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## JFK ASSASSINATION SYSTEM

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1 The Chairman. The hearing will come to order.

2 I would like to ask Mr. Schwarz if he would give us a  
3 brief synopsis of what we intend to question our witness  
4 about this morning.

5 Mr. Schwarz. The witness this morning will only be a  
6 single witness. He is Mr. Samuel Halpern. He was in the  
7 Far East, and I have now found out he was involved in the  
8 Sukarno moving and some alleged killing of an agent in  
9 Thailand, which are collateral matters that we may want to  
10 take up with him at the end.

11 But he came back here in the fall of 1961 and was in-  
12 structed as assistant to get into the Cuban matter. And  
13 he will testify that he was told that they would proceed  
14 to overthrow the Castro government, and that there were no  
15 holds barred.

16 He will then describe the way in which they worked  
17 with the Special Group.

18 The Chairman. What was Halpern's position?

19 Mr. Schwarz. Halpern's position was as Executive  
20 Assistant to Harvey. And Harvey, you will remember, was the  
21 man that was actually in charge of the Cuban position.

22 The Chairman. When are we going to get Harvey?

23 Mr. Schwarz. He is coming next Wednesday morning.

24 We are going to get some of this same conflict between  
25 the no-holds-barred testimony, which in his mind I guess he

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1 Mr. Halpern. Yes, sir.

2 Mr. Schwarz. Who else was present at that meeting?

3 Mr. Halpern. A Mr. Ghose Zogbey. He was my branch  
4 chief.

5 Mr. Schwarz. Is he alive today, or is he dead?

6 Mr. Halpern. He died last year.

7 Mr. Schwarz. Approximately when in the fall of 1961  
8 did that meeting take place?

9 Mr. Halpern. About the middle of October 1961.

10 Mr. Schwarz. What instructions were you given by Mr.  
11 Bissell at tht meeting?

12 Mr. Halpern. Mr. Bissell said he had recently -- and  
13 he didn't specificy the date or the time -- he had recently  
14 been chewed out in the Cabinet Room of the White House by  
15 borh the President and the Attorney General for, as he put  
16 it, sitting on his ass and not doing anything about getting  
17 rid of Castro and the Castro regime. His orders to both  
18 Mr. Zogbey and to me were to plan for an operation to  
19 accomplish that end.

20 Mr. Schwarz. Was any content put into the term  
21 "get rid of", or was that the term that was used, and only  
22 that term?

23 Mr. Halpern. To the best of my recollection, that was  
24 it. There was no limitation of any kind. Nothing was for-  
25 bidden, and nothing was withheld. And the objective was to

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1 remove Castro and his regime.

2 Mr. Schwarz. And did you talk about tactics at all  
3 in that meeting, or was it just a general discussion about  
4 getting organized.

5 Mr. Halpern. Just a general discussion as to what we would  
6 do, how we would proceed, and what we would need. And at  
7 that point I had no idea how many people were left on the staff  
8 in the branch only having been on the job a day or a day and  
9 a half.

10 Mr. Schwarz. Shortly after that time did you get put in  
11 contact with a general?

12 Mr. Halpern. Yes, sir. General Lansdale.

13 Mr. Schwarz. And what was his function when you were  
14 introduced to him?

15 Mr. Halpern. Both Mr. Zogbey and I were introduced  
16 to him as the new chief of Operations for a government-wide  
17 effort to accomplish the removal of Castro and the Castro  
18 regime. This effort was to include not only CIA but the  
19 Department of State and the Department of Defense. And  
20 General Lansdale was to be the Chief of Operations for that  
21 outfit.

22 Mr. Schwarz. And did you brief him about Cuba or did  
23 he brief you about the operation, or what was the nature of that?

24 Mr. Halpern. No, we briefed him first in the old  
25 Situation Room, what used to called the Ibell Building, which

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1 Mr. Halpern. It wasn't a matter of General Lansdale's  
2 being in charge, or the Attorney General being in charge,  
3 nobody objected to General Lansdale reporting to the Attorney  
4 General.

5 It was a matter of whether this would be done through  
6 the normal chain of command, or whether we would actually be  
7 under the General's direct command.

8 Mr. Schwarz. But it still is a characterization, you  
9 were dealing with organization and bureaucracy?

10 Mr. Halpern. That is right. And drafting papers.

11 Mr. Schwarz. Drafting papers to do what?

12 Mr. Halpern. To try to get organized in terms of how  
13 we would accomplish the objective.

14 Mr. Schwarz. Did any of those papers that you drafted  
15 in those early stages include any reference to assassination  
16 as a device to accomplish the objective?

17 Mr. Halpern. No, sir.

18 Mr. Schwarz. Now, did Mr. Helms enter the picture in  
19 the latter part of December 1961?

20 Mr. Halpern. That is correct.

21 Mr. Schwarz. Describe how he came into the picture.

22 Mr. Halpern. To my knowledge, Mr. Zogbey described to  
23 me a meeting he had been at at the Director's morning staff  
24 meeting -- this is Mr. McCone's morning staff meeting -- in  
25 which Mr. McCone, almost in terms of a bombshell for the

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1 group at the meeting, stated that Mr. Helms would henceforth  
2 be -- the words were, his man on Cuba. This was something  
3 that nobody in the room apparently had any inkling of, and  
4 particularly Mr. Helms, nor ~~Mr. Zogbey~~.

5 The Chairman. May I ask you to repeat that?

6 I am sorry, I just didn't catch it.

7 Mr. Halpern. At a meeting sometime in December 1961,  
8 which was the morning staff meeting that the Director held, and  
9 ~~Mr. Zogbey~~ was present --

10 Mr. Schwarz. But you were not?

11 Mr. Halpern I was not, I got this from ~~Mr. Zogbey~~ --  
12 the Director, Mr. McCone, announced that Mr. Helms would be  
13 his man on Cuba, Mr. Helms would then be the Chief of Operations  
14 for the Deputy Director of Plans, and Mr. Bissell was in the  
15 room as the DDP.

16 Mr. Helms had no inkling of this before the meeting,  
17 and so stated to ~~Mr. Zogbey~~, and even asked ~~Mr. Zogbey~~ if he had  
18 had any inkling before the meeting.

19 ~~Mr. Zogbey~~ told me that he had none whatsoever.

20 Mr. Schwarz. Did Mr. Helms then come and visit your  
21 new organization and tell you to make some changes?

22 Mr. Halpern. Yes. He came to ~~Mr. Zogbey~~'s office and looked  
23 at the list of officers, male and female, who were still  
24 working in the branch. Most of them were the remnants of the  
25 people from the old Bay of Pigs operation who had not yet been  
reassigned.

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1 involved in this operation? That was the first reference I  
2 recall to a female operative.

3 Mr. Schwarz. There was no such previous evidence.

4 Mr. Halpern. We had a number of female officers, and  
5 still do, in our branches. And there were some in the Cuban  
6 branch and the Cuban task force.

7 Senator Huddleston. What types of activities did they  
8 participate in?

9 Mr. Halpern. Oh, recruiting of agents, the handling  
10 of agents, disseminating reports, preparing propaganda guid-  
11 ances, preparing papers for a special group as appropriate,  
12 doing the work of any other officer.

13 Senator Huddleston. Can you name one or suggest one  
14 that was heavily involved in the assassination attempt?

15 Mr. Halpern. Oh, I don't know of any in the assassina-  
16 tion attempt per se.

17 Senator Huddleston. You don't know of any?

18 Mr. Halpern. No, sir.

19 Senator Huddleston. Thank you.

20 The Chairman. Senator Mondale?

21 Senator Mondale. I am sorry I came in late, Mr. Hal-  
22 pern, and missed some of your testimony. As I came in you  
23 were saying that orders came from somewhere to get off your  
24 ass.

25 Mr. Halpern. Yes, sir. Mr. Bissell told Mr. Zogbey

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1 cers whose objective would be to plan for the overthrow of  
2 the Castro regime.

3 Mr. Smothers. Was it your understanding that these  
4 plans were to extend to assassination?

5 Mr. Halpern. That word was not used, sir. But no  
6 holds were barred, and we had no limitation.

7 Mr. Smothers. Let me ask you it another way. What was  
8 your understanding of what Mr. Bissell had been told to do  
9 by the President and the Attorney General?

10 Mr. Halpern. To get rid of Castro and the Castro regime  
11 on the Island of Cuba.

12 Mr. Smothers. Did Mr. Bissell convey to you the idea  
13 that that included killing Castro?

14 Mr. Halpern. The subject never came up per se.

15 Mr. Smothers. What did you come away from that meeting  
16 expecting to do?

17 Mr. Halpern. We were very hard put to come up with  
18 any real ideas. We didn't know what to do, frankly. And we  
19 went back -- one thing we both agreed on, both Zogbey and  
20 I, is that we were not going to come up with a piece of  
21 paper which said this was going to be easy or could be done  
22 overnight, or could be done with mirrors.

23 The Chairman. Did you come away after your conversation  
24 with Mr. Bissell with the idea that he had instructed you  
25 to come up with a plan of some kind designed to overthrow,

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1 later.

2 The Chairman. I would like to take this and several  
3 other questions up with the committee, one of which deals  
4 with the question of the August recess. And I want to  
5 confer with you on that, too.

6 How many more questions do you have?

7 Mr. Schwarz. Instead of asking the other questions I will  
8 ask whether he knows anything about them, and we could bring  
9 him back later if he does.

10 Do you know anything about 

11 

12 

13 Mr. Halpern. Yes, sir.

14 Mr. Schwarz. We will bring you back on that.

15 The Chairman. Can we get that done now?

16 Mr. Schwarz. Such a  was made in  Hollywood, was it?

17 Mr. Halpern. I don't know where it was made, sir,  
18 but I know it was made.

19 Mr. Schwarz. It was made in the U.S.?

20 Mr. Halpern. As far as I know it was.

21 Mr. Schwarz. And was that done under your direction?

22 Mr. Halpern. Well, it was done at the Far East Division  
23 request, and I was the one who did the negotiating with the  
24 Office of Security.

25 Mr. Schwarz. And was the plan that 

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Mr. Halpern. No, sir, that was not the plan at all.

6

Mr. Schwarz. What was the plan?

7

Mr. Halpern. The plan was to have ~~such a film from~~

8

~~which we could make film~~ which we could use in the propaganda

9

activity

10

11

12

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14

Mr. Schwarz. In short, it was ~~a fake movie~~ which was

15

designed to put [redacted] in an undesirable light, ~~by~~

16

17

18

Mr. Halpern. And, therefore, [redacted]

19

Senator Mondale. How was ~~that film~~ supposed to get to

20

21

Mr. Halpern. It wasn't ~~a film~~. The original plan was

22

to use ~~clips from~~ it in propaganda leaflets, and pamphlets,

23

and things like that, just ~~pictures from the film~~.

24

Mr. Schwarz. Who authorized that?

25

Mr. Halpern. ~~Mr. Ulmer~~, who was then Division Chief.

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1 Mr. Schwarz. Do you know if any higher authority  
2 authorized it?

3 Mr. Halpern. Not offhand, no, sir, personally I don't  
4 know.

5 Mr. Schwarz. And was it done, or was it turned off?  
6 I mean, the ~~pictures were taken~~?

7 Mr. Halpern. The ~~picture was taken~~, and that was the  
8 end of it.

9 Mr. Schwarz. And Mr. Maheu was used to accomplish it?

10 Mr. Halpern. I have no idea whatsoever.

11 Mr. Schwarz. And were ~~the clips used~~ [redacted]

12 Mr. Halpern. No, they were not.

13 Mr. Schwarz. Why not?

14 Mr. Halpern. We didn't have any proper outlets to  
15 get it done.

16 Mr. Schwarz. You had ~~the film~~, but you had no way to  
17 distribute it [redacted]?

18 Mr. Halpern. ~~Not the film, but the clips.~~

19 Mr. Schwarz. [redacted]

20 [redacted]  
21 Mr. Halpern. The name is brand new to me, sir.

22 Mr. Schwarz. Do you know anything about the [redacted]

23 [redacted]

24 Mr. Halpern. No, sir.

25 Mr. Schwarz. [redacted]

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[Redacted]  
Peter Joast?

Mr. Halpern. That I participated? No, sir.

Mr. Schwarz. [Redacted]

[Redacted]

Mr. Halpern. No, sir. I was only in Bangkok, I think, once in my life.

Mr. Schwarz. That doesn't ring a bell at all?

Mr. Halpern. No, sir.

Mr. Schwarz. Do you know about any other killings?

Mr. Halpern. No, sir.

The Chairman. Any other questions?

Senator Schweiker. I just want to say, Mr. Chairman, that I would like to compliment the witness for some very clear and impartial answers, instead of the partial amnesia that we have run into lately.

And I think your kind of candor is very helpful to us in this committee to do the job. And I think it was very refreshing to hear some clear-cut specific recommendations of what did or did not happen. I just want to thank you.

The Chairman. I agree.

Thank you very much.

If there are no further questions, I think that completes the interrogation.

(The witness left the hearing room.)

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