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OLC 79-0113/21
14 March 1979

MEMORANDUM FOR: Jack Sullivan, OS
Dick Rininger, OGC
William Sturbitts, LA/DEO
Russ Holmes

FROM : S. D. Breckinridge
Principal Coordinator, HSCA

SUBJECT : Draft HSCA Report

1. It is requested that you review the attached comments on the HSCA draft about "The Evolution and Implications of the CIA-Sponsored Assassination Conspiracies" and be prepared to discuss them at a meeting in my conference room at 10:00 a.m. Friday.

2. Practically all of the information in this draft has appeared in one form or another in the Church Committee's interim assassination report and in Book V of its final report.

3. You will note that I did not itemize every appearance of the names of O'Connell, Orta, Varona, or Cubala. I hope this will not be necessary in our communication with the Committee as it would take pages just to list them.

S. D. Breckinridge
S. D. Breckinridge

Attachment

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Comments

I have read the draft report on the "CIA-Sponsored Assassination Conspiracies." This is my preliminary reaction.

Page 3. Insert the word "late" before the date 1960, sixth line from the bottom.

Page 3. Last sentence should read: "CIA records indicate that the operation was inactive from April 1961 until April 1962."

Page 4. Delete "James 'Big Jim' O'Connell" and replace with the word "Chief" and where O'Connell's name appears throughout the draft from thereon it should be replaced by "the Official Support Chief."

Page 4. The next to the last paragraph. The word "recruited" should be replaced by the word "contacted".

Page 4. Last paragraph, third line from bottom. The word "contends" should be replaced by the word "reporting".

Page 5. Delete the name of Juan Orta where it appears at the top of the page. Wherever his name appears thereafter in the report it should be referred to as "the senior Cuban official".

Page 5. Varona should be described here and wherever it appears as "the Cuban exile leader". Where it appears frequently this can be detracted to a reference as "the exile leader".

Page 6. Change last sentence to commence as follows: "The 1967 IGR noted that...." I am inclined to not take issue with the use of the word "admitted" in the second line of the last paragraph; it is an argument word and we volunteered it on our own as an assertion not an admission.

Page 7. End of the first complete paragraph. Substitute word "operation" for the word "plots".

Page 8. Paragraph ending at top of the page, next to last line. Just who did what for whom is uncertain but I am not inclined to take issue with the word "probably".

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Page 11. Fifth line from bottom. Insert word "unsuccessfully" after "Harvey subsequently attempted...."

Page 12. Twelfth line from bottom, Insert year "1967" before the name of Ed Morgan.

Page 14. Second sentence should be rephrased as follows: "This report detailed the accounts of various CIA plans and operations against Castro...."

Page 15. OGC please check what we did about INS deportation proceedings.

Page 16. Delete that portion of the last sentence of the first paragraph that reads as follows: "...on-going plots against the revolutionary government in Cuba and its...." The main thrust of the SSC report had to do with plotting against Castro and this tends to shift the emphasis to a broader range than the SSC report really supports.

Page 17. Second sentence, first complete paragraph. While it is correct to summarize the SSC report as stated, the SSC report is incorrect, and we should so note.

Page 17. Last paragraph. There was no "ripple effect". Nobody paid any attention to the SSC report after the first few days. It was quite some time afterwards, on a time-available basis that the CIA Task Force took up the problem. In any event, it was not intended to "answer" the SSC report in the usual sense of the word so much as it was intended to research the general problem. We did not know what we would find.

Page 18. The subparagraph (1), second line. The word "assassination" should be put in quotation marks.

Page 18. Fifth to the last line. TFR for IGR.

Page 19. Fifth line. "Operative" for "operation".

Page 21. Next to last line. TFR for IGR.

Page 23. Top paragraph. The reason there was no contact with AMLASH for a year preceding from 1962 to 1963 was that he was in Cuba.

Page 23. Next to last line right in middle paragraph. CIA did not say that any dispute was in the eyes of the SSC only.

Page 24. Second paragraph, first line. Substitute "cabled" for "called".

Page 24. Second paragraph, ninth line. Substitute TFR for CIA.

The HSCA draft is imprecise in this treatment. The task force report gave a rather detailed recitation of what AMLASH was told as to the basis for its view, and why Book V of the SSC report with AMLASH's action was uncertain the Task Force report made it clear that his reaction as to what he was told was exactly the same as the CIA record of what he was told. We should make this point.

Page 26. Fourth line in the quotation at the top of the page. Substitute the word "reinforce" for the word "re-inform".

Page 32. While the names of O'Connell and Orta appear in other pages in the draft, they appear here and should be deleted.

Page 34. Remove the "s" from the CIA Inspector General Reports.

Page 35. The record is clearly documented in detail as to what the AMLASH operation was. The authors may not wish to choose between the record and what the SSC has said about it (erroneously) and what Langosch has said about it. I propose that we make this followed by the statement below:

As you have been advised, Langosch was not involved in or responsible for the AMLASH operation, being peripherally aware of its existence. His views of AMLASH/1's security is a very different question than the substance of the operation. I must note that his testimony before HSCA seems to have undergone material evolution since he testified before the Church Committee (SSC) in 1975. One must wonder to what extent the SSC report has influenced his present views. In any event, when he testified before SSC he was most uncertain about the time-frame of the AMLASH operation (critical to any evaluation of it in terms relevant to your charter), as well as to specific facts including how to characterize it (see page 75 Book V, SSC Final Report). His most recent testimony may serve the purpose of raising questions for consideration in your report, but one would think that some consideration would be given his reliability as a witness (the fact that he was not informed at the time, that what he now says is contrary to the well documented status of the operation, and the fact that he now speaks differently than he did earlier).

Page 36. Instead of describing Pollack as "from the CIA" he should be referred to as "a former CIA employee".

Page 37. First line. The word "object" should be "objective."

Page 37. Second line. The word "Cuba" should be "AMLASH/1".

Page 41. If they don't know how to spell "Bundy" I am not inclined to help them.

Page 46. The draft's assertion that O'Connell and Maheu are lying about identification of the syndicate people with whom they were dealing; this is unsupported by the evidence.

The record is somewhat longer than the association of the HSCA investigators with it, and the only thing they add to it is this unfounded subjective judgment. I was one of the two CIA officers who debriefed O'Connell on his part in the operation, when another inspector and I did the original 1967 IG report on assassinations. At that time O'Connell was forthright and did not dissemble, although he experienced difficulty in recalling some details.

but At the time of the 1967 interviews, O'Connell related the discovery of the actual identity of the persons with whom they were dealing primarily as an interesting development in the unfolding events of the operation. He related his role in a factual manner; he had been given an assignment and carried it out. He related it without explanation or apology. If he was pressed by HSCA investigators he may have been asked questions that posed the various considerations in terms of rationale, etc., that that was not his presentation when he was speaking inside the Agency in 1967 — then under strict terms of security — when he originally recorded himself on the matter. He is not a philosopher, and I doubt that he would have volunteered much on this score. Quite frankly, my impression from 1967 (and I interviewed him again in 1975) was that he was impressed by the high-level attention the syndicate gave the matter, rather than being embarrassed by it. It is more accurate to see him viewing it as a sign of the serious attention given by the syndicate, possibly reinforcing the chances of achieving the objective. O'Connell knew from the beginning that he was dealing with the syndicate, and that there had to be high-level approval was a foregone conclusion. No real thought had been given as to what sort of person would be assigned to the job, and whomever it was there was little that could be done about it if the operation was to proceed. The interpretation of O'Connell's thought processes are far fetched.

Page 48. O'Connell's name appears several times in the preceding pages but it appears here with Ed. We might suggest that the word "they" be substituted. All the other places it can be "operational support chief".

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Page 68-71. I recall the introduction to the HSCA draft report that it would not impugn the reputation of innocent by-standers. The identities of Dan Rowan and Phyllis McGuire fall into this category. The simple and correct story is that Giancana felt that he was being cuckolded by Rowan and took advantage, in his jealousy, of his new and novel relationship with CIA. O'Connell should not have gone along with him, but he did, unfortunately. With the advantage of 20-20 hindsight it may look easy today to have termed it aside then. Remember, when O'Connell first told the story in some detail (with some error in dates), inside the Agency for the record (1967), he told it in just those terms. He had no reason then to conceal his concern, and little speculation really doesn't alter the basic facts of that simple story. There really was no concern at that time about Giancana meeting.

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Suggest we move all references that identify Rowan and McGuire and clean up the presentation to fit the facts.

Page 74. Second line TFR for CIA.

Page 76. A little confusion in the sequence of events between phase I and phase II. When the first access to Castro failed, and a viable new one did not develop, Roselli went to the Cuban exile leader. That contact and the apparent uncertainties that it offered is what was terminated at the end of phase I. That is where it started when it was reactivated in April 1962 for phase II.

There are many operations in the Clandestine world in which the instruments of action are not known in detail to the case officer. In the phase II operation, Roselli served as cut-out between CIA and the Cuban exile leader, in a sense, ran his own net and did not reveal the identities of his people or any specific plans. In the absence of direct access to the target his operatives have to *had* go in and develop a way in which to carry out their mission. Had it succeeded, the possibility which have been such to meet and reconstruct after the fact; the absence of ultimate action it may seem uncertain to some individuals unfamiliar with the tenuous nature of some plans of action. The real question, in my mind, is whether the Cuban exile leader really dispatched "teams" with the mission they were supposed to have.

Page 77. It may seem extraordinary to the investigators that CIA operated as they did. First, as mentioned above, there are a number of uncertainties in the world of clandestine operations. In this particular case, dealing with representatives of the underworld, CIA therefore, labors under certain practical inhibitions about how far it could press individuals using their resources to carry out a mutual objective. There doubtless are many instances in which individuals throughout the chain are unknown to CIA.

Page 84. We do not take exception with the statement that the Committee believes "that Roselli fabricated the retaliation theory." If we note it at all it may disappear from the draft, and it reinforces our contentions that CIA did not report the Castro plots because no one perceived the retaliation theory. If Roselli fabricated the concept it was some time in late 1966 or the first half of 1967.

Page 92. Suggest that we request that HSCA relate the designation of "A" for Victor Spinosa Hernandez, rather than using his full name.

Page 93. Top paragraph. We cannot contribute positively to the question of a real link between the syndicate and "A". However, the SSC final report, Book V, at pages 78, 79, and 105 seems to make it clear that what "A" knew about AMLASH post-dated the 1963 period.