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Office Memorandum • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

TO : Director, FBI
FROM : Legat, Havana (64-153)
SUBJECT: AMERICAN GAMBLING ACTIVITIES IN CUBA
ANTI-RACKETEERING

CONFIDENTIAL

DATE: December 29, 1958

DECLASSIFIED BY SP8 mac/ude
ON 8-29-94

Reference Havana letters August 27, and September 8, 1958, and Miami teletype of October 23, 1958, transmitting information received from Legat, Havana.

Set forth below is additional information which has come to the attention of the Legat, Havana, concerning the activities and interests of American gamblers in Cuba:

GENERAL INFORMATION:

AND FIELD OFFICES ADVISED BY ROUTING SLIP(S) OF DATE 1-4-88

The disturbed political situation in Cuba and the resulting decrease in tourism has had a severe affect in recent months on the gambling casinos in Havana. Most of the casinos are barely breaking even. It is apparent, however, that American gamblers continue to have an optimistic long-range view concerning the eventual success of gambling casinos in Cuba. In recent months on the occasions when gamblers have sold interests in casinos, there has apparently been a number of other gamblers interested in buying these interests. In addition, the Legat, Havana, continues to receive information indicating that other gamblers in the United States are planning to invest in and construct more casinos in Cuba as soon as the political situation stabilizes.

On 9/29/58, T. James Ennis, manager of the Hotel Havana-Riviera, advised that he was informed by a Florida hotel manager named (FNU) VON HAGEN that VON HAGEN was interested in setting up an island-wide punch board operation in Cuba. VON HAGEN stated that PILAR GARCIA, Chief, Cuban National Police, had indicated that he would allow such an operation if given a percentage.

On 12/18/58, [redacted] informed that a new gambling casino of small size called The Colony would shortly open up on the Isle of Pines, Cuba, and that this casino would be operated by an individual named BEN FINNEY and another individual named PHIL SCHAEFER.

[redacted] also informed that an individual named STANLEY SPENSKY, who formerly owned a number of houses of prostitution and slot machines in Steubenville, Ohio, had just been released from prison where he had been "doing time for murder" and was in Havana looking for a gambling operation in which he could invest money.

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED EXCEPT WHERE SHOWN OTHERWISE
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[On 11/18/58, HAV-4] ^(u) advised that an individual named SCHWARTZ who formerly worked for FRANK COSTELLO, was attempting to establish a gambling casino with another unknown American in the terminal building of the Rancho Boyeros Airport. This SCHWARTZ is believed to be identical with JOHN SCHWARTZ who, in the past, has been reported as checking on gambling opportunities in Cuba and who is reputed to have been a "front man" for FRANK COSTELLO.

On 12/5/58, HAV-33 informed that a gambling casino called Casino del Rio was being constructed on the Rancho Boyeros highway on the outskirts of Havana. Source stated that it appeared this casino would be solely a Cuban operation.

[On 12/9/58, HAV-4] ^(u) advised that contact with airport employees at Rancho Boyeros Airport indicated a gambling casino would definitely occupy part of the new building being constructed at the airport. ^(u)

On 12/19/58, HAV-33 advised that in addition to the casino to be constructed at the Rancho Boyeros Airport, there were also indications that a gambling casino would be placed in the Hotel Copacabana, Havana, Cuba. Source stated that FREDESVINDO BOSQUE CUETO, FBI #420934, is the Cuban fronting for the casino at Rancho Boyeros Airport and an individual named STANLEY WIEDNER is the individual promoting a casino for the Hotel Copacabana. ^{Cuba}

On 11/26/58, Mr. James E. Brown, Jr., Consul General, American Embassy, Havana, advised that inquiry concerning CLIFFORD A. JONES had been received from the Haitian Embassy in Havana. CLIFFORD A. JONES is the former Lieutenant Governor of Nevada who has an interest in the gambling casino at the Hotel Havana-Hilton. Mr. Brown indicated that it appeared possible that JONES was attempting to establish a gambling operation in Haiti. ^{Cuba Nev.}

CASINOS IN OPERATION:

The following are the major casinos operating in Havana:

HOTEL NACIONAL GAMBLING CASINO: ^{Havana, Cuba}

On 9/3/58, HAV-31 advised that AMBROSE JOSEPH TRUPPA, FBI #136412A, aka TOMMY AMBROSE, had been employed in the gambling casino at the Hotel Nacional. Source said that TRUPPA is a cousin of JOHNNY STOMPANATO who was killed by CHERYL CRANE, the daughter of LANA TURNER.

On 10/2/58, the English language newspaper, "The Times of Havana," carried an article stating that MIKE McLANEY of New York and Miami had purchased the gambling casino in the Hotel Nacional. ^{Fla Cuba}

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Cuba

CUBA
On 10/2/58, HAV-31 advised that MIKE and WILLIAM MCLANEY had completed the purchase of the Nacional gambling casino. Source indicated that the new manager of the casino is CHARLES SCHWARTZ and that "REDS" MACE would be the day boss and JOE MORISI the night boss.

On 10/22/58, HAV-31 informed that SCHWARTZ and MORISI were departing Havana the next day for the United States. Source indicated that both were scheduled for a court appearance on 10/27/58, in connection with gambling arrests in Atlantic City, New Jersey, on 9/9/58.

On 10/20/58, Tom Kelley, resident manager of the Hotel Nacional (conceal), informed that LOU CHESTER, a Toronto stockbroker, is "bank-rolling" MIKE MCLANEY in the gambling casino in the Hotel Nacional. *Canada Cuba*

CUBA
On 11/26/58, HAV-31 informed that the following individuals have interests in the gambling casino at the Hotel Nacional: WILLIAM O'BRIEN, HERMAN "STUMPY" AORMAN, CHARLES SCHWARTZ, CHARLES MYERSON, Hillsdale, New Jersey, and MIKE MCLANEY. Source stated further that the following three individuals have been brought in by the new group of interest holders to work in the casino and might also have interests in it: FRED MASUCCI, VINCENT GEPP, Belmar, New Jersey, and NATHAN "COASTY" HOBERMAN. *CUBA*

On 10/29/58, HAV-31 informed that ANTHONY RANDAZZO, Dade County Sheriff's Office No. 179194, had been in the Hotel Nacional in the company of other individuals using the names of MILANO and LOMBARDI. [On 11/7/58, HAV-4 informed that DOMINICK DONARDO, CARMEN MILANO and PETER MILANO arrived in Havana on 10/29/58, via Pan American Airways from Miami, Florida. Source said they stayed at the Havana-Hilton Hotel and indicated they were from Cleveland, Ohio. HAV-4 informed that they departed Havana on 10/30/58, via Pan American Airways, flight 418, for Miami. Source noted that an individual using the name CARL KOVENS accompanied them.] (S)(u) *Cuba*

HOTEL CAPRI CASINO:

HAVANA CUBA
On 10/20/58, PCI Arthur Newman (conceal), credit manager of the Hotel Nacional gambling casino, informed that WILLIAM GUSTO BISCHOFF, with alias LEFTY CLARK (Miami Top Hoodlum) had quit his job as manager of the gambling casino at the Tropicana Night Club and had purchased a piece of the "money game" in the Hotel Capri casino.

On 10/22/58, HAV-31 informed that EDWARD DI FEDERICO helps protect the interests of NICHOLAS DI COSTANZO in the Hotel Capri casino. Source stated that DI COSTANZO is considered by gamblers in Havana to be "FRANK ERICKSON's boy." DI COSTANZO, together with CHARLES TOURINE, with alias CHARLES WHITE (Miami Top Hoodlum) are considered the leading figures among a large group of interest holders in the Capri casino.

On 10/31/58, HAV-33 informed that ANTHONY WILLIAMS, the brother of Boston Top Hoodlum JOHN WILLIAMS, is employed as an inspector in the Hotel Capri gambling casino. *CUBA*

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On 10/13/58, Bertin Perez, manager of the Hotel Capri, advised that the following individuals were staying in the hotel and that he believed these individuals to be associates of JOHN WILLIAMS: DOMINICK BRAMANTE, J. L. DI BLAZI, SALVATORE SPINALO, all of Boston, Massachusetts.

On 11/7/58, HAV-33 informed that WILLIAM GUSTO BISCHOFF has the "money game" (a craps game) at the Hotel Capri casino.

On 11/21/58, HAV-33 informed that on 11/17/58, He had observed ANTHONY STASSI, with alias TONY ROGERS, in the gambling casino at the Hotel Capri. STASSI is the brother of JOE STASSI, partner of SANTO TRAFFICANTE (Miami Top Hoodlum) in the Sans Souci Night Club.

HOTEL HAVANA-RIVIERA CASINO: *Havana, Cuba*

On 8/26/58, T. James Ennis, mentioned above, advised that DANIEL J. PASSARIELLO and ANTHONY M. PASSARIELLO had registered at the Hotel Havana-Riviera on 8/8/58. They both gave a home address of 624 Robinson Terrace, Union, New Jersey. Their reservations were taken by assistant manager Pinto, who works for the gambling casino, and their accommodations were paid for by IRVING FELDMAN, one of the interest holders in the casino in the hotel.

On 8/21/58, Mr. Ennis informed that VINCENT ~~ALO~~ stayed at the Riviera from August 3 to August 5, 1958. His bill was paid for by the gambling casino.

On 10/2/58, HAV-31 informed that JACK LANSKY (Miami Top Hoodlum) who had formerly managed the gambling casino at the Hotel Nacional had become manager of the gambling casino at the Hotel Havana-Riviera as a result of the sale of the Nacional gambling casino. Source noted that EDWARD CELLINI, who had worked as night boss for LANSKY at the Nacional, would go with him to the Riviera.

On 11/25/58, HAV-33 informed that MEYER LANSKY, HARRY SMITH and other individuals who had interests in the casino at the Hotel Havana-Riviera, had held a meeting concerning gambling operations there. Source was unable to furnish further details concerning the meeting.

On 12/5/58, HAV-33 verified that JACK LANSKY is managing the casino at the Hotel Havana-Riviera.

On 12/3/58, HAV-31 informed that the following individuals are known to have interests in the Hotel Havana-Riviera casino: MEYER LANSKY, HARRY and BEN SMITH, IRVING FELDMAN, SANTO TRAFFICANTE and DINO CELLINI.

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On 12/9/58, Neil Walsh, assistant manager, Hotel Riviera, advised that CHARLES BARON, an interest holder in the Tropicana in Las Vegas, Nevada, had recently purchased a substantial interest in the Havana-Riviera Hotel and gambling casino. BARON reportedly purchased the interests of HARRY and BEN SMITH. On 12/18/58, HAV-31 informed that BARON was a well known automobile dealer in Chicago, Illinois.

HOTEL DEAUVILLE CASINO: Havana, Cuba

CUBA The principal interest holders in the Deauville casino continue to be SANTO TRAFFICANTE and EVARISTO GARCIA, a Cuban "bolita" banker. On 9/9/58, PCI Alberto Suarez Aleman (conceal) advised that HENRY RUBINO, the manager of the Deauville Casino, and SANTO TRAFFICANTE had a dispute and as a result RUBINO had quit his job.

CUBA On 10/28/58, PCI Arthur Newman advised that the rental cost of the Deauville casino is one of the lowest in Havana, only \$65,000 a year.

CUBA On 12/11/58, Albert Vaughan, INS representative in Havana, informed that FRANK CAMMARATA, who recently completed serving a sentence in Michigan State Penitentiary, had been arrested by the Cuban police at the Hotel Deauville. At the time of arrest he was rooming with PETER A. FERRARI, FBI #733656. Mr. Vaughan indicated that it appeared CAMMARATA would be deported by the Cuban Government as an undesirable.

CUBA On 12/19/58, HAV-33 informed that MILO BELL appears to be the manager of the Deauville casino for SANTO TRAFFICANTE.

On 12/18/58, HAV-31 informed that JOHN WILLIAMS, mentioned above, had purchased an interest in the Deauville casino.

HOTEL ST. JOHNS CASINO: Havana, Cuba

CUBA On 12/3/58, HAV-31 informed that the following individuals are known to have interests in the St. Johns casino: ANGEL GONZALEZ GONZALEZ, CALEEL SIMON, EDWARD CELLINI and JOHN WILLIAMS. Source noted further that SANTO TRAFFICANTE has a hidden interest in this casino and that his interest is protected by GONZALEZ.

On 10/31/58, HAV-33 informed that he had received information that the following additional Cubans also had interests in the St. Johns casino: ENRIQUE LUJAN, MIGUEL GARCIA, and CARLOS LOMBARDIA. Source stated that all the interest holders had invested \$30,000 each in this operation.

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On 11/21/58, HAV-33 informed that JOHN WILLIAMS has all his investment in the craps table at the St. Johns casino and that an individual named ~~STANLEY MOAK~~ is operating the table for him.

HOTEL PLAZA CASINO:

CUBA
Havana, Cuba
On 11/19/58, HAV-31 informed that an individual named FRANK BYRD is reputed to have a substantial interest in the gambling casino in the Hotel Plaza. Source noted that ~~JOE STASSI~~, FBI #559327, has at least 50% of this casino. Source noted that the casino was closed down by the Cuban Army Military Intelligence Service (SIM) on 11/19/58, and that STASSI's son had been arrested by SIM. Source stated it appeared that ~~IRENALDO GARCIA BAEZ~~, chief of SIM, was attempting to "shake down" the casino operators. Source noted that ~~AMLETTO BATISTI~~, Cuban Congressman and owner of the Hotel Sevilla-Biltmore casino, had been feeling the competition from the Plaza casino and might have used his political influence to cause the closing of the Plaza casino by SIM.

CUBA
On 11/21/58, HAV-33 informed that the following individuals had been observed in the casino at the Hotel Plaza: ~~JOE STASSI~~, ~~GEORGE LEVINE~~, ~~JACK FREIDLANDER~~, ~~FRANK GENTILE~~, ~~GEORGE SHERMAN~~, ~~MILTON SEID~~, and ~~ANTHONY STASSI~~. On 12/5/58, HAV-33 advised that the operators of the Plaza casino had "made a deal" with SIM and that they were operating smoothly.

CUBA
On 11/26/58, PCI Arthur Newman stated that ~~JOE STASSI~~ and ~~GEORGE SHERMAN~~ have substantial interests in the Hotel Plaza gambling casino. Source noted that the PLAZA was doing well as a "sawdust joint" although initially the operators of the casino had made a mistake in not taking in some Cuban interest holders. Source noted as a result in the beginning the casino had had no local protection and had been hounded by the police for "shake down" money until agreements with local law enforcement officials were reached.

On 12/3/58, HAV-31 informed that the following are some of the individuals with interests in the gambling casino at the Hotel Plaza: ~~FRANK BYRD~~, ~~JOE STASSI~~, ~~ROBERT "MUSCLES" MARTIN~~, ~~GEORGE SHERMAN~~, ~~PETE SARNO~~, ~~MILTON SEID~~ and ~~FRANK GENTILE~~. On 12/18/58, HAV-31 informed that ~~JOHN WILLIAMS~~ (Boston Top Hoodlum) has an interest in the Plaza casino. Source noted that ~~JACK FREIDLANDER~~ is also an interest holder in the casino.

HOTEL HAVANA-HILTON CASINO:

CUBA
Havana, Cuba
HAV-31 advised on 11/19/58, that ~~CHARLES BRUDNER~~, with alias ~~Charlie Broad~~, is now the biggest single interest holder in the Havana-Hilton casino with an interest of 25%.

CUBA
On 12/5/58, HAV-33 informed that ~~JOE SILESI~~ (New York Top Hoodlum) continues to manage the gambling casino in the Hotel Havana-Hilton with the assistance of ~~LARRY SNOLSKY~~.

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On 12/3/58, HAV-31 informed that the following individuals were considered to be the principal interest holders in the gambling casino at the Havana-Hilton Hotel: CHARLES BRUDNER, FRANK "RED" REED, ROBERTO MENDOZA, JOE SILESI, RAUL GONZALEZ and SANTO TRAFFICANTE. CUBA

On 12/19/58, HAV-33 informed that SILESI is frequently seen in the Havana-Hilton casino in the company of his wife, ANNA.

HOTEL COMODORO CASINO:Havana, Cuba

On 8/23/58, HAV-4 informed that RALPH REINA was acting as manager of the gambling casino at the Hotel Comodoro. Source stated that the principal interest holder in this casino is SANTO TRAFFICANTE. (u) (S)

On 9/24/58, HAV-31 informed that an individual named "SAL" had replaced RALPH REINA as manager of the gambling casino in the Hotel Comodoro. Source noted that "SAL" had been installed by SANTO TRAFFICANTE. Source said that the following three employees had been released from the casino by "SAL": TOMMY "GAGS" GAGLIANO, JOSEPH TAMBURRO and JERRY MICHAELS. Source said that these individuals had indicated that TRAFFICANTE had made "SAL" manager of the casino because "that is what SANTO will do for you if you kill ANASTASIA." Source noted that he was disinclined to believe that "SAL" had anything to do with ANASTASIA's murder. CUBA

On 9/21/58, HAV-33 informed that SALVATORE SCALIA is the manager of the casino in the Hotel Comodoro and that he is a close friend of one RAFAEL COLLARES, a member of the Cuban Secret Police. Source noted that RALPH REINA had left for the United States. CUBA

On 11/21/58, HAV-33 informed that SALVATORE SCALIA had recently shot his own girlfriend. Source said that because of resulting bad publicity SANTO TRAFFICANTE had removed SCALIA from his job as manager of the Comodoro casino. On 12/5/58, HAV-33 informed that BENNY FERNANDEZ is the new manager of the Comodoro casino. Source noted that FERNANDEZ was reportedly born in Italy and later went to New York where he was associated with the Italian element. Source said that subsequently FERNANDEZ went to Florida where he worked with associates of SANTO TRAFFICANTE. Source noted that FERNANDEZ is residing in room 306 at the Hotel Comodoro. CUBA

On 12/18/58, HAV-31 informed that FERNANDEZ is a gambler from Tampa, Florida, that he at one time worked in a furniture store in Washington, D. C., and that there were indications he would marry a girl named BERMAN from Washington, D. C.

In connection with SALVATORE SCALIA, information was received by the Legat, Havana, that on 11/14/58, SCALIA was arrested by Cuban police in connection with the shooting of a Cuban girl reported to be SCALIA's mistress. [HAV-32 has advised that subsequent to SCALIA's] (u) (S)

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and Trust Company, East Hill Branch, Rosselyn, New York. MEDINA said LEVINE had the \$20,000 in two paper bags. MEDINA stated further that LEVINE had \$10,000 or \$15,000 worth of checks in another paper bag which he wanted cashed but that MEDINA refused to handle either transaction. MEDINA said in view of the fact that LEVINE is presently being sued by persons owning the Oriental Park Race Track, it was possible he was trying to sneak some of the assets of the track out of Cuba. According to source, LEVINE claimed that KEILLY had been arrested and needed the \$20,000 to make bond.

The December 10, 1958, edition of "Informacion," a Cuban Spanish language newspaper, contained an article indicating that MILTON WYNNE had purchased an interest in the Oriental Park Race Track and would operate it as a partner with GEORGE LEVINE. According to the article, WYNNE had previously been legal representative for the Belmont Park Race Track in New York and had subsequently been associated with horse racing in Puerto Rico.

LAS VEGAS NIGHT CLUB CASINO:

Havana, Cuba

On 9/26/58, HAV-33 informed that LUCIEN RIVARD had Cuba previously been one of the owners of the Las Vegas Night Club located at Infanta and 25th Streets in Havana. Source stated, however, that in May, 1958, RIVARD had sold his interest in this night club and had left Cuba. Source said there was no indication that he had yet returned.

Extra copies of this letter have been prepared for forwarding by the Bureau to the following offices as indicated:

- New York (2)
- Albany (1)
- Miami (2)
- Cleveland (1)
- Salt Lake City (1)
- Newark (1)
- Cincinnati (1)
- Boston (1)

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