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AMERICAN GAMBLing ACTIVITIES IN CUBA
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TO : DIRECTOR, FBI (92-2867)

DATE: 6/16/58

FROM : SAC, NEW YORK (92-886)

SUBJECT: AMERICAN GAMBLING ACTIVITIES IN CUBA
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① G.I.I.F.

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED
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(JFK)

Re NY letter to Bureau, 6/4/58.

On 4/19/58, PCI [redacted] furnished the following information to SA EDMUND FLANAGAN. When reporting this information, [redacted] identity should be protected and he should be described as contact with whom has been insufficient to determine his reliability. This information should be carefully paraphrased so as not to reveal identity.

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AMERICAN GAMBLING ACTIVITIES IN CUBA

Re Sans Souci

In June, 1957, [redacted] and WILLIAM P. BUCKNER, FBI #1652818, both of whom currently operate bingo games in the NYC area, went to Havana, Cuba, to operate the bingo concession in the gambling casino of the Sans Souci.

[redacted] stated the operation of the Sans Souci is controlled by SANTOS TRAFFICANTE with 60% interest; JOE STASSI, aka.; Joe Rogers, of New Jersey with 20% and a Cuban national, RAUL GONZALEZ with 20%. [redacted] added that GONZALEZ has close connections with the "muscle men" in Cuba.

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BUCKNER and he are considered experts in the operation of bingo and because of this were asked to operate the bingo game in the Sans Souci as this concession was consistently losing money.

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[redacted] stated the average attendance at the Sans Souci was small and 400 patrons a night was considered good.

- 4-Bureau
- 1-Miami (62-3398) (Info)
- 1-Salt Lake City (94-221) (Info)
- 1-New York (92-632) (Subj)
- 1-New York (92-886)

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To stimulate interest in bingo, [redacted] and BUCKNER offered as a door prize a mink stole. After considerable advertising regarding the door prize of the mink stole, 1600 people were in attendance the night it was given away at the casino of the Sans Souci.

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[redacted] added that the "wise guys" felt that this attendance was a "fluke." To show that they could keep the attendance high, [redacted] stated the holders of ticket stubs for the mink stole door prize were told that the stub was worth \$1.00 to play bingo on the following Monday evening. [redacted] explained that Monday was the worst night for attendance at the Sans Souci. On this Monday night, 1100 people were in attendance at the Sans Souci. As a result of this increased attendance and the promise that he and BUCKNER would supervise the entire gambling operation of the Sans Souci, they were to be given the concession of bingo.

[redacted] stated that because bingo consistently lost, he and BUCKNER did not feel that they could make any money. He stated that the bingo concession lost an average of \$22,000 a month. He and BUCKNER, therefore, proposed that they be given a percentage of the entire gambling operation of the Sans Souci. They pointed out that if \$22,000 was the average loss per month and they operated the concession in the future for say \$10,000 loss, they would in fact have made \$12,000 for the casino. If bingo, for a given month, would break even they would have made \$22,000 for the casino. They also pointed out that they could keep attendance high at bingo by offering door prizes, etc., and that the side games of "21, roulette and crap" would naturally profit from the added attendance.

As a result of the above and with the understanding that [redacted] and BUCKNER manage the entire operation of the Sans Souci, the breakdown was then to be:

TRAFFICANTE	40%
STASSI	20%
GONZALEZ	20%
[redacted] and BUCKNER	20%

[] stated that now that he represented 20% of the Sans Souci he was offered the opportunity to see the books and observe the overall operation of the casino. He stated that for a period of about two weeks, he watched the operation of "21, roulette and crap," giving particular interest and attention to the security of the money to make sure "No one was taking off the top."

He added that during the course of his observation of the casino he talked to the cashier, a Cuban national who said the "bank" for the Sans Souci was about \$400,000. On closer scrutiny of the books, however, he determined that the actual cash on hand was \$16,000 and the remainder of the \$400,000 was in I.O.U.'s and checks "dated from the year 1", which he considered worthless. He said that because of the above and the following incident, he and BUCKNER left Cuba and returned to the US.

[] stated that he was in Cuba the last four or five days in June, 1957; for about eight or ten days in July, 1957, and from mid-September to the end of October, 1957. During this time, [] stated he never received any money, paid for his own expenses and did not put any money into the operation of the Sans Souci.

[] said the main reason he left the Sans Souci and Cuba and returned to the US was the result of the small bank and the following:

He explained that slot machines were illegal in Cuba but that all casinos, hotels, etc. have a large number of slot machines. He states this was possible because a relative of Cuban President BATISTA, who [] believed was BATISTA's brother, had control of all these slot machines. He stated that the relative of BATISTA got 50% of the "take" from the machines and the remaining 50% went to the casino or hotel where the machines were located.

He said that on one occasion he witnessed

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the "BATISTA people" taking money from the machines located in the Sans Souci and witnessed the counting of it. The total take from these machines was \$11,000-\$5,500 to the "BATISTA people" and \$5,500 for the Sans Souci. He said the \$5,500 for the Sans Souci was taken to SANTOS TRAFFICANTE's office but that when the figure was entered in on the books, it was \$2,700 and not \$5,500. [] added that you could not ask anyone about this discrepancy "because for this you could get killed, better you get out and go home."

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[] requested that the information concerning the discrepancy in the take from the slot machines be kept in strict confidence.

[] stated that from what he observed at the Sans Souci and the knowledge he obtained from looking over the books of the casino, that the entire operation is losing from \$18,000 to \$33,000 a month. He stated that on thinking it over, he felt that Sans Souci "must be a drop or something, maybe junk." When questioned about the latter statement, he said, "This is strictly guess work. It does not figure that a joint would stay open just to lose money."

Re SANTOS TRAFFICANTE

[] stated that ~~SANTOS~~ TRAFFICANTE, who also used the name, LUIS ~~SANTOS~~, gets most of his money from the "Bolita" game in Tampa, Florida. He added that no Americans, to his knowledge, are in the numbers game in Cuba as the operator of the game there gets only about 1% interest on his bank while in the US the average operator gets 4% interest on his bank.

FLA

CUBA

BORN IN ITALY

Concerning TRAFFICANTE's interest in the Sans Souci, [] stated he believed he has some interest, but "fronts" for others for the total 40% or 50% that he represents. [] went on to say that TRAFFICANTE "is not too bright." He stated that when he read in the NY newspapers concerning the Apalachin, NY, meeting 11/14/57, and read that one LUIS SANTOS ran into the woods, he felt that this individual was in fact TRAFFICANTE.

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He stated "this shows the mental capacity of this character. Why run? Why use a phony name?" He stated that TRAFFICANTE spoke with a slight accent and he felt that TRAFFICANTE was born in Italy. He said also that TRAFFICANTE "spoke Spanish like a native."

[redacted] stated that besides his interest in the Sans Souci, TRAFFICANTE also has a percentage of the Deauville, a small gambling casino in Havana.

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Re DINO CELLINI

[redacted] stated that he felt TRAFFICANTE was a front man for others at the San Souci because DINO CELLINI did most of the talking for TRAFFICANTE concerning this casino. He stated CELLINI is one of the main "fronts" in Cuban gambling in that he talks for TRAFFICANTE at the Sans Souci, is Night Manager of the casino and the Hotel Riviera and runs a school for Cuban dealers.

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He said CELLINI originally came out of the Midwest, possibly Cleveland or Cincinnati, Ohio, and has been in Cuba for 8 or 10 years. Prior to his coming to Cuba, CELLINI operated a "gambling joint" in Washington, D.C. [redacted] stated he believed CELLINI was in trouble in Washington, D.C., "I think over a shooting." He added that CELLINI has never been back to the United States and feels that it is because of the trouble in Washington, D.C. He said CELLINI's wife, his brother and his mother are all in Cuba and all with the exception of CELLINI come to the US occasionally. He added CELLINI's wife makes the most frequent trips.

Re JOE STASSI, wa., Joe Rogers

STASSI, as reported above, had 25% interest in the Sans Souci and later 20% interest (while BUCKNER and [redacted] had 20%). He said STASSI, who comes from New Jersey, was never seen by him while he was at the Sans Souci.

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[redacted] stated STASSI's son, JOE STASSI, Jr. who is about 18 years old, watched out for his father's interest in Sans Souci. He said the younger STASSI was either a "stick man or dealer."

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[] explained that if a person puts money in a place like the Sans Souci, he is entitled to put one or two people on the casino payroll. These people could be anyone, porters, bartenders, dealers, etc., who are on the spot to protect the investment and available should a decision have to be made concerning the operation.

Re ~~MEYER~~ LANSKY

One of the big money men in Cuban gambling. [] stated that he has a big interest in the gambling at the Hotel Riviera and Hotel Nacional. His brother, JACK LANSKY, is Manager of gambling at the Hotel Nacional.

Re ~~JOE~~ SILESI, wa., Joe Rivers

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[] stated that the above-captioned individual is in Havana and is tied in with the gambling interest.

Re ~~FRANK~~ ERICKSON

[] stated that ERICKSON has a lot to say about the operation of the casino at the Hotel Riviera. [] stated he heard it rumored that ERICKSON has a one million dollar interest in this hotel.

CUBA

Re ~~NICHOLAS~~ DI CONTANZO

[] stated that "NICK", aka., "Fat the Butch" from Yonkers, NY, is in Havana and is tied in with the gambling interest. He stated that "Fat the Butch" ran a crap game for 14 years in a club in Harlem. Former Mayor LAGUARDIA belonged to this same club.

CUBA

OTHER INFORMATION FURNISHED
BY [] ON 4/19/58

Re ~~NICHOLAS~~ RATTENI

CUBA

[] stated that NICK RATTENI, aka., Nick Perry (ph) told him that he, RATTENI, heard the FBI was making inquiry about his past association with VINCENT RAO. []

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stated RATTENI operates a garbage carting service in Yonkers, RATTENI, according to [] is worried about the FBI inquiry and stated that RATTENI could not understand why the FBI was interested in him as he hasn't done anything illegal.

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Re GERARDO CATENA

[] stated he knew captioned individual as JERRY CATENA who owns the Runyon Sales Co. of New York and New Jersey with another individual by the name of (FNU) GREEN.

[] stated that this company sells juke boxes. He added that CATENA knows the FBI is interested in his activities and is worried about the FBI inquiry.

Re De Feo Cadillac Agency

[] stated this Cadillac agency, in either Yonkers or White Plains, has sold Cadillacs to several "characters." [] stated he heard that the FBI was asking De Feo for all background information concerning these "characters," including the serial and motor number of the automobile sold, credit information including the credit references given.

NY 1894-C during contacts April 7-14, 1958, advised SA THOMAS J. EMERY that he and a shylock friend of his, JIMMY COLLANZA (ph) had been at Local 1804, ILA, to see HENRY "BUSTER" BELL recently and BELL remarked that he had just returned from a trip to Cuba and Panama, supposedly on ILA business. BELL mentioned something about his union's plan to back a construction project in Panama in which about 15,000 housing units are to be built. BELL did not elaborate on this and the informant stated he is not aware exactly how this union fits into the Panama project.

CUBA

Informant advised that while in BELL's office at Local 1804 on South Street, NYC, BELL introduced them to a Cuban referred to only as Mr. "BOSQUE", who in ensuing conversation indicated he was one of BATISTA's

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top men, and was the one who was instrumental in getting MEYER LANSKY and LEFTY CLARK (true name WILLIAM BISCHOFF) nationally known gamblers, and top hoodlums, into Havana casinos. This individual remarked to COLLANZO (ph) and informant, that this "trouble", referring to the current revolt in Cuba, would be over by next tourist season, and that plans are being made to open several new casinos, and make Havana the biggest gambling center in the world. This Cuban stated that new casinos will not necessarily be connected directly with hotels, and that there will be a yearly license fee of about \$100,000 to operate such a casino.

Informant was not aware of this individual's business with BELL, and knew only that he was supposed to be staying at the President Hotel, NYC, under the above name, "BOSQUE."

The following informants in the NY area have been contacted for any information they might have regarding Cuban gambling activities with negative results.

NY 889-C was contacted by SA HOWARD C. LA DUKE on 2/28/58.

NY 211-C was contacted by SA STEPHEN L. HALPIN on 3/14/58.

NY 2227-C was contacted by SA THOMAS T. MC SHANE on 5/8/58.

NY 1170-C ^{was} contacted by SA LEON KELMER on 4/25/58.

NY 1763-C was contacted by SA JAMES T. MC SHANE on 5/8/58.

Investigation in NY is continuing to develop the identity of subscribers of telephone contacts made by WILBUR CLARK, ALLARD ROEN and T.J. MC GINTY when they were staying in NY hotels during first week of May, 1958.

Extra copies of this letter are being submitted to Bureau for forwarding to Legat, Havana and information copies are disseminated for the Miami and Salt Lake City offices in view of the interest of these offices in this matter. P.