
Agency Information

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AGENCY FILE NUMBER : 07-M-74

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BISSELL, RICHARD

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JFK ASSASSINATION SYSTEM
IDENTIFICATION FORM

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[R] - ITEM IS RESTRICTED

RICHARD BISSELL

Bot
354

SENSITIVE

INTERVIEW AND MEETING SUMMARY

Page 1 of

FILE:

Interview by telephone (203-677-1792) with Richard Bissell on August 6, 1975 (6:00 p.m.) conducted by Joseph di Genova. (Bissell's office: 203-677-2063).

I reviewed for Mr. Bissell the new documents related to the July 1960 incident. This included the July 21, 1960 cable from Langley indicating that the "Possible removal of the top three Cuban leaders being given serious consideration at HQS." Mr. Bissell's independent recollection of that and events about which he had previously testified was not jogged. He said that cable "is just further evidence bearing on the state of mind in Washington toward the Cuban operation." At this point I traced for him the steps of E. H. Hinkle, who sent out the July 21, 1960 cable, and explained Hinkle's recollection concerning Barnes involvement in the writing of the cable. Bissell then noted that "Barnes would probably have told me about it at the time."

When asked about the language "receiving serious consideration," Bissell said that "that suggests to me that the idea was indeed receiving serious consideration and that headquarters was anxious to explore the possibility with the asset." "Dulles would have known that this was being considered." When informed that the cable was subsequently superseded by a cable telling Havana to "Drop Matter" Bissell said that Dulles probably considered this particular effort "too risky, because we didn't know enough about the asset, and because too many innocent people would have been killed by crashing a plane." He speculated that Dulles may have ordered the cancellation of the first cable because the plan did not involve the killing of all three of the top leaders but rather only one, Raul Castro Ruz.

I informed Bissell that J.C. King said that he was probably circumvented on this particular matter; i.e., the incident and also the serious consideration. Bissell remarked that he would be "surprised that King said that he would have been excluded from that type of thing." Bissell could remember no cases where J.C. King was not kept fully informed. In this matter, Bissell noted that "serious consideration in the cable meant that discussions occurred between Dulles, myself, Cabell, Barnes and King." "Barnes was very close to Allen Dulles and me and if Barnes told Hinkle to send that cable with those words 'serious consideration' in it, he would have known what he was talking about." "Barnes simply would not have sent such a cable unless he knew for a fact that it was receiving serious consideration." Bissell then added that one reason to suppose that the matter was receiving serious consideration was that the cable authorized an "approach to the asset, which as you know, is a risky act. Barnes would not have said in the cable that inquiry should be made of the asset unless he had reason to believe that such an operation was being very seriously considered. And he would have only thought that if it had gotten beyond the think-tank level at the agency."

MEMORANDUM

TO : Frederick A. O. Schwarz, Jr. and Curtis Smothers

FROM: Frederick Baron

DATE: July 16, 1975

RICHARD BISSELL

Index to Issues

The attached "Summary of Pertinent Testimony" from the I.G. REPORT and the transcripts of BISSELL, HELMS, HARVEY, BUNDY, and ROSTOW is organized by the following issues:

- I. EXECUTIVE ACTION: Early 1961
- II. TURNOVER OF SYNDICATE CONTACT TO HARVEY
- III. AUTHORIZATION BY DCI
- IV. PRESIDENTIAL AUTHORIZATION

MEMORANDUM

TO : Frederick A. O. Schwarz, Jr. and Curtis Smothers
FROM: Frederick Baron
DATE: July 16, 1975

RICHARD BISSELL: SUMMARY OF PERTINENT TESTIMONY

I. EXECUTIVE ACTION (Project ZRRIFLE): Early 1961

I.G. REPORT, 1967: According to HARVEY, "early in the KENNEDY administration BISSELL called him in to discuss what HARVEY refers to as an Executive Action Capability; i.e., a general stand-by capability to carry out assassinations when required. HARVEY's notes quote BISSELL as saying, 'The WHITE HOUSE has twice urged me to create such a capability.' BISSELL recalls discussing the question of developing a general capability with HARVEY." (37)

On February 19, 1962, new DDP RICHARD HELMS approves the handling of the project on a "special basis," including unvouchered funds authorized by HARVEY's certification. (39)

BISSELL:

BISSELL recalls "assigning HARVEY the task of undertaking the ZRRIFLE project," but he does not recall "a specific conversation with anybody in the WHITE HOUSE as the origin of that request." (51; 6/9) BISSELL said, however, "I have no reason to believe that HARVEY's quote (about WHITE HOUSE urgings) is wrong." (51; 6/9) BISSELL recalled turning the project over to HELMS and briefing him on it. (53; 6/11)

Conflict on Knowledge/Authorization. BISSELL began his testimony with uncertainty about any "urgings" from the WHITE HOUSE. At a later point, he said: "There is little doubt in my mind that Project RIFLE was discussed with ROSTOW and possibly BUNDY." (46) He expressed the belief that the PRESIDENT knew of the project, although BISSELL admitted to having "no direct knowledge" of this. (56; 6/9) But at another point, BISSELL testified that it was a "possibility" that the CIA initiated the project:

"it was the normal practice in the Agency and an important part of its mission to create various kinds of capability long before there was any reason to be certain whether those would be used....So it would not be particularly surprising to me if the decision to create...this capability had been taken without an outside request." (67-68; 6/9)

When BISSELL returned again to the theme that "it may have been initiated within the Agency," he characterized his conversation with ROSTOW more as a briefing than as receiving an instruction from ROSTOW. (80-81; 6/9)

Generally, BISSELL recalls that in any discussion with ROSTOW or BUNDY, "all aspects of the creation of the capability" (50; 6/11) would have been mentioned. BISSELL said it was "quite possible" that he discussed CASTRO, TRUJILLO, and LUMUMBA with ROSTOW as examples of assassination targets. (50; 6/11) BISSELL said that the subject might have arisen at the weekly luncheon meetings at the State Department attended by BUNDY, ROSTOW, and representatives from State, CIA, and Defense. (81-82; 6/9)

HARVEY:

HARVEY confirmed the accuracy of the I.G. REPORT version of his initial discussion of Executive Action with BISSELL. (36-37; 6/25) HARVEY testified that his "net impression" from the discussion with BISSELL was that both Executive Action and the ongoing poison pill assassination plot were "fully authorized and approved" (54; 6/25), although no specific individual in the "WHITE HOUSE" was mentioned. (81; 6/25) HARVEY said that after his initial meeting with BISSELL, he discussed the propriety and feasibility of assassination with selected CIA officers, who generally expressed a "negative reaction." (40; 6/25) After a subsequent meeting with BISSELL, HARVEY continued to develop the assassination capability without mounting an operation or communicating the objective to any potential asset who was being assessed. (45; 6/25)

Chronology. HARVEY has notes (see attachment) of two meetings to discuss Executive Action which he is "almost certain" took place in 1961. (51; 6/25) On January 25, he met with SIDNEY GOTTLIEB, the new Chief of CIA's Technical Services Division. On the following day, he met with ARNOLD SILVER, who recruited agent QJWIN -- the only agent HARVEY ever employed in Project ZRRIFLE (for the purpose of "spotting" potential assets). (50-55; 6/25) HARVEY said that these meetings took place after his initial discussion of Executive Action with BISSELL, thus placing that meeting in "early January." (52; 6/25)

ROSTOW:

ROSTOW testified that during his entire tenure in government, he never heard a reference to Executive Action or "such a capability or such an intention to act by the U.S." (10) He has no recollection of instructing BISSELL to establish such a capability. (10) He testified that he was "morally certain" (13) that such a discussion was "unlikely to the point of being virtually unthinkable" (11) for a number of reasons:

1. Such a discussion would be memorable. (11)
2. The division of national security responsibility between ROSTOW and BUNDY "excluded me from the covert operations business." (11)
3. He believes that assassination historically has proven counter-productive and it would be especially so for an open society like the U.S. where leaders are vulnerable to attack. (11)
4. Assassination is morally "repugnant" to ROSTOW. (11)
5. By January 25-26, ROSTOW had been in the Administration less than a week and had heavy responsibilities concerning the USSR and Laos thrust upon him for immediate consideration. He found it "incredible" that he "would go launching off in that week with suggestions for the planning" (15) of an extraordinarily sensitive operation.
6. He had no knowledge at the time that any such planning or operation was ongoing. (15-16)
7. The State Department luncheon meetings were too open a forum in which to raise such a suggestion; only the first of those meetings

could have been held before January 26, 1961. (21-23)

ROSTOW does, however, have a calendar notation of a meeting with BISSELL and BUNDY at the Hay-Adams Hotel on January 27, 1961 (Staff Interview, 7/8); he has been asked to submit an affidavit on this meeting.

ROSTOW explained the discrepancy between his testimony and that of his "close personal friend" (4) by saying that BISSELL's memory of the period may be blurred by the traumatic experience of the Bay of Pigs which occurred shortly afterward. (55) In the event of a blurred memory, ROSTOW felt that he and BUNDY might have been used as possible WHITE HOUSE contacts in BISSELL's mind because they were "his closest friends in the WHITE HOUSE at that time." (17) ROSTOW also suggested that under ALLEN DULLES, the CIA fell into the habit of operating "quasi-autonomously" without correct clearance from the PRESIDENT (27-28) -- a habit which may have produced a "compulsion" to place a retrospective blessing upon the operation. (19)

BUNDY:

BUNDY does recall being told about the development of an Executive Action capability "in a general way" (4): as an untargeted (5) "capability coming into being" rather than a mounted operation. (7) Bundy testified:

"I am sure I gave no instruction. But it is only fair to add that I do not recall that I offered any impediment after I was briefed. (10) ...I wouldn't have the authority to give

any such instruction, and I would have been only the channel to give such instruction. (13) ...I would have had to take the matter to the PRESIDENT, because I had no independent authority." (16)

BUNDY testified that as far as he could recall, he did not take the matter to the PRESIDENT. (16) BUNDY's impression was that the CIA was "testing my reaction," not "seeking authority." (15) BUNDY does not recall who told him of the Executive Action project, but "it surely might have been" BISSELL (15), or some other senior CIA official. (14) BUNDY said that he worked on the assumption that he would be told of sensitive covert operations, such as an assassination plot, but BISSELL never mentioned such a thing to him. (41) BUNDY said that he did not take steps to dissuade the person who briefed him on the assassination capability or to pursue the matter in any other way (19) because he was satisfied

"that this was not an operational activity, and would not become such without two conditions: first, that there be a desire or a request or a guidance that there should be planning against some specific individual; and second, that there should be a decision to move against the individual." (7)

BUNDY rated the chance that the conversation about Executive Action took place before January 25-26 as "near zero" because of the problems with which he was preoccupied in the first week in government. (9)

HELMS:

HELMS recalls Executive Action (ZRRIFLE) as "a tiny little thing" (52) which nonetheless had as one of its purposes a capability to assassinate foreign leaders. (54) He remembered that there was a single

asset who was a "capability in being....If you needed somebody to carry out murder I guess you had a man who might be prepared to carry it out."

(50) "I finally phased it out," HELMS said. (51) HELMS said that the "special basis" for handling ZRRIFLE funds was for bookkeeping reasons (53) to avoid the normal clearance procedures. (54)

II. TURNOVER OF SYNDICATE CONTACT TO HARVEY

I.G. REPORT, 1967:

Project ZRRIFLE continued on a separate course from the CIA-ROSELLI poison pill assassination plot against CASTRO until November 15, 1961:

"HARVEY has a note that on that date he discussed with BISSELL the application of the ZRRIFLE program to Cuba. HARVEY says that BISSELL instructed him to take over EDWARDS' contact with the criminal syndicate and thereafter to run the operation against CASTRO." (39)

BISSELL:

BISSELL testified that he did not recall directing the reactivation of the project but, he said, "I think I did, as part of Mr. HARVEY's responsibility for Project RIFLE, instruct him to take over the contact." (19; 6/11) BISSELL agreed that the purpose of the contact had been to assassinate CASTRO and said that "it is a fair inference that there would have been no reason to maintain it /the contact/ unless there was some possibility of reactivating that operation." (19; 6/11)

BISSELL was more explicit later that day: "late in 1961 or early in 1962...the contact with the syndicate which had CASTRO as its target ...folded into the ZRRIFLE project...and they became one." (47; 6/11)

BISSELL does not recall telling anyone in the WHITE HOUSE that something had been done to bring a CIA officer together again with the criminal syndicate. (19-20; 6/11)

HARVEY:

HARVEY recalls being asked by BISSELL to "takeover the ROSELLI operation" (86; 6/25) in the context of discussing Executive Action. (19; 6/11) HARVEY does not recall any mention of the WHITE HOUSE in this discussion. (21, 60-61; 6/11) HARVEY told HELMS about the talks with BISSELL when HELMS took over as DDP. (63; 6/11)

HELMS:

HELMS does not recall that ZRRIFLE was ever contemplated as a capability to assassinate CASTRO. (55)

III. AUTHORIZATION WITH DCI

I.G. REPORT: In the latter part of September 1960, after BISSELL, EDWARDS, and O'CONNELL had initiated an operation to assassinate CASTRO using syndicate contacts:

"with BISSELL present, EDWARDS briefed the Director (ALLEN DULLES) and the DDCI (GENERAL CABELL) on the existence of a plan involving members of the syndicate. The discussion was circumspect; EDWARDS deliberately avoided the use of any 'bad words.' The descriptive term used was 'an intelligence operation.' EDWARDS is quite sure that the DCI and the DDCI clearly understood the nature of the operation he was discussing....EDWARDS states that, while there was no formal approval as such, he felt that he clearly had tacit approval to use his own judgment." (18)

BISSELL:

"Relying heavily on the I.G. REPORT" for his recollection of the meeting with DULLES (21; 6/9), BISSELL said at one point that he "believed" DULLES had been briefed (22-23; 6/9) and at another point he was "quite convinced" DULLES knew the nature of the operation. (24; 6/9) He could only "guess" about whether subsequent conversations with DULLES about the operation would have occurred (24-25; 6/9), although he was "virtually certain" that DULLES "would" have asked for reports about the "SHEP EDWARDS operation." (25; 6/9)

BISSELL acknowledged that before the meeting with DULLES, contact had been made with the Mafia in connection with the operation (20; 6/9), although the \$150,000 contract on CASTRO's life had not yet been made.

BISSELL had "no explanation" for why EDWARDS would have reported as follows to the FBI in May 1961, in an interview about the wiretap incident. (65; 6/9)

"Colonel EDWARDS advised that only Mr. BISSELL (Director of Plans, CIA) and two others in CIA were aware of the GIANCANA-MAHEU activity in behalf of CIA's program and ALLEN DULLES was completely unaware of EDWARDS' contact with MAHEU in this connection." (5/22/61 FBI memo re "Arthur James BALLETTI, et al.")(Emphasis added.)

IV. AUTHORIZATION OUTSIDE OF THE CIA IN THE EISENHOWER
ADMINISTRATION

A. Bissell

Bissell testified that as of the Fall of 1960, he knew nothing of clearances outside the CIA for the Castro assassination effort. (Bissell, Vol. I, Tr. 30). Bissell met frequently with the Special Group in the Fall of 1960, but never informed the Special Group that there was an effort underway to assassinate Castro. (Id., 25-26). Thus, the question of President Eisenhower's knowledge rests on whether Allen Dulles informed him of the Castro plot. Bissell assumed that Allen Dulles would obtain the required authorization above the CIA level. Bissell conceded that he is "guessing" that Dulles informed Eisenhower. As Bissell explained, however, his guess that Dulles informed President Eisenhower "is not based on hard evidence" but is "pure personal opinion." (Bissell Tr. Vol. I, 61). Bissell further characterized this method as one of "obliquely" advising the President (Bissell Tr. Vol. I, 47), and of a "circumlocutious" approach (Bissell Tr. Vol. II, p. 6).

On other occasions involving sensitive covert operations, Dulles had told Bissell he had used the "circumlocutious" approach with President Eisenhower. (Bissell Tr. Vol. II, 10). But with respect to the Castro assassination attempt, Dulles did not tell Bissell he had used this approach, according to Bissell's recollection. (Id., 11).

B. Gray

Gray testified he did not believe Allen Dulles would have approached President Eisenhower without informing Gray who was Eisenhower's Special Assistant for National Security Affairs. (Gray Tr. 35). Mr. Gray further testified that his relationship with President Eisenhower was such that President Eisenhower "would discuss with me anything that came to his attention independently of me." (Id., 7). And he testified that President Eisenhower never discussed with Gray the subject of a Castro assassination or of the use of the syndicate and Cubans in such an effort. (Id.).

Gray testified that in mid-1960 President Eisenhower approved a "four-point program" which ultimately resulted in the Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba. (Tr. 14). Gray recalled that the four points comprised (1) sabotage, (2) economic sanctions,

(3) propaganda, and (4) training of the Cuban exile force. (Id.). Gray testified that discussion of the "overthrow" of the Castro government in the context of this program did not constitute authority to conduct an assassination of Castro. (Tr. 18).

Specifically, Gray testified that unless the CIA was given a direct order to assassinate Castro or such assassination was included in a specific program, the CIA had no authority to attempt an assassination. (Id.). Moreover, Gray emphasized that throughout the Eisenhower Administration -- through the day President Eisenhower left office on January 21, 1961 -- "there was no plan or action committed" with respect to launching the proposed invasion to overthrow Castro. (Tr. 40).

The minutes of the Special Group meeting on November 3, 1960, state that the State Department representative, Livingston Merchant, inquired "whether any real planning has been done for taking direct positive action against Fidel, Raoul and Che Guevara." (Gray Ex. 1). In response, Gen. Cabell, the Deputy Director of CIA, is recorded as concluding that such action "is beyond our capabilities." (Id.).

In his testimony, Gray agreed that those minutes indicate that subject of a Castro assassination was

discussed in the exchange between Mr. Merchant and General Cabell. (Gray Tr. 9, 17).

The records of a National Security Council meeting on March 10, 1960* and a Special Group meeting on March 14, 1960 contain phrases that arguably refer to discussion of a Castro assassination.

Date: October 18, 1960
To: Director
Central Intelligence Agency
Attention: Deputy Director, Plans
From: John Edgar Hoover, Director
Subject: ANTI-CASTRO ACTIVITIES
INTERNAL SECURITY - CUBA

The following information has been reported by a source whose reliability has not been tested but who is in a position to obtain information concerning the activities of Samuel H. Giancana, well-known racketeer from Chicago, Illinois:

According to the source, during recent conversation with several friends, Giancana stated that Fidel Castro was to be done away with very shortly. When doubt was expressed regarding this statement Giancana reportedly assured those present that Castro's assassination would occur in November. Moreover, he allegedly indicated that he had already met with the assassin-to-be on three occasions, the last meeting taking place on a boat docked at the Fontainebleau Hotel, Miami Beach, Florida. Reportedly, Giancana claimed that everything has been perfected for the killing of Castro and that the "assassin" had arranged with a girl, not further described, to drop a "pill" in some drink or food of Castro's.

The source further advised that Giancana reportedly stated that Castro is in the advanced stages of syphilis and is not completely rational. We are making efforts to obtain additional information concerning these allegations, which have not been substantiated, and recipient agencies will be kept advised of any additional pertinent data received.

1 - Office of Security
Department of State

Sed 21 - 25/1 - Eye (action)
 — "The Magic Button"

8

Parcotics Büro ~~✗~~

"for a living" -

RIS 201 cover

Curtain - Bankruptcy - No Star

eyes - Jim A.

not a TSO problem

Contractor
 from U-2

Apply brakes

Last report beyond last resort &
 a confession of weakness. -

- El Benefactor - assumption -

Example 3 "wrong"

Framework of Sid's job.

Elut R+D - Memo.

Jeffrey

"Translating machines" - HLE
 basic sounds project -
 phenons - (V umph CB)

Comm - Fear

REC

JUN 24 1975

Anesthesia -

CIA

26/1 - AS - Farform-OCI - Matter -

No file Review -

new never mention
 word assassination

1. Select proper open to run -

2. Place & corner

May 2

3. Security Rules

B-WITH-AS-3

4. Hunt lives

Sid - Review.

5. Last Resort - Brakes -

Substantive - what
 next

SECRET

6. No other agencies (2
9)
7. No projects or papers
except per cones.
8. Principal Agent - G (Markel)? -
AF - Project Draft LCH -
Markel 1500 - from MB -
Mark spot again. Call at
project - de Dioko
9. Disposal -
10. Targets who & where -
Must know before
we can spot -
-
11. Case officering
12. Cover file - create & from
RIS or old id. - non ser
13. Had charges of RIS counter
action & monitor if they
are blamed -
FBI list - Remember

RECEIVED FROM

JUN 24 1975

CIA

SECRET

Director
Central Intelligence Agency

1 - Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence
Department of the Army

Attention: Chief, Security Division

1 - Office of Special Investigations
Air Force

Attention: Chief, Counterintelligence Division

1 - Director of Naval Intelligence

1 - Assistant Attorney General
J. Walter Yeagley

p 12

l 19-21. eliminate " -- until
was --- autumn of '61" ten

p 22

l 19

eliminate "So"

p 23

l 12

"informed" should read "forward"

22 July

Richard W. Bassill Jr.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

In Reply, Please Refer to
File No.

TOP SECRET

May 22, 1961

ARTHUR JAMES BALLETTI, et al.

On May 3, 1961, Colonel Sheffield Edwards,
Director of Security, Central Intelligence Agency (CIA)
furnished the following information.

Colonel Edwards advised that in connection with
CIA's operation against Castro he personally contacted Robert
Maheu during the Fall of 1960 for the purpose of using Maheu
as a "cut-out" in contacts with Sam Giancana, a known hoodlum
in the Chicago area. Colonel Edwards said that since the
underworld controlled gambling activities in Cuba under the
Batista government, it was assumed that this element would
still continue to have sources and contacts in Cuba which
perhaps could be utilized successfully in connection with
CIA's clandestine efforts against the Castro government.
As a result, Maheu's services were solicited as a "cut-out"
because of his possible entree into underworld circles.
Maheu obtained Sam Giancana's assistance in this regard and
according to Edwards, Giancana gave every indication of
cooperating through Maheu in attempting to accomplish several
clandestine efforts in Cuba. Edwards added that none of
Giancana's efforts have materialized to date and that several
of the plans still are working and may eventually "pay off."

Colonel Edwards related that he had no direct
contact with Giancana; that Giancana's activities were
completely "back stopped" by Maheu and that Maheu would
frequently report Giancana's action and information to
Edwards. No details or methods used by Maheu or Giancana
in accomplishing their missions were ever reported to
Edwards. Colonel Edwards said that since this is "dirty
business" he could not afford to have knowledge of the actions
of Maheu and Giancana in pursuit of any mission for CIA.
Colonel Edwards added that he has neither given Maheu any
instruction to use technical installations of any type nor has
the subject of technical installations ever come up between
Edwards and Maheu in connection with Giancana's activity.

~~TOP SECRET~~

ENCLOSURE

- 2 -

TOP SECRET

UNITED STATES
~~TOP SECRET~~

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

CONFIDENTIAL
Colonel Edwards related that Maheu did come to concerning the arrest in Las Vegas of Balletti for "win". Maheu cautioned Edwards that the Balletti arrest could cause some embarrassment since Balletti was in Las Vegas attempting to obtain coverage on some "Hollywood people" in connection with Giancana's efforts for CIA. Edwards said that he did not know the facts of the Balletti case and Maheu claims "Balletti went too far" in his efforts to obtain information. Edwards stated that he was unaware of any reason for this activity of Maheu or Giancana in Las Vegas and that Giancana's activity in furtherance of the anti-Castro activity was left completely in Maheu's hands.

Colonel Edwards advised that only Mr. Bissell (Director of Plans, CIA) and two others in CIA were aware of Giancana - Maheu activity in behalf of CIA's program. Allen Dulles was completely unaware of Edwards' contact with Maheu in this connection. He added that Mr. Bissell, in his recent briefings of General Taylor and the Attorney General in connection with their inquiries into CIA relating to the Cuban situation, told the Attorney General that some of the associated planning included the use of Giancana and other underworld against Castro.

"Property of FBI
This report and its contents are
loaned to you by the FBI, and
neither it nor its contents are
to be distributed outside the agency
to which loaned."

- 2 -

~~TOP SECRET~~

14 May 1962

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD:

SUBJECT: Arthur James Balletti et al - Unauthorized Publication
or Use of Communications

1. This memorandum for the record is prepared at the request of the Attorney General of the United States following a complete oral briefing of him relative to a sensitive CIA operation conducted during the period approximately August 1960 to May 1961. In August 1960 the undersigned was approached by Mr. Richard Bissell then Deputy Director for Plans of CIA to explore the possibility of mounting this sensitive operation against Fidel Castro. It was thought that certain gambling interests which had formerly been active in Cuba might be willing and able to assist and further, might have both intelligence assets in Cuba and communications between Miami, Florida and Cuba. Accordingly, Mr. Robert Maheu, a private investigator of the firm of Maheu and King was approached by the undersigned and asked to establish contact with a member or members of the gambling syndicate to explore their capabilities. Mr. Maheu was known to have accounts with several prominent business men and organizations in the United States. Maheu was to make his approach to the syndicate as appearing to represent big business organizations which wished to protect their interests in Cuba. Mr. Maheu accordingly met and established contact with one John Rosselli of Los Angeles. Mr. Rosselli showed interest in the possibility and indicated he had some contacts in Miami that he might use. Maheu reported that John Rosselli said he was not interested in any remuneration but would seek to establish capabilities in Cuba to perform the desired project. Towards the end of September Mr. Maheu and Mr. Rosselli proceeded to Miami where, as reported, Maheu was introduced to Sam Giancana of Chicago. Sam Giancana arranged for Maheu and Rosselli to meet with a "courier" who was going back

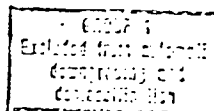
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Copy No. 2 of 2

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TOP SECRET

Page 1 of 3 pages



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and forth to Havana. From information received back by the courier the proposed operation appeared to be feasible and it was decided to obtain an official Agency approval in this regard. A figure of one hundred fifty thousand dollars was set by the Agency as a payment to be made on completion of the operation and to be paid only to the principal or principals who would conduct the operation in Cuba. Maheu reported that Rosselli and Giancana emphatically stated that they wished no part of any payment. The undersigned then briefed the proper senior officials of this Agency on the proposal. Knowledge of this project during its life was kept to a total of six persons and never became a part of the project current at the time for the invasion of Cuba and there were no memoranda on the project nor were there other written documents or agreements. The project was duly orally approved by the said senior officials of the Agency.

2. Rosselli and Maheu spent considerable time in Miami talking with the courier. Sam Giancana was present during parts of these meetings. Several months after this period Maheu told me that Sam Giancana had asked him to put a listening device in the room of one Phyllis McGuire, reported to be the mistress of Giancana. At that time it was reported to me that Maheu passed the matter over to one Edward Du Boise, another private investigator. It appears that Arthur James Balletti was discovered in the act of installing the listening device and was arrested by the Sheriff in Las Vegas, Nevada. Maheu reported to me that he had referred the matter to Edward Du Boise on behalf of Sam Giancana. At the time of the incident neither this Agency nor the undersigned knew of the proposed technical installation. Maheu stated that Sam Giancana thought that Phyllis McGuire might know of the proposed operation and might pass on the information to one Dan Rowan, another friend of McGuire's. At the time that Maheu reported this to the undersigned he reported he was under surveillance by agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, who, he thought, were exploring his association with John Rosselli and Sam Giancana incident to the project. I told Maheu that if he was formally approached by the FBI, he could refer them to me to be briefed that he was engaged in an intelligence operation directed at Cuba.

3. During the period from September on through April efforts were continued by Rosselli and Maheu to proceed with the operation. The first principal in Cuba withdrew and another principal

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Page 2 of 3 pages
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was selected as has been briefed to The Attorney General. Ten thousand dollars was passed for expenses to the second principal. He was further furnished with approximately one thousand dollars worth of communications equipment to establish communications between his headquarters in Miami and assets in Cuba. No monies were ever paid to Rosselli and Giancana. Maheu was paid part of his expense money during the periods that he was in Miami. After the failure of the invasion of Cuba word was sent through Maheu to Rosselli to call off the operation and Rosselli was told to tell his principal that the proposal to pay one hundred fifty thousand dollars for completion of the operation had been definitely withdrawn.

4. In all this period it has been definitely established from other sources that the Cuban principals involved never discovered or believed that there was other than business and syndicate interest in the project. To the knowledge of the undersigned there were no "leaks" of any information concerning the project in the Cuban community in Miami or in Cuba.

5. I have no proof but it is my conclusion that Rosselli and Giancana guessed or assumed that CIA was behind the project. I never met either of them.

6. Throughout the entire period of the project John Rosselli was the dominant figure in directing action to the Cuban principals. Reasonable monitoring of his activities indicated that he gave his best efforts to carrying out the project without requiring any commitments for himself, financial or otherwise.

7. In view of the extreme sensitivity of the information set forth above, only one additional copy of this memorandum has been made and will be retained by the Agency.

15/
Sheffield Edwards

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Page 3 of 3 pages

3 November 1960

E-5

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Minutes of Special Group Meeting, 3 November 1960

PRESENT: Messrs. Merchant, Douglas, Gray, Gen. Cabell,
Gen. Lansdale

✓
1. Cuba

Mr. Gray inquired once more as to the status of planning for problems which would arise post-Castro. Mr. Merchant said he would check into the progress of the State Department group which has been charged with developing recommendations on this matter.

From this the Group launched into a far-ranging discussion of the entire concept of U.S. efforts against Castro. Mr. Douglas, supported by Mr. Gray and Mr. Merchant, expounded the idea that perhaps things have now progressed to a point where covert activities of the type originally envisaged for CIA to undertake will not be effective. Mr. Douglas referred to the extensive program of the militia, Mr. Gray cited the matter of arms from the Soviet bloc, and Mr. Merchant dwelt on the increasing effectiveness of Castro's measures to control the population in ways which the Communists have developed so well. The latter said that he and others in the State Department had originally thought that a popular rebellion would develop within Cuba and that this could be augmented by the comparatively small-scale efforts of exiles under CIA control. Now the same people are beginning to feel more and more that despite the numerous defections and the economic deprivations being experienced by the middle and upper classes, time is actually working on Castro's side. Mr. Merchant said that he foresaw that there would occur a point in time beyond which covert intervention would not do the job.

Mr. Gray expressed the opinion that we will never be able to "clean up" the situation without the use of overt U.S. military force. He suggested the possibility of using the CIA-backed exiles to mount a simulated attack on Guantanamo in order to offer an excuse for overt

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intervention. This led to an involved discussion, the general conclusion of which was that such action on our part would not be desirable, but that should Castro be foolish enough actually to attack Guantanamo this would almost certainly mean war. Mr. Gray said that he had had the subject of Cuba inscribed on the NSC agenda for next Monday in order to be able to arrive at a top-level decision on this very point. He thought it essential that the policy of the U.S. should be completely understood by responsible officials, so that any overt Cuban act would be met with a previously-agreed-on response.

Mr. Merchant stated that, apart from any attack on Guantanamo, he thought that some of the previous argumentation in today's meeting was faulty, in that we could not have it both ways. By this he meant that it is not logical to conclude that an indigenous uprising is impossible and yet that it is feasible for the U.S. to go in overtly and "clean up the mess." He pointed out that if Castro's support were such that an uprising was out of the question then an open invasion by the U.S. would be met by a hostile population and we would be plunged into a situation like Algeria.

Turning to the immediate problem before the Group, Gen. Cabell outlined the general proposal to establish bases in the U.S., with the reasons for coming to this conclusion. He cited specifically the possibility of U.N. investigation in Guatemala and the increased scope of the program, which has been brought about by the increased strength of the Castro regime. All members of the Group expressed serious doubts as to whether such activity could be kept at all secure. Mr. Merchant said at one point, that although this does not represent a final conclusion on his part, he is inclined to think that the proposal embodies the worst aspect of both worlds; that is, the choice should rest between continuing our operations entirely on foreign soil or preparing to make the best possible case for overt intervention.

Mr. Gray suggested that the decision could be put up to his associates at the same time Tibet is discussed. Mr. Merchant agreed that this is where it should end up, but asserted that he is not prepared to move in that direction until a survey has been made of the possibilities of keeping operations in the U.S. unrevealed.

In this connection Gen. Cabell mentioned the possibility of using a refugee organization - either an existing one or a contrived one - to backstop the operations.

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Mr. Douglas said that in any case he would be prepared to have the Department of Defense investigate the availability of specific locations that would be suitable.

Finally, Mr. Merchant asked whether any real planning has been done for taking direct positive action against Fidel, Raul and Che Guevara. He said that without these three the Cuban Government would be leaderless and probably brainless. He conceded that it would be necessary to act against all three simultaneously. Gen. Cabell pointed out that action of this kind is uncertain of results and highly dangerous in conception and execution, because the instruments must be Cubans. He felt that, particularly because of the necessity of simultaneous action, it would have to be concluded that Mr. Merchant's suggestion is beyond our capabilities.

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✓4. Supply Drops - Cuba

Gen. Cabell explained that the Pinar de Rio supply mission had not taken place because of the absence of specified communication from the DZ, and the Escambray operation had been canceled because of weather. He said that these missions are still planned, and assumed that the Group had no objections. The members so signified.

✓5. U-2, Cuba

Gen. Cabell said that the photographic coverage on the first flight had been only about 50%, because of cloud cover. He continued that we are analyzing the exact results on a priority basis and that some time after the middle of next week we should be in a position to make recommendations for the missions required to extend the coverage.

Mr. Gray commented somewhat wryly that this was all right with him since he "would certainly not be available to discuss anything of this kind before the middle of next week." The other members appeared to have the same reaction.

✓6. Policy Consideration Re Cuban Exiles

Mr. Gray said that Assistant Attorney General Yeagley had spoken to him after his meeting with Col. King and Messrs. Esterline and Holman. He had said that the information given to him by the CIA representatives, and the arrangements for future coordination if necessary, were entirely satisfactory to him. He had stated, however, that a problem remains with respect to action the FBI should take; that is, the FBI needs guidance in its handling of Cuban exile groups other than those under the direction of CIA.

The Group agreed that the best way to attack this problem would be to have Mr. Yeagley attend next week's Special Group meeting and discuss the matter at first hand. Mr. Parrott was asked to make arrangements for this.

✓7. Value of Cuba to the USSR as a Base Vis-a-vis
Cape Canaveral

Mr. Parrott gave Mr. Merchant the gist of the OSI memorandum

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on this subject, which had been discussed with the rest of the Group
on 20 October 1960.

T. A. Parrott
THOMAS A. PARROTT

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Occurrence: In the briefing in late November 1960 of President-elect KENNEDY by DULLES and BISSELL, under close questioning BISSELL states that KENNEDY was not told of the use of the Mafia because:

1. KENNEDY was President-elect and it was inappropriate to tell him of this, even though BISSELL himself recognized it was peculiar that he should be advised of the planned invasion of a foreign country, but not the assassination of its leaders;
2. Neither he nor DULLES were following the matter closely enough to have operational knowledge; or

3. It was DULLES' responsibility in any event.
BISSELL then allows as to how it was "quite possible" that JFK was told but, if so, only in general terms as neither CIA official had detailed knowledge. His best recollection, though, is that the subject did not come up.

Then, pressed on when the CIA put a contract out with the Mafia, such knowledge is shared with the President, he retreats to saying he believes it was the Director's responsibility to do so. Further, he believes that through some channel of DULLES', JFK was briefed on the use of the Mafia, but concedes he is only guessing.

Persons/Entities:

KENNEDY, John F. (President-elect)
DULLES, Allen
BISSELL, Richard
MAFIA

Dates:

late Nov.
1960

Categories:

CASTRO

Source:

Bissell, 6/9/75, pp. 35-40.

Staff:

R. Dawson

Files:

11 July 1975
Date:

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TO: Fritz Schwarz
FROM: Frederick Baron

DATE: July 10, 1975

McGEORGE BUNDY

Testimony of Richard Bissell on EXECUTIVE ACTION

1. TAB S (pp. 48-54 -- 6/9/75)

Bissell testified that when he asked HARVEY to create the EXECUTIVE ACTION CAPABILITY it "could have been BUNDY" (49) or ROSTOW (51) who asked him to do this. Bissell does not recall any specific conversation (51). Bissell and Rostow are "the names of the two people from whom it [the request for such a capability] is most likely to come from." (53).

2. TAB T (pp. 58-59 -- 6/9/75)

Bissell said he assumes that BUNDY and ROSTOW would have been the bureaucratic channel for such a request (58).

3. TAB U (pp. 80-83 -- 6/9/75)

Bissell testified that the "urgings" for an EXECUTIVE ACTION CAPABILITY could have come at the weekly luncheon meetings with BUNDY, ROSTOW, and representatives from STATE, CIA, and DEFENSE (81-82).

Bissell testified that as he normally operated, he would have replied to ROSTOW in such cases (82). "When I reported to him [ROSTOW] it would have gone to BUNDY as well." (82).

4. TAB V (pp. 16-19 -- 6/11/75)

IG REPORT, 1967: "On November 15, 1961, HARVEY has a note that on that date he discussed with Bissell the application of these ZR/RIFLE programs to Cuba. HARVEY says that Bissell instructed him to take over EDWARDS' contact with the criminal syndicate, and thereafter to run the operation against CASTRO."

Bissell testified that he did not recall directing the reactivation of the project but, he said, "I think I did, as part of Mr. HARVEY's responsibility for Project RIFLE, instruct him to take over the contact." (19). Bissell agreed that the purpose of the contact

had been to assassinate CASTRO and said that "it is a fair inference that there would have been no reason to maintain it /the contact/ unless there was some possibility of reactivating that operation." (19).

5. TAB W (pp. 42-53 -- 6/11/75)

Bissell testified: "There is little doubt in my mind that Project RIFLE was discussed with ROSTOW and possibly BUNDY." (46). Bissell said he discussed "all aspects of the creation of the capability." (50). Bissell said it was "quite possible" that he discussed CASTRO, TRUJILLO, and LUMUMBA with ROSTOW as examples of assassination targets. (50).

When asked a final time, by Senator Baker, whether he recalled discussing the assassination capability with ROSTOW and BUNDY, Bissell replied: "I am not sure about BUNDY, but I think ROSTOW, yes, sir." (52)