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EXECUTIVE SESSION

DEPOSITION OF VICTOR ESPINOSA

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WEDNESDAY, JUNE 7, 1978

- - -

House of Representatives

President John F. Kennedy  
Subcommittee of the Select  
Committee on Assassinations

Washington, D. C.

The deposition of Victor Espinosa was taken at 3:30 p.m., in the office of the Select Committee on Assassinations in Room 3370 of the office of the Committee, Second and D Streets, S.W., Washington, D. C.

Present: Jonathan Blackmer and John Hornbeck, Counsel to the Select Committee.

Also Present: Ms. Elizabeth Berning, Chief Clerk to the Select Committee.

1 Whereupon,

2 VICTOR ESPINOSA

3 having been duly sworn by the Chief Clerk to the Select  
4 Committee, was examined under the rules of the Select  
5 Committee and testified as follows:

6 Mr. Blackmer. We are present in the Select Committee's  
7 offices to depose you. My name is Jonathan Blackmer and I am  
8 an attorney with the Select Committee on Assassinations.

9 By virtue of Rule 4 of House Resolution 222, I am  
10 empowered to take statements under oath. Shortly, Mr. John  
11 Hornbeck will join us, who is a senior staff counsel on this  
12 committee, to further ask questions of the witness.

13 What is your full name, sir?

14 Mr. Espinosa. Victor Espinosa.

15 Mr. Blackmer. And you are here for the purpose of  
16 giving a voluntary statement before this committee?

17 Mr. Espinosa. Yes.

18 Mr. Blackmer. I have given you a copy of the Committee  
19 Rules, House Resolution 222, 460 and 760. You are not now  
20 under subpoena, are you?

21 Mr. Espinosa. No.

22 Mr. Blackmer. You are here voluntarily?

23 Mr. Espinosa. Yes.

24 Mr. Blackmer. You have the right to have counsel pre-  
25 sent if you wish. There is no counsel here and I assume that

1 is of your own choice.

2 Mr. Espinosa. I don't see it is necessary, anyway.

3 Mr. Blackmer. The entire record of this deposition will  
4 be transcribed. We will send you a copy for you to read,  
5 verify and return to the Select Committee, after which we will  
6 send you your own personal copy. Should you wish to make any  
7 changes in the substance of the transcript, this must be done  
8 before a federal magistrate.

9 I know you are residing in London, and if it is necessary  
10 to make any changes, if you feel corrections are necessary, if  
11 you would please call us, we will try to make arrangements over  
12 there for that to be done.

13 I would like to begin the questioning with a little back-  
14 ground. You were born in Cuba; is that correct?

15 Mr. Espinosa. That is right.

16 Mr. Blackmer. And you resided there until when?

17 Mr. Espinosa. Until 1959.

18 Mr. Blackmer. And at that time you came to the United  
19 States?

20 Mr. Espinosa. Yes.

21 Mr. Blackmer. Approximately in 1957 or 1958, were you a  
22 student at the University of Havana?

23 Mr. Espinosa. Yes, I was.

24 Mr. Blackmer. And as a student at the University of  
25 Havana, were you engaged in any underground activities with

1 either anti-Batista or later anti-Castro?

2 Mr. Espinosa. Yes, both.

3 Mr. Blackmer. And could you tell us the nature of the  
4 activities which were directed against the Batista regime?

5 Mr. Espinosa. Well, different kinds of clandestine  
6 activities.

7 Mr. Blackmer. Would that be in the nature of raising  
8 explosives or arms for paramilitary use?

9 Mr. Espinosa. Yes, mainly.

10 Mr. Blackmer. Were you involved in any individual sabo-  
11 tage operations?

12 Mr. Espinosa. Yes.

13 Mr. Blackmer. What specific activities were those? Was  
14 there anything that comes to mind?

15 Mr. Espinosa. No, not really.

16 Mr. Blackmer. Was it aimed at the economy more than  
17 individual members of the Batista regime?

18 Mr. Espinosa. Not so much the economy, but as an indi-  
19 vidual member.

20 Mr. Blackmer. High level officials?

21 Mr. Espinosa. Yes.

22 Mr. Blackmer. Were you involved with Fidel Castro in  
23 these anti-Batista activities?

24 Mr. Espinosa. No.

25 Mr. Blackmer. Who were you working with?

1 Mr. Espinosa. With students, the Revolutionary Council of  
2 the University of Havana.

3 Mr. Blackmer. Who are the particular leaders?

4 Mr. Espinosa. There was Echeverria.

5 Mr. Blackmer. Do you have a first name?

6 Mr. Espinosa. Jose Antonio; and Cubela, Porton Chaumon  
7 and a few others.

8 Mr. Blackmer. How were your activities financed?

9 Mr. Espinosa. Mainly by bonds that were being sold to  
10 sympathizers of the revolutionary party.

11 Mr. Blackmer. Were there any large contributors that you  
12 can think of?

13 Mr. Espinosa. I am sure there were, but not that I had  
14 any knowledge of.

15 Mr. Blackmer. Your family were landowners, were they not,  
16 in Cuba?

17 Mr. Espinosa. Yes.

18 Mr. Blackmer. And were they part of the upper class?

19 Mr. Espinosa. Yes.

20 Mr. Blackmer. Were they at all sponsoring your acti-  
21 vities?

22 Mr. Espinosa. Not that I know of.

23 Mr. Blackmer. Could you tell us when you first met  
24 Rolando Cubela?

25 Mr. Espinosa. It was a long time ago. We were children

1 and he used to go to school in the same town in which I was  
2 born in Cuba.

3 Mr. Blackmer. So you had known him many years before your  
4 activities started.

5 Mr. Espinosa. Yes.

6 Mr. Blackmer. At the University?

7 Mr. Espinosa. Yes.

8 Mr. Blackmer. Who were some of his associates in the  
9 underground activities?

10 Mr. Espinosa. For example, one Cubela and Machado.

11 Mr. Blackmer. Do you have the first names?

12 Mr. Espinosa. I cannot remember the first names because  
13 we used to call him "Machaletto" and Joe Westbrook.

14 Mr. Blackmer. Is that an American?

15 Mr. Espinosa. No, he was a Cuban.

16 Mr. Blackmer. Do you know what any of these individuals  
17 are doing now?

18 Mr. Espinosa. They are dead.

19 Mr. Blackmer. Are any of these individuals now with the  
20 Castro government?

21 Mr. Espinosa. I think Chaumon is with the Castro govern-  
22 ment, and I think Raminda -- and it has been so many years --  
23 and Naranjo and the rest of the people I mentioned there.

24

25

1 are dead.

2 Mr. Blackmer. When did your interest change from being  
3 anti-Batista to pro-Castro?

4 Mr. Espinosa. I was never pro-Castro; being against  
5 Batista does not mean you are pro-Castro.

6 I think very shortly after Castro took over I began to be  
7 anti-Castro.

8 Mr. Blackmer. Did you ever meet Castro?

9 Mr. Espinosa. No.

10 Mr. Blackmer. Do you know of any people who were closely  
11 associated with him?

12 Mr. Espinosa. Only one person.

13 Mr. Blackmer. And that was whom?

14 Mr. Espinosa. That was Jose Smith, and he landed in Cuba  
15 when Castro landed and he was killed at that time. That is the  
16 only person whom I knew was close to him.

17 Mr. Blackmer. When Castro landed in Cuba, was that in  
18 1956?

19 Mr. Espinosa. Yes, 1956.

20 Mr. Blackmer. So your activities began approximately in  
21 1957.

22 Mr. Espinosa. No, I would say 1955.

23 Mr. Blackmer. During this period of time, did you know  
24 Pedro Diaz Lanz?

25 Mr. Espinosa. No, I did not.



1 Mr. Blackmer. Have you subsequently known about Pedro  
2 Diaz Lanz?

3 Mr. Espinosa. Yes.

4 Mr. Blackmer. Did you have any personal knowledge of  
5 him?

6 Mr. Espinosa. What do you mean by "personal knowledge?"

7 Mr. Blackmer. Did you ever have any contact with him?

8 Mr. Espinosa. Yes, I did.

9 Mr. Blackmer. And what period of time was that?

10 Mr. Espinosa. It was, I would say, in 1959 and 1960 in  
11 Miami.

12 Mr. Blackmer. Do you recall who he was with when you saw  
13 him?

14 Mr. Espinosa. No, I do not recall really, and I only met  
15 him once or twice.

16 Mr. Blackmer. Do you know an individual by the name of  
17 Frank Sturgis?

18 Mr. Espinosa. Yes.

19 Mr. Blackmer. Where did you meet this individual?

20 Mr. Espinosa. In Miami.

21 Mr. Blackmer. In what time?

22 Mr. Espinosa. 1959 or 1960.

23 Mr. Blackmer. Was he with Diaz Lanz when you met him?

24 Mr. Espinosa. I can't recall.

25 Mr. Blackmer. When you were living in Havana in 1958 and

1 1959, did you remember frequenting the Hotel Nacional.

2 Mr. Espinosa. Yes, I did.

3 Mr. Blackmer. Did you know an individual there by the  
4 name of Michael McLaney?

5 Mr. Espinosa. Yes.

6 Mr. Blackmer. Would you explain how you first met Mr.  
7 McLaney and the nature of your relationship?

8 Mr. Espinosa. I met him first because the manager of the  
9 hotel, the social manager of the hotel was a friend of mine.

10 Mr. Blackmer. And his name was what?

11 Mr. Espinosa. It was Callejas, and he subsequently  
12 introduced me to Bill McLaney who ultimately introduced me to  
13 Mike McLaney.

14 Mr. Blackmer. And what was the nature of your  
15 relationship?

16 Mr. Espinosa. It was just social in Cuba.

17 Mr. Blackmer. Did you go out with them to dinner?

18 Mr. Espinosa. Yes, sometimes.

19 Mr. Blackmer. Were either of the McLaney brothers  
20 involved in any clandestine activities against either Batista  
21 or Castro to your knowledge at that time?

22 Mr. Espinosa. Not that I know of.

23 Mr. Blackmer. You came to the United States, you  
24 say, in December of 1959?

25 Mr. Espinosa. Yes, I think so.

1 Mr. Blackmer. Were you sponsored by Mike McLaney?

2 Mr. Espinosa. Yes, I was.

3 Mr. Blackmer. And did he help you in getting over here  
4 financially?

5 Mr. Espinosa. No.

6 Mr. Blackmer. Were you trained by the Central  
7 Intelligence Agency in any clandestine paramilitary training of  
8 any kind?

9 Mr. Espinosa. Yes, I believe it was then.

10 Mr. Blackmer. Could you tell us your first contact with  
11 the Central Intelligence Agency and your first role in the  
12 Cuban exile movement prior to the Bay of Pigs in the United  
13 States?

14 Mr. Espinosa. Well, I heard when I came to the States  
15 they were forming some kind of a brigade or something to invade  
16 Cuba, and I told different friends of mine in Miami to let me  
17 know when the thing was happening. I went to New York to work  
18 and they contacted me at one point, and they were recruiting  
19 people to take part in this activity, and I went back to Miami  
20 and I enlisted myself.

21 Mr. Blackmer. Could you tell us who it was that contacted  
22 you?

23 Mr. Espinosa. I think it was Mario Jiminez.

24 Mr. Blackmer. He contacted you and came back to Miami,  
25 and where did you go to enlist?

1 Mr. Espinosa. I went to one of the enlisting houses, and  
2 I think there was one house where you go over there and  
3 enlist.

4 Mr. Blackmer. And do you recall any particulars about  
5 that house, who was running it and who was there?

6 Mr. Espinosa. No.

7 Mr. Blackmer. Do you know an individual by the name of  
8 Howard Hunt?

9 Mr. Espinosa. Well, I have heard about him.

10 Mr. Blackmer. Have you seen photographs of him?

11 Mr. Espinosa. Yes.

12 Mr. Blackmer. Was this individual involved in any of  
13 this early contact you had with the Central Intelligence  
14 Agency?

15 Mr. Espinosa. I don't know.

16 Mr. Blackmer. After you enlisted in Miami, where were  
17 you then sent?

18 Mr. Espinosa. I was sent to Guatemala.

19 Mr. Blackmer. And this would have been approximately  
20 when?

21 Mr. Espinosa. This would have been approximately ---

22 Mr. Blackmer. Could it possibly have been in the  
23 beginning of 1960?

24 Mr. Espinosa. No, it was not the beginning of 1960. I  
25 would say it was toward the end of 1960, the third quarter

1 of 1960. It was June or July, approximately.

2 Mr. Blackmer. Did you first go to Panama or first to  
3 Guatemala?

4 Mr. Espinosa. I went to Guatemala and then went to  
5 Panama.

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1 Mr. Blackmer. What type of activities were you trained  
2 in?

3 Mr. Espinosa. Just general activities, general,  
4 conventional military warfare and guerrilla warfare and  
5 training in explosives and munitions and clandestine  
6 operations, et cetera.

7 Mr. Blackmer. Do you recall any of the people who  
8 trained you? Were they Americans?

9 Mr. Espinosa. Yes, there were some Americans and some  
10 Europeans too.

11 Mr. Blackmer. Do you recall the names of these  
12 individuals?

13 Mr. Espinosa. I cannot recall the names. I know one  
14 person, an American of Philippine origin, and he was known to  
15 us as Colonel Vallejo.

16 Mr. Blackmer. During this training, did you know an  
17 individual by the name of Carlos Hernandez?

18 Mr. Espinosa. Yes, I did.

19 Mr. Blackmer. Was there an individual by the name of  
20 John Koch Gene involved with you?

21 Mr. Espinosa. I do not recall that name.

22 Mr. Blackmer. How about Acelo Pedro Amores?

23 Mr. Espinosa. No.

24 Mr. Blackmer. How about Miguel Alvarez Jiminez?

25 Mr. Espinosa. Yes.

1 Mr. Blackmer. Is this the same man who contacted you or  
2 a different Jiminez?

3 Mr. Espinosa. This is a different Jiminez.

4 Mr. Blackmer. Any relation to Mario?

5 Mr. Espinosa. No.

6 Mr. Blackmer. Was there anyone else that you later had  
7 acquaintances with that you trained with?

8 Mr. Espinosa. There were a dozen; there were many.

9 Mr. Blackmer. Did you ever go in any infiltration raids  
10 into Cuba as part of this?

11 Mr. Espinosa. Yes.

12 Mr. Blackmer. Can you recall any of the specific details  
13 of any of the particular raids?

14 Mr. Espinosa. Yes. One time we went to a raid about 20  
15 kilometers in Havana and we were supposed to knock out this  
16 Navy installation somewhere, and all of the raids were a  
17 different nature, like if we went into the country, and  
18 getting information of the country and bringing people out of  
19 the country.

20 Mr. Blackmer. Do you recall any specific individuals  
21 that you went on these raids with?

22 Mr. Espinosa. Yes, I recall a few.

23 Mr. Blackmer. Could you give us their names?

24 Mr. Espinosa. Miguel Alvarez; Calcie Nundez was another,  
25 and Frank--and I can't remember Frank's last name.

1 Mr. Blackmer. Was he American?

2 Mr. Espinosa. No, Cuban. It was Ugarte, and I can't  
3 remember his first name.

4 Mr. Blackmer. Approximately when were these raids,  
5 before or after the Bay of Pigs?

6 Mr. Espinosa. They were before and after the Bay of  
7 Pigs.

8 Mr. Blackmer. How many raids did you go on after the Bay  
9 of Pigs?

10 Mr. Espinosa. After the Bay of Pigs, I think I went in  
11 two or three times.

12 Mr. Blackmer. And do you recall the last raid that you  
13 went on that was sponsored by the CIA, approximately what date  
14 that was?

15 Mr. Espinosa. Possibly it was four or five months after  
16 the invasion.

17 Mr. Blackmer. Sometime in the summer of 1961?

18 Mr. Espinosa. Yes.

19 Mr. Blackmer. Were you involved in the Bay of Pigs  
20 invasion itself?

21 Mr. Espinosa. Not directly.

22 Mr. Blackmer. Were you infiltrated into Cuba before the  
23 Bay of Pigs?

24 Mr. Espinosa. I was being infiltrated at the same time  
25 that the Bay of Pigs was taking place, and we were ordered to



1 go back to Miami and then when we got back to Miami, we found  
2 out that they had landed.

3 Mr. Blackmer. Did they then try to send you back?

4 Mr. Espinosa. There was a little hustle at that time;  
5 everything was very much in the air and we were on stand-by,  
6 but we were not sent back.

7 Mr. Blackmer. Do you recall whether or not any members of  
8 Customs or Immigration in the Miami area were made aware of any  
9 of your particular raids so as not to stop you?

10 Mr. Espinosa. Would you rephrase that again?

11 Mr. Blackmer. The various raids that you went on, I  
12 assume many of them were from the Miami area.

13 Mr. Espinosa. They were from the Keys; down toward Key  
14 West.

15 Mr. Blackmer. Were you aware of any monitoring by Customs  
16 or Immigration officials of the United States Government?

17 Mr. Espinosa. Would -- what do you mean by "monitoring"?

18 Mr. Blackmer. These agencies are charged with the respon-  
19 sibility of enforcing the neutrality acts. They try to limit  
20 any hostile acts emanating from this country.

21 Were you aware that they were told specifically about your  
22 operations so that they did not stop you?

23 Mr. Espinosa. No.

24 Mr. Blackmer. Were you ever stopped?

25

1 Mr. Espinosa. Yes, I was stopped.

2 Mr. Blackmer. While you were working for the CIA?

3 Mr. Espinosa. No, never.

4 Mr. Blackmer. When were you stopped?

5 Mr. Espinosa. After I stopped activities with the CIA.

6 Mr. Blackmer. Approximately when was this?

7 Mr. Espinosa. One time was in June of 1963.

8 Mr. Blackmer. That was in Miami?

9 Mr. Espinosa. Yes, in Miami, and I had been served by  
10 Customs agents two different times and I don't know the legal  
11 name for it, notification. If I was caught in a boat or in a  
12 plane or trying to go somewhere, related to any kind of  
13 anti-Castro activity, I will get five years in jail or \$5,000  
14 fine or 10 years in jail.

15 Mr. Blackmer. You were in fact stopped once on June 15,  
16 1963?

17 Mr. Espinosa. Yes.

18 Mr. Blackmer. Were you subsequently fined or any charges  
19 brought against you?

20 Mr. Espinosa. No. I was taken to a prison and anyway I  
21 was released the next day.

22 Mr. Blackmer. Let us, if we can, deal with that incident  
23 specifically. Our records indicate that on June 15 of 1963,  
24 outside of Miami, you and four other individuals were stopped  
25 by Customs and FBI agents with a twin-engine beach craft

1 airplane that you were attempting to load with explosives and  
2 bombs for your intended mission, which was to bomb an oil  
3 refinery in Havana.

4       Could you tell us whose idea that operation emanated  
5 from?

6       Mr. Espinosa. From me.

7       Mr. Blackmer. It was your idea?

8       Mr. Espinosa. Yes.

9       Mr. Blackmer. Did you get any assistance from any other  
10 individual for the raid?

11       Mr. Espinosa. Yes, I got assistance from Carlos  
12 Hernandez, from Miguel Alvarez and that is the other kind of  
13 assistance you are asking for?

14       Mr. Blackmer. Financial or other?

15       Mr. Espinosa. Financial assistance from McLaney.

16       Mr. Blackmer. How much money did McLaney give you for  
17 this project?

18       Mr. Espinosa. I cannot recall. He gave us whatever we  
19 needed to buy the explosives and so on.

20       Mr. Blackmer. Who got the airplanes?

21       Mr. Espinosa. It was Sam Benton.

22       Mr. Blackmer. And how did you know Sam Benton?

23       Mr. Espinosa. I met him at McLaney's house several  
24 times.

25       Mr. Blackmer. How was he introduced?

1 Mr. Espinosa. You mean in what ---

2 Mr. Blackmer. What you understood to be his particular  
3 role.

4 Mr. Espinosa. He was like a friend of mine and a friend  
5 of Mike's and I guess Mike wanted him to front for him or be  
6 the one who got the airplane.

7 Mr. Blackmer. Did he have any specific knowledge of  
8 planes or munitions or anything of that nature to where he  
9 would be a person that you would go to get these things?

10 Mr. Espinosa. I wouldn't know that but I don't think so,  
11 and I wouldn't think so.

12 Mr. Blackmer. So, you think it was really Mike who  
13 secured the planes and used Sam as the front man.

14 Mr. Espinosa. No, I think Mike told him to get us what  
15 we wanted more or less and he got it.

16 Mr. Blackmer. Was it your understanding that Benton was  
17 connected with the government in any way, the U.S. government?

18 Mr. Espinosa. No, at no time did I believe he was  
19 connected with the U.S. Government.

20 Mr. Blackmer. And had Mike at any time to your knowledge  
21 been connected with the U.S. Government?

22 Mr. Espinosa. Not that I know of.

23 Mr. Blackmer. Where did you get the explosives that you  
24 were going to use?

25 Mr. Espinosa. I think we got them in Fort Lauderdale.

1 Mr. Blackmer. Did you personally get them or someone  
2 else got them?

3 Mr. Espinosa. I think Miguel Alvarez got them.

4 Mr. Blackmer. Can you tell us a little bit about what  
5 the plan was for this bombing raid?

6 Mr. Espinosa. Well, the plan was to try to get the  
7 refinery out of service or out of production so instead of  
8 bringing crude oil into the country and be refined in Cuba,  
9 they would have to bring in the gasoline. So, that would have  
10 made a very easy target for us in order to blow up the tankers  
11 or whatever vessels were used to bring in the gasoline.

12 Mr. Blackmer. Were you aware that any of these vessels  
13 that were carrying oil to Cuba may have been flying a Russian  
14 flag?

15 Mr. Espinosa. No, this was a hypothetical thing at the  
16 time.

17 Mr. Blackmer. It was not your intention at that time to  
18 provoke an incident between the U.S. and Russia?

19 Mr. Espinosa. No, that would have stopped us from  
20 blowing up the Russian ship.

21 Mr. Blackmer. So, you had some knowledge, I understand,  
22 of the particular oil refinery that you were going after?

23 Mr. Espinosa. Yes.

24 Mr. Blackmer. How did you acquire that knowledge?

25 Mr. Espinosa. Well, through a family businesses.

1 Mr. Blackmer. And what specifically was that business?

2 Mr. Espinosa. It was--there were industrial inspectors  
3 who used to inspect sugar refineries, alcohol and places where  
4 alcohol was being made and gasoline refineries, or oil  
5 refineries, et cetera.

6 Mr. Blackmer. And you had personally gone over this  
7 particular refinery?

8 Mr. Espinosa. Yes, as a younger man I used to go there  
9 with inspectors sometimes to make some pocket money or  
10 something.

11 Mr. Blackmer. A part-time job?

12 Mr. Espinosa. A part time job, yes.

13 Mr. Blackmer. Did you talk McLaney into financing this  
14 operation?

15 Mr. Espinosa. Yes.

16 Mr. Blackmer. And did you know what his particular  
17 interest was in seeing this operation successfully completed?

18 Mr. Espinosa. Well, I mean, first we have to say that if  
19 the operation was successful, perhaps we had a chance to  
20 economically cripple the country and consequently bring about  
21 a change in the politics. Of course, a change in the  
22 political situation at the time would have been a favorable  
23 change for Mr. McLaney's economics or business out there.

24 Mr. Blackmer. So, McLaney was personally interested in  
25 regaining some of his possessions in Cuba.

1 Mr. Espinosa. Yes, exactly like that.

2 Mr. Blackmer. Do you know if he was involved in any of  
3 the internal politics in Cuba in the sense--do you know if he  
4 was sponsoring any particular exile leaders who could possibly  
5 in the foreseeable future go back to Cuba and take over once  
6 Castro was eliminated?

7 Mr. Espinosa. I don't know that. I don't think so.

8 Mr. Blackmer. So, is it your opinion that Mr. McLaney  
9 was doing what little he could and hoping that others would do  
10 a little and add to the possible fall of the Castro regime?

11 Mr. Espinosa. Exactly.

12 Mr. Blackmer. In July of 1963 outside of New Orleans,  
13 Louisiana, a large catch of dynamite and home-made bombs were  
14 found in the home of Bill McLaney. Could you tell us what you  
15 know about that catch of arms that was discovered?

16 Mr. Espinosa. It was taken there by me and it was to be  
17 used in other raids.

18 Mr. Blackmer. A similar raid?

19 Mr. Espinosa. As the one that was in Cuba.

20 Mr. Blackmer. I understand that some of the people that  
21 participated with you in the June 15 attempt also participated  
22 with you in the July attempt.

23 Mr. Espinosa. Yes.

24 Mr. Blackmer. First of all, it is my understanding that  
25 you planned on using a B-25 or B-26 bomber.

1 Mr. Espinosa. Yes.

2 Mr. Blackmer. Was it the B-25 or B-26?

3 Mr. Espinosa. I cannot remember, one or the other.

4 Mr. Blackmer. Who was it that was to get the plane?

5 Mr. Espinosa. The plane was to be delivered to us over  
6 there.

7 Mr. Blackmer. At Pontchartrain?

8 Mr. Espinosa. Yes, and we were to go over there on the  
9 plane and take off.

10 Mr. Blackmer. Specifically, who was going to go on the  
11 actual flight?

12 Mr. Espinosa. It was going to be a pilot, whose name I  
13 can't remember right now.

14 Mr. Blackmer. Was it Antonio Soto Vasquez?

15 Mr. Espinosa. I am not sure; it could be.

16 Mr. Blackmer. Who else was to go on the plane?

17 Mr. Espinosa. There were only three people to go on the  
18 plane. It was going to be Antonio, if it was--I am not sure,  
19 and Miguel and myself or either Migual or Carlos Hernandez.

20 Mr. Blackmer. Was Sam Benton, once again, going to get  
21 you the plane?

22 Mr. Espinosa. No.

23 Mr. Blackmer. Who was going to get you the plane?

24 Mr. Espinosa. I have no idea. We were tried; the whole  
25 thing was departmentalized.



1 Mr. Blackmer. Whose responsibility was it, to your  
2 knowledge -- was it to get the plane?

3 Mr. Espinosa. Financial responsibility, you mean?

4 Mr. Blackmer. Financial responsibility.

5 Mr. Espinosa. It was Mike McLaney.

6 Mr. Blackmer. And to the best of your knowledge, Mike was  
7 going to make sure that the plane was at a specified location?

8 Mr. Espinosa. That is right.

9 Mr. Blackmer. And as to the pilot, did you take the  
10 pilot with you or was the pilot supposed to be there with the  
11 plane?

12 Mr. Espinosa. No. I went there first to that place, and  
13 then the guy who was going to go with the plane, Carlos  
14 Hernandez, came from Miami; and the pilot was supposed to meet  
15 us there once the plane was there or we knew the plane was  
16 coming, and he was going to fly from Miami to New Orleans.

17 Mr. Blackmer. The pilot didn't come with Carlos  
18 Hernandez?

19 Mr. Espinosa. No.

20 Mr. Blackmer. Do you know an individual named Lauchli  
21 from Colesville, Illinois?

22 Mr. Espinosa. Yes.

23 Mr. Blackmer. How did you come to know Lauchli?

24 Mr. Espinosa. Someone gave me his phone number, and I  
25 can't recall who did it by now, and I called him and I

1 inquired if I could go and see him and get some explosives and  
2 get some special detonators made for the bombs we were going  
3 to drop in the raid.

4 Mr. Blackmer. This individual that told you about him,  
5 what did the individual tell you about Luchli?

6 Mr. Espinosa. It was just the John Birch Society who had  
7 helped some of the Cubans and different officials before.

8 Mr. Blackmer. You telephoned this individual and met  
9 him, I assume, where?

10 Mr. Espinosa. At his place, at his house.

11 Mr. Blackmer. That was where?

12 Mr. Espinosa. In Colesville, Illinois.

13 Mr. Blackmer. Did you then go with him to pick up  
14 explosives?

15 Mr. Espinosa. First, we picked up the explosives but we  
16 left them at the place where he had them and then we went on  
17 for three or four days making the detonators which were made  
18 from the heads of 61 millimeter mortar shells or 60 millimeter  
19 mortar shells.

20 Mr. Blackmer. I assume Mr. Lauchli supplied all of the  
21 individual parts and you and Luchli together made the bombs?

22 Mr. Espinosa. We put them together and he had a very  
23 nice working room.

24 Mr. Blackmer. This was in Colesville, Illinois?

25 Mr. Espinosa. Yes.

1 Mr. Blackmer. And then did you subsequently take the  
2 bombs and munitions with you to New Orleans?

3 Mr. Espinosa. Yes.

4 Mr. Blackmer. When you went to New Orleans, where did  
5 you stay?

6 Mr. Espinosa. I stayed at McLaney's house.

7 Mr. Blackmer. The same cottage at Lake Pontchartrain?

8 Mr. Espinosa. Yes but let me say something first. I  
9 stayed the first night in a motel, and the next day I drove  
10 because I wasn't sure I could find a place at night and then  
11 the next day I drove over there.

12 Mr. Blackmer. Did you at any time contact Bill McLaney?

13 Mr. Espinosa. I can't recall if I did or not, I probably  
14 did.

15 Mr. Blackmer. Do you recall if someone else may  
16 have given you a key or was the door left open? In other  
17 words, what I am trying to establish is: Did Bill know about  
18 the whole operation?

19 Mr. Espinosa. I can't say for certain.

20 Mr. Blackmer. And you do not recall whether or not he  
21 physically came to the cottage where you were?

22 Mr. Espinosa. No.

23 Mr. Blackmer. Did you know anyone else in New Orleans at  
24 the time that you might have been in contact with?

25 Mr. Espinosa. No.

1 Mr. Blackmer. Did you know an individual by the name of  
2 Guy Bannister?

3 Mr. Espinosa. Not that I know of.

4 Mr. Blackmer. A former FBI agent and active, at the time,  
5 in New Orleans?

6 Mr. Espinosa. No.

7 Mr. Blackmer. Do you know, or have you ever heard of  
8 David Ferrie?

9 Mr. Espinosa. No.

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1 Mr. Blackmer. Are you familiar with an individual by the  
2 name of Carlos Marcello?

3 Mr. Espinosa. No.

4 Mr. Blackmer. Nick Popich?

5 Mr. Espinosa. No.

6 Mr. Blackmer. Peter Gurisco?

7 Mr. Espinosa. No.

8 Mr. Blackmer. After you arrived at Lake Pontchartrain, a  
9 day or so later, I assume Carlos Hernandez came and met you  
10 and I assume you went over the plan of the operation.

11 Mr. Espinosá. Yes.

12 Mr. Blackmer. Could you tell us at what point you  
13 decided against going on the operation?

14 Mr. Espinosa. Well, somehow the father of Fred Gill, who  
15 was going to arm the plane, died and subsequently we had to  
16 restructure and the guy had to go to Miami and shortly after  
17 the burial or something we found out he had been picked up by  
18 the FBI, so we had to call the operation off.

19 Mr. Blackmer. And at any time did you see the planes?

20 Mr. Espinosa. No.

21 Mr. Blackmer. After the operation was cancelled, where  
22 did you go?

23 Mr. Espinosa. I came to New York.

24 Mr. Blackmer. Did you contact McLaney?

25 Mr. Espinosa. Yes, I did.

1 Mr. Blackmer. And did you explain to him that the  
2 operation had been cancelled?

3 Mr. Espinosa. Yes, for the time being.

4 Mr. Blackmer. What was his reaction?

5 Mr. Espinosa. I explained it to him and I thought he was  
6 reasonable.

7 Mr. Blackmer. After the June 15th raid was stopped by the  
8 FBI, did you contact Mike McLaney?

9 Mr. Espinosa. Of course.

10 Mr. Blackmer. What was his reaction to that?

11 Mr. Espinosa. He was always a good gambler and he took  
12 things very philosophically.

13 Mr. Blackmer. Was he upset that the Federal Bureau of  
14 Investigation had, in essence, infiltrated the operation?

15 Mr. Espinosa. No.

16 Mr. Blackmer. Was he aware that someone in the operation  
17 had leaked the information to the FBI?

18 Mr. Espinosa. Yes, we told him.

19 Mr. Blackmer. What was his reaction to that?

20 Mr. Espinosa. We told him we wanted to kill the guy, but  
21 he said, "No, you shouldn't do that."

22 Mr. Blackmer. After your trip to New York and your  
23 contact with Mike McLaney, did you ever again propose a similar  
24 operation?

25 Mr. Espinosa. No.

1 Mr. Blackmer. Why was that?

2 Mr. Espinosa. Well, you get tired of failure.

3 Mr. Blackmer. Well, it was only twice at this time.

4 Mr. Espinosa. It is only twice, but up to five or six  
5 yers doing the same thing.

6 Mr. Blackmer. In 1962, there was a raid on a hotel in  
7 Havana, a shelling of a hotel in Havana by members of the  
8 DRE.

9 Mr. Espinosa. It was 1966.

10 Mr. Blackmer. No, 1962, by members of the DRE, which was  
11 an anti-Castro exile organization at the time.

12 Mr. Espinosa. Yes.

13 Mr. Blackmer. Were you familiar with that raid?

14 Mr. Espinosa. No.

15 Mr. Blackmer. Did you know that Carlos Hernandez was on  
16 that raid?

17 Mr. Espinosa. I have heard that he was, but I wasn't  
18 sure.

19 Mr. Blackmer. Did you know Manuel Salvat?

20 Mr. Espinosa. I can't recall.

21 Mr. Blackmer. Also on that raid was an individual named  
22 Udalia Mayar.

23 Did you ever hear of that individual?

24 Mr. Espinosa. I think so, yes.

25 Mr. Blackmer. And do you recall what you have heard

1 about that individual?

2 Mr. Espinosa. No.

3 Mr. Blackmer. Were you aware at any time of any  
4 organized crime efforts to sponsor similar raids similar to  
5 the one that you were on?

6 Mr. Espinosa. No.

7 Mr. Blackmer. When you were living in Havana and  
8 frequently in the Hotel Nacional, did you ever know an  
9 individual named Norman Rothman?

10 Mr. Espinosa. Yes.

11 Mr. Blackmer. What was the nature of your relationship  
12 with him?

13 Mr. Espinosa. I just saw him a couple of times; that is  
14 all.

15 Mr. Blackmer. Did you not in fact know his son?  
16

17 Mr. Espinosa. Yes.

18 Mr. Blackmer. And did you know his son in Havana or  
19 Miami?

20 Mr. Espinosa. I met him in Miami.

21 Mr. Blackmer. Was there a particular hotel or bar that  
22 you used to meet?

23 Mr. Espinosa. Yes, there was a bar in a hotel in Miami  
24 Beach. He used to have this bar, and I think we called him  
25 "Cappy," his nick-name, and we used to go quite often to his



1 bar.

2 Mr. Blackmer. And was the elder Rothman there on  
3 occasion?

4 Mr. Espinosa. Maybe a couple of times, yes.

5 Mr. Blackmer. But you had no specific association with  
6 the elder Rothman?

7 Mr. Espinosa. No.

8 Mr. Blackmer. And at no time did Norman Rothman have  
9 need of your services as far as implementing any clandestine  
10 activities?

11 Mr. Espinosa. No.

12 Mr. Blackmer. So, it was just Mike McLaney.

13 Mr. Espinosa. Yes.

14 Mr. Blackmer. Did you know an individual named Frank  
15 Bender?

16 Mr. Espinosa. I don't think so.

17 Mr. Blackmer. In Havana once again, did you have any  
18 contact with the American Embassy with respect to your  
19 underground activities?

20 Mr. Espinosa. No.

21 Mr. Blackmer. Did you know any individuals in your group  
22 who had connections with the American Embassy?

23 Mr. Espinosa. No.

24 Mr. Blackmer. Did you know whether or not your friend,  
25 Rolando Cubela, had any contact with the American Embassy?

1 Mr. Espinosa. No.

2 Mr. Blackmer. Did you have any contact with the Central  
3 Intelligence Agency in Havana?

4 Mr. Espinosa. Not many, but from a good friend of mine,  
5 yes.

6 Mr. Blackmer. Who was that?

7 Mr. Espinosa. Carlos Tepedino. I don't know for sure he  
8 was an agent.

9 Mr. Blackmer. Tepedino was a friend of Cubela, and he  
10 had contact with the CIA?

11 Mr. Espinosa. I cannot tell you for sure if he had  
12 contact with the CIA but this is what we all believed at the  
13 time.

14 Mr. Blackmer. Is there any individual that you may have  
15 suspected that he had contact with?

16 Mr. Espinosa. No.

17 Mr. Blackmer. Have you heard of an individual named  
18 David Phillips?

19 Mr. Espinosa. No.

20 Mr. Blackmer. Did you ever see Frank Sturgis at any of  
21 the gambling casinos in Havana?

22 Mr. Espinosa. No.

23 Mr. Blackmer. Were you aware of any of Frank Sturgis'  
24 activities with Fidel Castro prior to Castro's take-over?

25 Mr. Espinosa. No.

1 Mr. Blackmer. Do you know an individual named Gerald  
2 Patrick Hemming?

3 Mr. Espinosa. I think I met him once or twice in Miami.

4 Mr. Blackmer. And did you have any dealings with  
5 Hemming?

6 Mr. Espinosa. Nothing at all.

7 Mr. Blackmer. What did you know about Hemming?

8 Mr. Espinosa. Nothing. What we thought we knew about  
9 him is that he was always mixing with the Cubans that were  
10 trying to do something but the word was he was working for the  
11 FBI or CIA or somebody, and no one ever took him very  
12 seriously about anything or confided in him for anything.

13 Mr. Blackmer. Where were you on November 22, 1963?

14 Mr. Espinosa. That was the assassination?

15 Mr. Blackmer. Yes.

16 Mr. Espinosa. In New York.

17 Mr. Blackmer. When you learned of the assassination--and  
18 I assume you saw newspaper articles and television coverage of  
19 the assassination--did you recognize Lee Harvey Oswald as  
20 having seen him before?

21 Mr. Espinosa. No.

22 Mr. Blackmer. Had you heard anything after the  
23 assassination from any of your friends in the Cuban exile  
24 community that may have implicated any one of the old Cuban  
25 exiles in the assassination?

1 Mr. Espinosa. No, never.

2 Mr. Blackmer. After the Bay of Pigs, what was the  
3 reaction to him of the Cuban exiles that you knew? I am sure  
4 they were very disappointed and were many of them violently  
5 angry against Kennedy himself or the U.S. Government?

6 Mr. Espinosa. Not really against him, against the CIA  
7 mainly or against the government and not against Kennedy.

8 Mr. Blackmer. What was their general feeling as the  
9 cause of the failure of the Bay of Pigs?

10 Mr. Espinosa. The CIA.

11 Mr. Blackmer. How do you mean?

12 Mr. Espinosa. Well, should I go into this a little?

13 Mr. Blackmer. Yes, I think so.

14 Mr. Espinosa. When the question was risen by the pilots  
15 in Guatemala, if you are going to go to the Bay, go in with a  
16 B-25 or B-26. B-26, let us say, is a tactical bomber plane  
17 and now this kind of plane, if I remember, it has eight  
18 50-caliber machine guns in the nose and two in the tail and so  
19 on.

20 And in order for this plane to fly from Guatemala to Cuba  
21 and be able to have a feeder for 30 minutes operation in the  
22 area and bomb or machine gun for 30 minutes and come back to  
23 Guatemala, all of this ammunition and all of the machine guns  
24 have to be taken from the plane and put additional gasoline  
25 tanks in.

