs prisoners, give to Fidel Castro a contaminated skindiving suit.

It was known that Fidel Castro liked to skindive. The CIA plan was to dust the inside of the suit with a fungus producing maderia foot, a disabling and chronic skin disease, and also contaminating the suit with tuberculosis bacilli in the breathing apparatus. There is no evidence that General Donovan knew of any such schemes developed inside the Agency. The scheme was dropped because Donovan on his own volition gave Fidel Castro an uncontaminated skindiving suit as a gesture of friendship.

During this period of time there were also discussions about preparing a booby-trap spectacular seashell which would be submerged in an area where Castro often skindived. The seashell would be loaded with explosives to blow apart when the shell was lifted. After investigation it was determined that there was no shell in the Caribbean area large enough to hold a sufficient amount of explosive which was spectacular enough to attract the attention of Castro. Also, a midget submarine which was anticipated to be used for the emplacement of the seashell did not have a long enough operating range.

4. The Phase IV Plan - 1963-1965

In 1963 a CIA employee who was fluent in Spanish was assigned on temporary duty with the Special Operations Group on Cuba. The employee is hereafter referred to as the Phase IV case officer.

Photocopy from
Gerald Ford Library

The task assigned to him "...was to collect intelligence and to try to organize a group of military officers inside Cuba who were opposed to the Cuban regime--the Castro regime."

In the latter part of 1963 he met, on a trip abroad, a Cuban with whom CIA personnel had been in contact since 1961. At this first meeting the Phase IV case officer said there was no discussion about any possible assassination of any Cuban leader.

At a subsequent meeting, which took place in Europe, the Phase IV case officer said that the primary discussion concerned "getting into more detail on the organization of a group inside Cuba which could be used in an internal coup against the Castro government.

"The subject of assassination was never raised by me. It was never discussed in that context. In discussing the coup and how a coup would be carried out, the, this particular contact did raise the possibility and in his mind the very real possibility that there would be bloodshed, and that somebody would be killed. Their, or his, opinion was that to even get the internal revolt, a coup, underway that the leadership--the top leadership--would have to be neutralized. Specific assassination of any of the people, it was not discussed in those particular terms."

Photocopy from
Gerald Ford Library

According to the Phase IV case officer, the Cuban held a relatively high position in the Cuban government. The Cuban "requested a meeting...a high level policy maker in Washington, specifically mentioning Robert Kennedy as one of the people with whom he would like to talk, to get some assurance that Washington was serious about proceeding with this type of an operation."

The Cuban also said "that they would need some help in-arms probably-in getting started, in kicking off the coup." The Cuban mentioned high powered rifles and scopes and said "they felt that they could capture sufficient arms to carry on once they started."

Subsequently, a senior CIA officer travelled to Europe to meet the Cuban and "assured him...that the U.S. Government was serious about this operation..." and "that the U.S. Government was prepared to support the coup and that when they launched the coup as soon as they established themselves in any reasonable manner inside Cuba that the U.S. Government would support them."

The next meeting took place on November 22, 1963 in Europe. The Cuban contact requested "some type of

Photocopy from
Gerald Ford Library

of esoteric gadget with which he would be able to defend himself" if there were a confrontation directly with Castro. "He had in mind some sort of a pellet pen or anything that was not a hand weapon that he could carry with him" into any conference with Castro.

Although the Agency did not develop such a device, it did develop a ballpoint pen which had a hypodermic needle inside that when you pushed the lever, the needle came out and poison could be injected into someone. The Phase IV case officer showed the pen to the Cuban contact on November 22, 1963. The Cuban contact declined the gadget "because of the close proximity with which he would have to get to a person if anything developed in the form of a confrontation with him." Instead, the Cuban asked for weapons, and the case officer told the Cuban "that a cache of weapons would be put down for him in Cuba."

One or two caches of weapons, including high-powered rifles with scopes, were subsequently placed down in Cuba. In addition, according to the Phase IV case officer, he delivered several hundred dollars to help the Cuban contact with his living expenses, while in Europe. "It was around \$1,000 at one time, no more than that."

Photocopy from
Gerald Ford Library

Originally, the Cuban contact had been a Castro supporter and had been a member of one of the groups that overthrew Batista. However, "he became disenchanted with Castro" shortly after Castro took over because of "the harsh police state policies that were being carried out."

The Phase IV case officer broke off contact with the Cuban in the latter part of 1964 and was reassigned to another task in early 1965. The Cuban contact then was turned over to a Cuban exile group.

According to the 1967 CIA Inspector General investigation /report, CIA support was withdrawn from the Cuban in 1965 because too many people knew about him and his plan.

In March 1966 a Cuban leader was arrested and confessed to receiving rifles with telescopic sites from the CIA to be used for the assassination of Castro, according to a "Prensa Latina" news release. The man said he received \$100,000 toward this plan.

In a memorandum to the Secretary of State after this news story appeared, the CIA said that the contact was recruited to collect intelligence of military activities and objectives in Cuba. The Agency said: "There is no truth to the allegations that the CIA paid \$100,000 or

Photocopy from
Gerald Ford Library

any other sizeable sum of money" as claimed in the Cuban newspapers following the confession of the contact. The Agency also said "the Agency was not involved" with either of the two men arrested by Cuban authorities "in a plot to assassinate Fidel Castro as claimed in the Prensa Latina news release, nor did it ever encourage either of these two persons to attempt such an act..." The memorandum to Secretary Rusk was signed by Richard Helms and was dated March 6, 1966.

Photocopy from
Gerald Ford Library

DRAFT
GRAY/sln
5/22/75

E. The Dominican Republic

1. Summary and Conclusion

In late 1960 and 1961, the United States, having abandoned its policy of nonintervention in the Dominican Republic, sought to bring about the overthrow of the regime of Generalissimo Rafael Trujillo and the establishment of a moderate successor government. To accomplish this result several measures were undertaken on the diplomatic level and the Special Group (predecessor of the Forty Committee) approved a program of covert action as well. At their direction the CIA encouraged a group of internal dissidents along with several exile organizations. On May 30, 1961, members of the internal group assassinated Trujillo.

There was no direct American participation in the assassination. The idea originated with the Dominicans; they acquired some of the weapons on their own; and they did the detailed planning. They were never subject to American supervision or control.

Photocopy from
Gerald Ford Library

On the other hand, CIA and State Department officers in the Dominican Republic were in regular contact with the plotters before the assassination, and they were well aware of the group's lethal intentions. The CIA had told the group of practical problems with several earlier assassination plans; it had offered to train a member of the group in the use of explosives to kill Trujillo.

As a gesture of American support, three revolvers and three carbines, along with limited supplies of ammunition, were passed to the plotters about two months before the assassination. One of the carbines was reportedly left at the scene of the crime. Four submachineguns were also sent to the Dominican Republic by diplomatic pouch. They were withheld from the plotters because of last-minute State Department objections.

It appears that high-level State Department and White House officials first learned guns had been provided to potential assassins some six weeks after the transfer, and about two and a half weeks prior to Trujillo's death. A statement of policy was prepared and approved by the President, reading "we must not run risk of U.S. association with political assassination, since U.S. as a matter of general policy cannot condone assassination. This last principle is overriding and must prevail in doubtful situations." The preparation of this message, and the required coordination,

Photocopy from
Gerald Ford Library

consumed about two weeks. There is no evidence of any effort during this period to recover the weapons or otherwise interfere with the assassination plans. The policy statement was cabled to the Dominican Republic on May 29, the day before the successful assassination attempt. Both the Consul General and the CIA Station Chief in Ciudad Trujillo promptly protested this change in the policy which they had followed in the belief it had been approved by appropriate authority. Before these cables were received in Washington, Trujillo was dead.

Photocopy from
Gerald Ford Library

2. (Proposed) General Conclusion and Recommendation

The Commission concurs in the position taken in the policy statement. We have concluded that there was an improper level of American involvement in the death of Generalissimo Trujillo. That is so even though the assassins might have been able to procure equivalent weapons from other sources. We also conclude that despite the apparent good faith of the persons concerned, there was inadequate consideration of the risks of such involvement and inadequate supervision and coordination of the operation.

We recommend that in the future, weapons should be supplied to plotters of a coup or revolution only in the rarest of circumstances, if at all. In passing on such activities the approving authority should consider carefully the potential damage to the foreign relations of the nation and the feelings of the American people if such activities become known. In our judgment eventual disclosure is inevitable.

The procedures of the CIA should be modified to require the concurrence of the Department of State before weapons, ammunition, explosives, and similar items are transmitted by diplomatic pouch. The treaty obligations of the U.S., including particularly those under the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relation should be observed and fulfilled in good faith.

Photocopy from
Gerald Ford Library

3. The Chronology

a. The Background

Rafael Trujillo came to power in the Dominican Republic in 1930. By 1960 he was notorious because of the corrupt and regressive nature of his regime, because of his systematic use of torture and murder as tools of government, and because of his intervention in the affairs of other nations. The country was in considerable turmoil as the result of several attempts to overthrow the government, sponsored by other Latin American countries.

The policy of the United States at the beginning of 1960 was to refrain from actions which would hasten Trujillo's downfall but to identify, develop, and encourage a moderate group which would take power in the event of Trujillo's death, flight, or overthrow. This policy of non-intervention, although clearly required by treaty, convinced many Latin Americans that the United States supported and maintained the Trujillo regime. Leaders such as President Betancourt of Venezuela, whose support the United States badly wanted in connection with operations against Castro, conditioned their support on U.S. assistance in toppling Trujillo. In April the President approved contingency planning for a more active U.S. role in the event the political situation in the Dominican Republic continued to deteriorate.

Photocopy from
Gerald Ford Library

b. The Rifles

In May the American Ambassador to the Dominican Republic returned to Washington for consultations. Both State Department and CIA files indicate that he reported the dissidents needed weapons, particularly a "small number of high-powered rifles with telescopic lenses." The Ambassador has no present recollection of any such request. He is confident that he made no serious effort to obtain them. Nevertheless, the request went forward. Near the end of June, according to CIA files, the Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs approved the provision of "a small number of sniper rifles or other devices for the removal of key Trujillo people from the scene," and requested that they be supplied at the earliest possible moment. Neither the CIA officer who obtained this approval nor the Assistant Secretary, now both retired, has any recollection of this meeting.

Photocopy from
Gerald Ford Library

c. Explosives

On June 24, 1960, Trujillo sponsored an unsuccessful attempt on the life of the President of Venezuela; as a result the United States and other OAS countries severed diplomatic relations in August. Consular relations were retained.

The Commission Staff interviewed the foreign service officer who served as Deputy Chief of Mission before the severance of relations, and as Consul General thereafter. It was his recollection that the dissidents had no definite assassination plans in mid 1960, although they did speak of that course as the only way out of the conditions under which they lived. It was not until early 1961, as he recalls, that the dissidents began formulating specific plans to kill Trujillo. The cables and memoranda of the period tend to confirm this recollection.

Nevertheless, the CIA continued at intervals during 1960 to discuss with the dissidents means for the assassination of Trujillo. A memorandum in October 1960 reflects that the dissidents planned to kill Trujillo with a bomb, detonated from a remote point, and then to take over the nation by means of an armed uprising, coordinated with other paramilitary action. A more detailed proposal along similar lines appears to have been provided by the dissidents in December.

Photocopy from
Gerald Ford Library

On December 29, 1960, the Deputy Director for Plans presented the Special Group with a program for covert action to bring about Trujillo's overthrow. A portion of the program called for Agency and consular officials in Ciudad Trujillo to continue to work with the internal dissidents to promote an uprising and the establishment of a moderate pro-U.S. successor to the Trujillo regime. The plan, as initially approved by the Special Group, contained no provision for supplying arms or explosives to the internal dissidents.

Two weeks later, the Department of State, on its motion, obtained Special Group consent to have the internal dissidents furnished "limited supplies of small arms and other equipment," meaning explosives, subject to the condition that these materials be provided to the dissidents at a point outside the country itself. The internal State Department memorandum which led to this proposal stated there would be no thought of toppling the government by any such "minor measure," but some sabotage potential would be placed in the hands of the pro-U.S. opposition with a corresponding boost to their morale and their opinion of the United States. The station and the consulate were informed of the Special Group action on January 19, 1961, the last day of the Eisenhower Administration. President Kennedy was informed of the Special Group action not later than mid-February.

Photocopy from
Gerald Ford Library

The Commission finds no reason to believe that any member of the Special Group intended to authorize the furnishing of assassination weapons. However, those CIA officials who had been involved in dealings with the dissidents very likely believed that the Special Group had authorized support of the planned assassination and armed uprising.

d. Revolvers.

During the early months of 1961 the CIA Station and the consular officials in Ciudad Trujillo kept in close touch with the dissidents, and they were aware of their various schemes to assassinate Trujillo. Although these officials apparently took no active role in the development of plans, they did on occasion discuss and criticize plans developed by the dissidents. In mid-February, two members of the dissidents' "Action Group", which was to carry out the actual assassination, came to the United States. They met with both CIA and State Department officers. During these meetings they stated repeatedly that the key to the success of the plot would be the assassination of Trujillo. The evidence is insufficient to permit a conclusion how far this knowledge went within the State Department.

Photocopy from
Gerald Ford Library

In March matters took an active turn. In a cable on March 4, a letter on March 16, and an airgram on March 22 the Consul General in Ciudad Trujillo reported that plans for Trujillo's assassination were coming to a head. He requested additional authority to supply the pro-U.S. dissidents with weapons.

Similar requests were made by the CIA Station Chief of his headquarters. Three times headquarters responded that it could not comply with these requests because the restrictions imposed by the Special Group precluded the introduction of arms into the Dominican Republic by Americans.

On March 22, the CIA Station Chief renewed his request that headquarters send him three .38 calibre revolvers and ammunition by diplomatic pouch. He stated that without some show of support the United States would lose the dissident group entirely, while if it supplied weapons it might have some control over the timing of their use.

Photocopy from
Gerald Ford Library

On the same day, March 22, representatives of the CIA met with the State Department officer who served as their point of contact with the Department's Bureau of Inter-American Affairs. Three days later, on March 25, the Deputy Director for Plans cabled the station setting forth United States policy with respect to the Dominican Republic and stating that the revolvers and ammunition would be sent by diplomatic pouch in the near future.

There is nothing in either CIA or State Department files to indicate whether the Department was consulted on the decision. The memories of the participants are hazy on the matter, but there are indications that the CIA did discuss the introduction of handguns into the Dominican Republic and believed it obtained approval. The then Deputy Director for Plans testified that as the territorial restriction on delivery of weapons was initially imposed at the request of the Department of State, he would have considered the State Department's willingness to waive the restriction as adequate authority and probably would not have returned to the Special Group for formal approval. He observed that the members of the Group or their staffs might have been advised informally.

Photocopy from
Gerald Ford Library

The use of a diplomatic pouch to send weapons for such purposes was prohibited by regulations of the CIA's Clandestine Services, and it is also illegal under international law. The Deputy Director of Plans approved the waiver of the internal regulations. There is nothing to indicate that the Department of State was informed of the use of the pouch, and the fact that the March 25 cable instructed the Chief of Station not to advise the Consul General of the use of the pouch suggests that the CIA acted unilaterally in this regard.

The CIA files indicate that the revolvers were passed to the dissidents, and the Department of State files indicate that one was passed by the Consul General and the other two by Agency officers. Neither the Consul General nor the former Chief of Station has any particular recollection of the matter.

e. Carbines

On March 26, the day after CIA decided to furnish the revolvers, the station cabled that it had found three M-1 carbines in the consulate, left behind by departing naval personnel. It requested magazines for the weapons and permission to pass them to the dissidents. On March 29 the Assistant Deputy Director for Plans responded that he was pouching the magazines, and that headquarters was "inclined to

Photocopy from
Gerald Ford Library

favor" passing the weapons and ammunition.

Another meeting was held with the Department of State on March 31. The State Department memorandum makes no mention of any discussion either of the furnishing of ammunition or of authority to pass the weapons, but the Deputy Director for Plans granted authority to pass the carbines the same day. Both the State Department liaison officer, who prepared the memorandum of the meeting, and the Consul General are clear in their recollection that the State Department in Washington did not learn of the pass of the carbines until the Consul General was in Washington several weeks after the pass took place. Nothing in CIA files indicates that this decision was coordinated in advance with the Department of State. It is possible that the CIA understood its initial authorization with respect to the handguns to extend to the carbines as well. It is also possible that CIA decided the Special Group restriction on importation of weapons did not apply, as the carbines were already inside the Dominican Republic.

CIA cabled its Station Chief on April 5 to request the Consul General not to comment in his correspondence with the Department that the arms and ammunition were being passed. A reassuring reply from the Consul General was received two

Photocopy from
Gerald Ford Library

days later. The CIA Station Chief, who would not have been involved in any coordination at the headquarters level, speculated that this injunction may have been designed to keep the State Department from knowing "officially" that the weapons were being passed.

It is clear that the coordination on the decision to provide the carbines was inadequate. It is impossible to determine from this evidence where the fault lies.

f. Submachine Guns

As early as March 20, the consulate and the station in Ciudad Trujillo had been informed that the assassins intended to kill Trujillo when he visited his mistress--substantially the plan followed some two months later. Although the plan originally called for Trujillo's dispatch inside his mistress' residence using silenced weapons, the group requested five M-3 submachineguns and 1500 rounds of ammunition for self defense in case the assassination plans went awry and there was a firefight with Trujillo's security forces. In its March 25 cable, headquarters replied that it was prepared to provide these weapons when the dissidents developed the capacity to receive them at sea or in a cache on the coast,

Photocopy from
Gerald Ford Library

but that for security reasons they could not be sent by pouch.

The Chief of Station returned to Washington for consultations in early April. He was able to convince his superiors that the pouch was the only feasible and secure means of getting the weapons into the Dominican Republic for delivery to the dissidents. The Deputy Director for Plans approved on April 10, and the pouch was sent on April 14 but with the restriction that the weapons not be passed without further approval. The files show that there was no coordination with the Department of State in Washington. Because of the Bay of Pigs landing on April 17, the station and the consulate were never given authority to supply the weapons to the dissidents and they never did so.

On May 2, as the result of repeated entreaties from the station and the consulate, the Deputy Director for Plans approved a cable for the DCI's release, stating that as it appeared the Action Group was prepared to act whether or not the submachineguns were provided, the station was authorized to pass them for the additional protection of the group. Apparently someone decided this decision should not be made without the consent of the Department of State, for on May 3

Photocopy from
Gerald Ford Library

the Deputy Chief of the Western Hemisphere Division met with Professor Adolph Berle, Chairman of the Interagency Task Force on Latin America. According to Berle's memorandum of the interview, confirmed by one of the witnesses, the initial presentation stated the group wished the arms in order to overthrow Trujillo. After some examination, Berle determined that the real plan was to assassinate Trujillo, and that the guns were wanted for that purpose. Berle responded that he could not care less for Trujillo, but that the United States did not wish to have anything to do with any assassination plots anywhere, any time. The Agency officer, who had been in a supervisory position with respect to this effort for approximately a year, told Berle he felt the same way.

It may be that the CIA tried to get Berle overruled; on May 5 a cable informed the station that a high-level State Department decision on the submachineguns was pending. Nothing in the files indicates what this cable might have referred to. In any event on May 8 the station was informed that the State Department had disapproved passage of the submachineguns, and this ended the matter.

Photocopy from
Gerald Ford Library

g. The Policy Statement

In mid-May, as a result of increasing indications that events in the Dominican Republic were reaching a climax, the White House requested situation reports and contingency plans. This exercise was overseen by a member of the National Security Council Staff. A CIA briefing paper prepared for this purpose stated that the three revolvers and the three carbines had been passed to the dissidents for their use in personal defense "attendant to their projected efforts to neutralize Trujillo." The report implied that both the revolvers and the ammunition had been in the consulate with the carbines, and therefore the limitations on the Special Group authorization technically did not apply.

The CIA liaison officer at the State Department called to his superiors' attention the fact that weapons had already been passed, and apparently submitted a memorandum outlining the reasons why the United States should not be involved in this activity. Among them were that the United States Government should not lend itself to direct political assassination, that the moral posture of the United States could ill afford further tarnishing in the eyes of the world, that the United States would have encouraged the action,

Photocopy from
Gerald Ford Library

supplied the weapons, effected the delivery, and then turned over only the final execution to (unskilled) local triggermen, and that the United States could not afford a precedent which might convince the world that our diplomatic pouches are used to deliver assassination weapons.

On May 15 a joint CIA-State Department memorandum was sent the President's National Security Adviser informing him that the plans of the pro-U.S. group were well advanced in the direction of ousting Trujillo "by any means." This memorandum did not call attention to the fact that the United States had supplied weapons to the group.

In the midst of these discussions, the Consul General, who had been in Washington for consultation, cabled on his return to the Dominican Republic that the dissident group planned to "execute action against Trujillo" that evening. The Department replied that it would consider this timing particularly unfortunate in view of the juxtaposition of the Consul General's return from Washington to the Dominican Republic and the inferences which might be drawn therefrom. This exchange of cables was furnished to the NSC staffer.

The state of the covert action program in the Dominican Republic was discussed in the Special Group on May 18, and again on May 25. The Commission has not had access to the minutes.

Photocopy from
Gerald Ford Library

On May 24, the State Department liaison officer provided the Under Secretary with a draft cable, stating that the need to dissociate the United States from obvious intervention, and even more so from political assassination, overrode the need to secure credit with the Dominican dissidents and with Latin America generally. This draft was approved at high levels in the CIA and the State Department, and was sent to the White House for Presidential review. After some redrafting in the White House, the final version in another hand, stated "We must not run risk of U.S. association with political assassination, since U.S. as a matter of general policy cannot condone assassination." This version was approved by the President in Paris and cabled to the Dominican Republic. It arrived the day before Trujillo's death on May 30. On June 1 the State Department instructed its Consul General, if he could do so "most inconspicuously", to destroy any records concerning contacts with the plotters and any related matters.

Photocopy from
Gerald Ford Library

~~TOP SECRET~~

F. Conclusion

President Ford has firmly announced that assassination is not and should never be a tool of United States policy. The Commission joins in this statement. It is against the constitutional and moral principles for which this republic stands for there to be any direct or indirect participation of any agency of the United States Government in any plans involving the assassination of any person in peacetime.

Photocopy from
Gerald Ford Library

~~TOP SECRET~~