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JFK ASSASSINATION SYSTEM  
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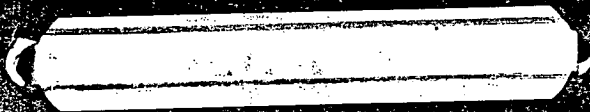
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WALT ROSTOW

BOX 458



July 16, 1975

Professor Walter Rostow  
1 Wildwind Point  
Austin, Texas 78746

Dear Professor Rostow:

We greatly appreciate the time you have devoted to cooperating with the Committee's inquiry. The Chairman has asked me to levy one additional request upon you.

To complete the record on the events under consideration in your testimony of July 9 before the Committee, would you please prepare a notarized, sworn affidavit answering the following questions:

1. What recollections do you have concerning the subjects discussed at your meeting with McGeorge Bundy and Richard Bissell at the Hay-Adams Hotel on January 27, 1961?
2. Do you recall or have a record of any other meetings, whether official or informal, between yourself and Richard Bissell between November 1, 1960 and March 1, 1961? Was there any discussion between yourself and Richard Bissell upon any of these occasions or in phone conversations during the same period that was related in any way to the establishment of a CIA project which included the capability to assassinate foreign leaders? What was the content of any such discussions?

Thanks very much for your help in this matter.

Sincerely,

Frederick A. O. Schwarz, Jr.  
Chief Counsel

Chronology and Issues

Biographical Background

Issues and Questions

1942-1945 ROSTOW was in OSS, Research Analysis Branch (169)  
 1946 State Department, German-Austrian Section  
 1947 Teaching at Oxford  
 1949-51 Special Assistant to the Executive Secretary, Economic Commission  
     for Europe, Geneva  
 1951-1961 MIT, Teaching faculty; consultant to Eisenhower Administration  
 Jan. 1961 DEPUTY ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT FOR NATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS  
 Dec. 1961 STATE DEPARTMENT, Head of Policy Planning Council  
 1964 Appointed by LBJ as U.S. member, Inter-American Committee for the  
     Alliance for Progress  
 4/1/66-  
 1/20/69 Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs (in  
     this position ROSTOW chaired the 303 Committee)

Chronology of Events

1960  
 October (Approx.) BISSELL instructs JUSTIN O'DONNELL to go to CONGO to plan  
     for the assassination of JMMABA (O'Donnell's testimony) on  
     initiative of BISSELL without prior White House approval or  
     knowledge (Bissell, 6/11, p. 55)

BISSELL testified that he told  
 ROSTOW "the instruction as to  
 O'DONNELL, was my initiative."  
 (BISSELL, 6/11, p. 55)

Late '60 CIA's BISSELL, EDWARDS, and O'CONNELL had initiated an  
 assassination plot against CASTRO utilizing MAFIA contacts  
 (ROSELLI, GIANCANA, TRAFFICANTE). Lethal cigars had already  
 been prepared and poison pills were being developed.

Did ROSTOW learn any of this?  
 What briefings of new President  
 and his National Security advisers  
 took place? Did ROSTOW make  
 inquiries?

1961  
 Jan. 20 ROSTOW appointed DEPUTY ASSISTANT to the PRESIDENT (KENNEDY)  
     for National Security Affairs.

What areas of responsibility?

~~TOP SECRET~~

~~TOP SECRET~~

Issues and Questions

1961 (cont)

Jan. 25-6 (approx) BISSSELL asks HARVEY to establish an EXECUTIVE ACTION capability under project ZRIFLE, including the capability to assassinate foreign leaders. The IG REPORT concluded from HARVEY's notes that BISSSELL was "twice urged" to do this by the White House.

Bissell said that "presumably" Harvey's notes are accurate (Bissell, 6/9, p. 51)

HARVEY meets with SILVER, GOTTLIEB, and HELMS about it. (IG REPORT)

Bissell testified: "There is little doubt in my mind that Project RIFLE was discussed with ROSTOW and possibly BUNDY." (6/11, p. 46) He recalls that the conversations would have involved the general capability of perpetrating assassination, "all aspects of the creation of the capability" (6/11, p. 50), Bissell said it was "quite possible" that he discussed CASTRO, TRUJILLO, and LUMUMBA with ROSTOW as examples of assassination targets. (6/11, p. 50)

BISSSELL testified that after Jan. 21, 1961 he met with ROSTOW "quite frequently and very informally," occasionally several times a week. (6/9, p. 81)

BISSSELL said that shortly after the advent of the JFK Administration, there were weekly luncheon meetings at the State Department with BUNDY, ROSTOW, CIA, State people and Defense. No agenda. (6/9, p. 81) BISSSELL testified the "two urgings" from the White House could have come at successive meetings of this sort. But in reporting on EXECUTIVE ACTION, he felt that rather than reporting on developments to the luncheon meetings "as I normally operated I would have replied more to ROSTOW in this case," and he feels that he did report to ROSTOW in this way. (V. I, p. 82-3)

ROSTOW mentions these sessions in his book. (169, Diffusion of Power)

What was ROSTOW's functional relation to BISSSELL?

April 18 Rostow attends first meeting on Cuba which concerned BAY OF PIGS mop-up (Rostow book, 209)

April 28 ROSTOW MEMO TO PRESIDENT

"If we can devise a policy for dealing with CASTRO short of a commitment to remove him soon at our military initiative...world opinion will support us in a policy of restraint on CASTRO and be more likely to move with us on SEASIA." (3)

Assassination meets the descriptions but it would not be restraint.

1961 (cont)

May 30

TRUJILLO ASSASSINATED

ROSTOW testified: "the generalized flow of intelligence at that time involved reports of plots to assassinate TRUJILLO...like once every week. And why we had to give guns to people who had access to guns in the Dominican military I don't know...I can't reconstruct the operation." (Rocky, 178)

Guns were tightly controlled by DR Army. Was ROSTOW privy to State cable traffic on this?

December

ROSTOW moves to STATE DEPARTMENT planning Council

1962

Sept. 3

ROSTOW MEMO TO THE PRESIDENT RE CUBA

"I have not been following the matter closely over recent months." Discusses "Soviet military deliveries to Cuba."

Does this argue for assassination as quicker more direct approach? Or does it imply that the "control system" would outlive CASTRO, rendering assassination pointless?

Under "Covert, Action": ROSTOW said that the "limited, U.S.-dominated, professional covert capability against CUBA" does not promise "a broadly-based political movement capable of challenging the CASTRO regime's control system." (p. 5, #1)

ROSTOW's Memo reviews Lansdale's Two-Track Cover Operation:

1. Heightened effort along "present MONGOOSE lines"--inspire conflict within top of regime. (p. 5, bottom para.)
2. Recruit Cubans, within and without Cuba, to implement "plan of operation which aims at the overthrow of CASTRO primarily from within rather than by invasion from without." Basing outside U.S.; one U.S. adviser "equipped to provide finance, but not monitoring every move." (p. 6, top)

Sept 27

Special Group (Augmented) consider's ROSTOW paper. DDCI wants copy.

Oct.

MISSILE CRISIS -- Mongoose dies.

1966-69

ROSTOW IS SPECIAL ASSISTANT TO PRESIDENT FOR NATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS.

~~TOP SECRET~~

## *The Bay of Pigs and Latin American Policy*

CASTRO: A ROMANTIC REVOLUTIONARY CLOSE TO HOME

KENNEDY'S PROBLEMS WITH THE AGGRESSIVE REVOLUTIONARY Romantics in Jakarta, Cairo, and Accra were important; and they involved strategically significant parts of the world. The unwelding interecine tension on the Indian subcontinent was also a serious matter, diverting, as it did, significant talents and resources from essential tasks of development on behalf of more than a half-billion human beings, dispersing the political life of two major nations, and rendering each, in different ways, increasingly vulnerable to external influence and manipulation. But for a working American politician these problems were relatively peripheral compared to the presence of Castro in Cuba.

By January 1961 Castro was an acknowledged part of the communist world, handsomely backed by the Soviet Union and other communist states. He was actively engaged in subversive action in Latin America and was holding up to the continent a revolutionary solution for its many economic and social ills. The communist base ninety miles from Florida was a direct and recognizable challenge to a vital American interest long incorporated in the Monroe Doctrine and a living part of the American political debate. And, as the result of Eisenhower's order of March 1960, Cuban opponents of Castro, assembled in Guatemala, were undergoing the final phase of military training for an invasion of Cuba, under the leadership and instruction of officers of the United States government.

### THE BAY OF PIGS: ONE MAN'S EXPERIENCE

AT 7 A.M. on the morning of Tuesday, April 18, 1961, I attended my first meeting on Cuba! The Bay-of-Pigs operation had begun the day before. As I came to work early I met Ted Clifton, the President's military aide, in the White House Situation Room and asked him how it was going. He said badly. Later McGeorge Bundy asked me to come along to a meeting in the Cabinet Room.

At the far end of the table were the three senior officers of the CIA: Allen Dulles, Pearré Cabell, and Richard Bissell. The President, Bundy, Clifton, and I were the only others present.

Dulles reported the operation was failing: the men were trapped on the beaches and Castro's forces were moving systematically against them. I had old and close ties to the three men reporting the incipient debacle. Dulles I had known a little from wartime OSS days, but well and warmly since 1951. With Cabell I had shared wartime years as a planner for the American air forces in Europe. Bissell was a friend of some thirty years, to whom I owed my start as an economist and much more. In the few months before we were telling our respective reports that started and, three months into his administration, he was about to confront unmitigated disaster.

They were wholly professional, Kennedy completely calm. But all were evidently shaken.

After the meeting I asked Bundy if I could help in the mop-up. I did not know how my friends had gotten into this situation. I had no sense of higher wisdom or virtue. But I thought a fresh man might be useful. Bundy—and then Kennedy—agreed. I went over to the CIA operational headquarters, located in a temporary building along the Potomac, to monitor the situation.

The reports coming in chronicled the closing in of Castro's forces on the beachhead. The morale of the Washington team engaged in the operation progressively disintegrated. This was not the first tactical defeat Americans had ever suffered, nor even the worst that I had observed; but it was painful to see their composure break up. Bissell, however, remained collected as men around him begged that he ask the President once more to throw American military power into the balance. As the situation on the beaches moved to final disaster during the night, he asked that I call the President, who was at a congressional reception, and arrange a meeting. His purpose was to inform Kennedy and permit him to exercise such options as were available. I did so.

It was a session in the Oval Office no one present is likely to forget. The President, Pearré Cabell, and McNamara in white tie; General Lyman Lemmonier and Admiral Arthur Burke in full uniform with medals; the stark hurt tragedy of the men on the beaches and the reports of the Revolutionary Court.



The limits and dilemmas of power—the relationship of power to the fate of human beings—was never more clear or poignant.

Kennedy was deeply and personally concerned with the fate of the men on the beaches, but he was not about to throw the full strength of the carrier-based aircraft into the battle and reverse his fundamental position that this was a conflict between Cubans, not a war between the United States and Cuba. The possibility of the men moving off the beaches into the hills was raised. It became starkly clear (to me, for the first time) that ~~the option of moving from an invasion to a guerrilla operation was precluded by geography and the choice of the invasion beach.~~ Kennedy decided to permit a limited number of fighter sorties to protect the handful of old bombers operating in part of the operation. The purpose was to buy time in the hope that at least some of the men might be ~~withdrawn~~. He ordered American naval craft to go in close for the same purpose. Rusk pointed out that we would thereby be more deeply committed. Kennedy raised his hand just below his nose and said: "We're already in it up to here."

Bissell was instructed to inform the entrapped men to disengage as best they could, either to boats or into the countryside. As Bissell left the room, Kennedy told him to keep his chin up.

~~Adolf Berle and Athur Schlesinger~~ were then dispatched from the meeting to the hardest mission of all: to meet with the Revolutionary Council in Florida and inform its members of the limits within which Kennedy was prepared to act.

Somewhat, it was difficult to go home that night. Some of us stayed around until almost four in the morning.

Hour by hour, day by day, the full measure of the failure, with its repercussions at home and abroad, pounded in on Kennedy and his advisers. Every minute counted. There was an initial numbness, except for Kennedy who moved to carry full personal responsibility and pull the nation and his administration together. I saw only one reflection of his inner feeling: sitting in the rocking chair in his office, he was looking at the *Washington News*, whose headlines covered the final capture of the expedition. Then he let the paper crumple over the floor without a word.

~~On April 19~~ Kennedy met with his advisers at length in the afternoon, an afternoon climaxed by the five o'clock arrival of the leaders of the Revolutionary Council. It was a meeting at once painful, dignified, and necessary.

At one point in mid-afternoon, the President left the room for a few minutes and Robert Kennedy spoke in anguish. He said we would have to act on the judged paper figures by Moscow. We just could not sit and take it. All the nervous men assembled around the Cabinet table ought to be able to think of something to do. There was no response, as we awaited the President's return.

I had not known Robert Kennedy before his brother's inauguration and had never before spoken seriously to him. I asked if we could step out of the White House for a moment. On the way down the Rose Garden I met the

that if you're in a fight and get knocked off your feet, the most dangerous thing to do was to come out swinging. Then you could really get hurt. Now was a time to dance around until our heads cleared. We would have ample opportunity to prove we were not paper tigers in Berlin, Southeast Asia, and elsewhere. This was a time to pause and think. He looked up expressionless. He finally said: "That's constructive."

The next day he came back to me and posed the question: If we shouldn't act now, what should we do about Cuba? He said I had a duty to come up with a plan. I promised to collect and set down my thoughts.

On ~~April 20~~ Kennedy delivered his defiant speech to the American Society of Newspaper Editors and the nation knew it had a leader who could absorb a severe blow and maintain command. It was the speech of a fighting Irishman.

As I worked through those long days with my colleagues, I was troubled, however, that the obsession with Cuba would divert thought and energy from the paths of action on which Kennedy had begun. ~~Therefore~~ ~~wrote~~ a long memorandum to him on April 27 and circulated it to Rusk, McNamara, and Bundy. It began in much the spirit of my talk with Robert Kennedy:

Right now the greatest problem we face is not to have the whole of our foreign policy thrown off balance by what we feel and what we do about Cuba itself. We have suffered a serious setback, but that setback will be trivial compared to the consequences of not very soon regaining momentum along the lines which we have begun in the past three months.<sup>1</sup>

Over the weekend Cuba was temporarily pushed off the front pages. De Gaulle was at the peak of his troubles in Algeria. There was a threat that dissident French paratroopers would descend on Paris. De Gaulle appealed to the French people to block a *coup d'etat*. On Sunday, April 23, Kennedy called from Green Day and asked me to come into the White House quietly to monitor what was happening in France and to keep him informed. I settled down in the White House shelter, where there was both communication equipment and a bunk. The only news available, in fact, came from David Scheenbrun's CBS broadcasts from Paris. It gradually became apparent that the descent on Paris would not take place; and I used the time to try my hand at a new approach to the problem posed by Cuba, as Robert Kennedy had suggested.

It had begun to be clear to me from Tuesday morning to Sunday night how the Bay of Pigs had come about. As Cuba emerged under communist control, a visceral reaction developed in the government that this was an outcome with which the United States could not live. Eisenhower shared this feeling, as his memoirs make clear, although his sentiments about Castro cannot be translated into a prediction of what he would have done about the Bay of Pigs when if he had come to the moment of decision. The fears were in

part military, in part ideological, in part an ancestral sense that the Monroe Doctrine had been unacceptably violated. On the other hand, there was no basis in American foreign policy, OAS doctrine, or in international law that justified the United States going to war because a Latin American nation had gone communist. It had clearly happened because of the internal dynamics of Cuba, not because communist arms and men had moved illegally across international frontiers.

Simultaneously, however, a way of escaping the dilemma appeared to emerge. Out of Castro's quiet realignment of his comrades in the July 26 Movement and of the humane democratic society they sought, there had come to the United States not Batista reactionaries, not mercenaries, but men prepared to give their lives to undo the perversion of Cuban history Castro had brought about.

The appeal of supporting these men on a clandestine basis was, under the circumstances, irresistible—an appeal strengthened, perhaps, by the successful CIA-backed overthrow of President Jacobo Arbenz in Guatemala some seven years earlier.

The Cuban operation, as it evolved, acquired, of course, a momentum of its own and it proved of its nature, incapable of being handled on a clandestine basis. It therefore lacked strategic surprise and was technically inadequate in many respects, some of which are summarized below. But the final flaw, as I saw it that Sunday night, lay in the failure to distinguish the kinds of circumstances in which an American President could or could not bring an American force overtly to bear. In the *United States in the World Arena* I had argued:

It appears to be a characteristic of American history that this nation cannot be effective in its military and foreign policy unless it believes that both its security interests and its commitment to certain moral principles require the nation to act. . . . When idealism alone seemed to be the basis for positions taken the nation did not back its play. . . . Equally, the nation has not been effective when confronted by situations where its power interests might be involved but where a persuasive moral basis for American action was not present.<sup>1</sup>

A covert operation, by definition, cut across the "moral basis" for the engagement of American forces. And, before the event, Kennedy had drawn a sharp line between supporting Cuban dissidents and sending American forces into Cuba. Nevertheless, as I observed the denouement of the operation on Tuesday, I could not help feeling that some of the men involved had come to believe that in the last analysis Kennedy would be unable to hold to the policy he had expressed repeatedly, in public and private, before the event; namely, that this was a conflict among Cubans and regular United States forces would not be available for it. Somewhere within them, one felt, was the perhaps unexpressed judgment that Kennedy simply could not afford to let it fail. It

was not only the men on the beaches who, until the end, had "an unshakable conviction that they would not be let down. It was inconceivable that they would be stranded."<sup>2</sup>

But Kennedy did hold to his policy. The operation had failed. And Castro had to be dealt with in other terms.

Sitting in the White House shelter, I began by listing on a yellow pad the specific dangers to the American interest that might arise from Castro's Cuba: the training and infiltrating of subversive agents and guerrillas; the invasion of neighboring states with Soviet arms; Soviet missiles aimed against the United States; an attack on Guantanamo or the Panama Canal; communist radio propaganda; and an example of economic and social development that would prove attractive in Latin America.

For each I suggested lines of action legally and morally open to the United States and, especially, to the hemisphere acting in concert on the principle of collective self-defense.

I called Robert Kennedy from the shelter and told him I would be ready to respond to his question by morning. The next day I went to Hickory Hill for an early breakfast. As we walked around the grounds I outlined this functional, overt, legal approach to dealing with Castro.

~~It seemed~~ It seemed ~~reviewed that a constant approach to Cuban policy had been formulated and he urged me to circulate it in the government.~~ This I did through the committee, headed by Paul Nitze, charged with coordinating policy toward Cuba and the fate of the Cuban refugees in the United States.<sup>3</sup>

#### THE BAY OF PIGS: A RETROSPECTIVE EVALUATION

There have been a good many retrospective evaluations of the Bay of Pigs operation, public and private.<sup>4</sup> Evidently, it was flawed in terms of political and military intelligence. It could not be kept secret before the event and there was no strategic surprise; no coordination with dissidents in Cuba; an underestimation of the cohesiveness and strength of Castro's ground and air forces and of his ability to round up and neutralize his opposition. It was flawed tactically by the failure to provide sufficient air power and to protect the supply ship with its critically important ammunition supply. (Technically, the operation ended with an ammunition shortage.) And the option Kennedy believed the men would have—of going to the hills if the invasion failed—was, in fact, foreclosed by the choice of the landing site.

The basic strategic flaw was, of course, political. If some fifteen hundred men were to serve as a catalyst in the overthrow of Castro, the burden of the effort would have to be borne by those already inside Cuba who were prepared to struggle for this result. And that meant organization, leadership, planning, and close coordination. Such possibilities may have existed, but they were not built into the enterprise.

All in all, it appears to have been an effort beyond the capacities of the CIA to mount successfully. And in such a covert enterprise, it was impossible to bring to bear all the talents and resources of the American government that would have been relevant.

That the plan was inherited from a previous administration by new men also played a role. Allen Dulles and his people were respected professionals and so were Lennitzer and the Joint Chiefs. It was hard for the new men to get their judgment with confidence against their predecessors; although the President finally drew the hard line on his own by refusing to engage regular American forces to salvage the enterprise, if the initial plan failed.

And there was a brute political fact: Cuba was part of American politics. Kennedy had taken an activist position during the campaign. The dissolution of the brigade in Guatemala would have brought the men back to Miami. The story would not have been that Kennedy would be charged with having lacked the courage to back an enterprise that Eisenhower had prepared to eliminate communism from Cuba by the action of brave Cubans.

Sorensen flatly states that Kennedy regretted not having called off the operation's and, although I worked closely with the President in the post-Day of Pigs days, I have no evidence to challenge that assessment. Clearly, the short-run consequences of revoking the plan could hardly have been as painful as the debacle. In a larger sense, however, there may be some insight in a judgment of the event from a rather unlikely source. Gunner Myrdal, for whom I had worked as a special assistant in the Economic Commission for Europe in 1947-1949, came to Washington later in the spring. He greeted me cheerfully by announcing we had a great President. I said I thought so, but we hadn't yet come much to prove it. I asked him what led to his assessment. Myrdal said: the Bay of Pigs—if Kennedy had called it off, he would have been ruined politically at home. He never would have freed himself of the charge that Castro's continued existence in Cuba was due to his failure to back Eisenhower's plan. But if he had engaged American forces to salvage a failing covert operation, he would have been ruined abroad. Now, suggested Myrdal, Kennedy could go on.

And Kennedy was determined to go on. Talking about my memorandum of April 1, he said the United States could simply not afford to brood or sink its energy in protracted debate or passive introspection. Britain had gone through such a phase over Suez, France over Algeria. And freedom could survive because each represented only 6 or 7 percent of the free world's power. But the United States was 70 percent of that power. If we did not keep our perspective, if we did not continue to act effectively, the whole delicate and dangerous equilibrium of power in the world would come unstruck.

By his example, Kennedy brought his team back onto its feet. There was, however, much personal introspection and fresh thought about the organization of the executive branch. We—Kennedy and his men—were clearly responsible for the debacle; not abstract bureaucratic entities. There was no

our business. Bundy wrote a reflective memorandum to Kennedy which was as fine a piece of paper as I had ever read in government. In his own way, each of the others engaged in military and foreign policy asked: What went wrong, what must we now do to avoid further error? Kennedy brought in Maxwell Taylor to conduct a formal inquiry. He also told Bundy and me to build up the flow of information to the Situation Room; and Bundy was asked to shift from a comfortable, high-ceilinged room in the Executive Office Building to a small office in the White House west basement close by the flow of traffic. (Remembering those days, I resisted all efforts to have that office redone in White House modern when I occupied it in 1966-1969. I felt it should remain as spare as a city editor's office.)

In getting back on our feet we had an asset. We had all seen, in one context or another, what tactical defeat looked like during the Second World War. (In my case, it was the dangerous and frustrating days of 1942-1943 when it appeared quite likely that daylight bombers, in which America had invested vast resources, would fail to penetrate German anti-aircraft and fighter defenses without unacceptable losses.) We had known what it was to take stock, make new dispositions, and get on with the job. My wife caught this mood one night I came home at three in the morning. She was sitting up in bed and said: "I've not seen you for years more cheerful or effective. You're an odd lot. You're not politicians or intellectuals. You're the junior officers of the Second World War come to responsibility." It remains a not bad characterization of the Kennedy administration.

#### THE TWO PUNTA DEL ESTES

KENNEDY'S post-Bay of Pigs policy toward Latin America emerged in two meetings at Punta del Este in August 1961 and January 1962. They dealt with the ideological and security challenges posed by Castro.

The ~~first was formally a conference of the Inter-American Economic and Social Council~~ was the climax to the series of initiatives that had begun when, in 1958, President Juscelino Kubitschek of Brazil had proposed Operation Panamerica as a kind of equivalent to the Marshall Plan for Latin America. Proximately, its purpose was to give substance to Kennedy's speech of March 13 formally launching the Alliance for Progress as a common effort to move Latin America into sustained economic and social progress. The goals defined and agreed on at Punta del Este touched the whole spectrum of Latin America's endemic problems: housing, land reform, education, health, tax reform, domestic price stability, export prices, economic integration.

Fundamentally, however, the Charter of Punta del Este was a commitment of the Latin American governments to their peoples that economic and social progress, in all their dimensions, would move to the center of political

