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

Table of Contents

Page

A.	The Scope of the Investigation	
1.	Determining Jurisdiction	1
2.	Patrice Lumumba	3
3.	President Achmed Sukarno	4
4.	Concurrence of the President on Interpretation of Authority	4
B.	Participation of CIA Personnel in Plans to Attempt to Assassinate Fidel Castro	6
1.	Flying Cuban Exiles into Cuba	7
2.	1960-61 and the Phase I Plans	8
a.	When the Plans Began	8
b.	The Development of the Phase I Plans According to the May 14, 1962 Memorandum to the Attorney General	10
c.	The Carrying Out of the Phase I Plan	13
d.	The Balletti Wiretap--Why the May 14, 1962 Memorandum was Prepared	15
e.	FBI Memoranda Concerning CIA Assassination Plans	19
f.	Additional Statements of Colonel Edwards re May 7, 1962 Briefing	23
g.	Statements of Colonel Edwards re Knowledge Inside CIA	24
h.	How the Plans Got Started	24
i.	Possible White House Direction or Approval of Plans	26
(1)	The Testimony of Richard Bissell	26
(a)	Eisenhower Administration	26
(b)	Kennedy Administration	26
(2)	The Testimony of Gordon Gray	29
(3)	The Testimony of Walt Rostow	29
(4)	The Interrogation of the Phase I Case Officer	29

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	<u>Page</u>
(5) The Interrogation of Colonel Edwards	29
(6) The Testimony of McGeorge Bundy	29
(7) The Subsequent Interrogation of McGeorge Bundy	32
(8) Documents of the National Security Council	33
(a) November 3, 1960 Minutes of Special Group Meeting	35
(b) Other Documents	36
j. June 13, 1961 Taylor Report	36
k. Relationship of Phase I Plan with Bay of Pigs	36
l. Knowledge of Phase I Plans Inside Cuba	37
m. Termination of Phase I Plan	37
n. Other Plans During Phase I	38
3. 1962-63 and the Phase II Plans	39
a. Possible Authorization--the Testimony of Richard Bissell	39
b. The Interrogation of the Phase II Case Officer	39
(1) Developing an "Executive Action" Capability	39
(2) Discussions with Edwards and Helms	40
(3) The Phase II Plans	40
c. The Testimony of Colonel Edwards re Knowledge of Phase II	43
d. Knowledge of John McCone, Director of Central Intelligence re Phase II	43
e. The Testimony of Richard Helms re Phase II	44
f. The August 10, 1962 Meeting of the Special Group (Augmented)	45
(1) The Interrogation of the Phase II Case Officer	46
(2) Interrogation of Robert M. McNamara	47
(3) The Testimony of John McCone	49

	Page
(4) The Affidavit of General Lemnitzer	49
(5) The Testimony of General Lansdale	50
(6) Additional Testimony of General Lansdale	50
(a) Discussions with and Written Proposals to President Kennedy	51
(b) Cuban Exile Groups	51
(c) Requests for "possibility" Plans--but No Authority to Carry Out	52
g. Interrogation of General Taylor	53
h. Testimony of Richard Helms Re Unseating Castro Government and Possible Plans	54
(1) White House Pressure	54
(2) Possible Assassination Plans	55
i. The August 16, 1963 Memorandum to John McCone about Phase I	56
4. Miscellaneous 1963 Schemes	59
5. The Phase III Plan--1963-1965	60
6. Miscellaneous 1964 Schemes Involving Cuban Exile Community	65
7. Summary	69
C. The Dominican Republic	70
1. The Chronology	70
a. The Background	70
b. The Rifles	71
c. Explosives	72
d. Revolvers	74
e. Carbines	77
f. Submachine Guns	79
g. The Policy Statement	82
2. Summary	85
D. Conclusion	86

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.

A. The Scope of the 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.

1. Determining Jurisdiction

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

*This summary of facts was prepared by David W. Belin, Executive Director of the CIA Commission, except for the portions on pages 70-85 pertaining to the Dominican Republic, which was prepared by Marvin L. Gray, Jr., a Counsel to the Commission. The statement of facts has not been reviewed by the staff nor has it been reviewed by the Commission.

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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.

On the basis of the investigation, the evidence shows that agents of the CIA were involved in planning in this country with certain citizens and others to seek to assassinate Premier Castro. The evidence also shows 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).

No evidence has been found involving 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 investigative body. With regard to activities outside of the United States, no evidence has been found of CIA participation in plans to assassinate foreign leaders, except as described in the next four paragraphs. However, the

investigation 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.

2. Patrice Lumumba

In the course of the first stage of its investigation to determine its jurisdiction, a preliminary investigation was made of charges that the CIA was involved in the death of Patrice Lumumba, who was killed in early 1961. No evidence was found 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.*

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,

*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."

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.

3. President Achmed Sukarno

Bissell also testified that there was discussion within the Agency of the possibility of an attempt on the life of President Achmed 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.

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.

4. Concurrence of the President on Interpretation of Authority

Since no evidence was found to bring the Sukarno and Lumumba matters within the scope of the Commission's investigative

*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.

authority, no further investigation in these two areas was undertaken. However, sufficient domestic aspects in the Castro and Trujillo plans were found to constitute grounds for undertaking additional 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 and CIA participation in the shipping of arms to persons in the Dominican Republic who sought to assassinate Generalissimo Trujillo. The facts have been developed through a review of the internal investigation of the CIA, examination of documents, and interviews and testimony. 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

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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.

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

In the late nineteen-fifties, there was increasing 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 1958, asking that he resign and turn over 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.

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.

1. Flying Cuban Exiles into Cuba

There has been testimony before the Commission staff 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 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 staff 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 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."

2. 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 for placement in a beverage to be drunk by Premier Castro.

a. When the Plans Began

There is some disagreement about exactly when 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 (April 17-19, 1961), and Colonel Sheffield Edwards, the Director of the Office of Security of the CIA.

9

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 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 of 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."

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 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.

b. The Development of the Phase I Plans According to the May 14, 1962 Memorandum to the Attorney General

The May 14, 1962 memorandum 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 (Robert Maheu) 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 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."

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

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syndicate personnel "to call off the operation" with the further direction that the syndicate person "was 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.

c. The Carrying Out of the Phase I 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."

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.

According to the case officer and the CIA Inspector General files, there were 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

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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.

d. The Balletti Wiretap - Why the May 14, 1962
Memorandum was Prepared

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.

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 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, according to Edwards, 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, General Counsel for the CIA, 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.)

Edwards, in his 1975 recorded interview, 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 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 approval of the Director at the 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.)

e. 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:

"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 entry 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.

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The memorandum concluded with the following paragraph:

"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 Maheu 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 original

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.

"On 5/9/62 Kennedy discussed with the Director a number of matters, including admission by CIA that Robert Maheu 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 the Department of Justice and stated because of this matter it would be difficult to prosecute Giancana or Robert Maheu then or in the future."

The memorandum stated 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 the 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

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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 take such steps without checking with the Department of Justice.

"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."

f. Additional 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 in his 1975 recorded interview 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.

g. 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.

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 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.

