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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

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September 10, 1963

MEMORANDUM FOR THE FILE

SUBJECT: Board Panel on Covert Action Operations

The Board Panel met in the Board's offices on September 6, 1963. Panel members present were Mr. Robert Murphy, Chairman; Mr. Gordon Gray; and Dr. William Langer. Messrs. Coyne and Ash also attended the meeting.

During the course of its meeting the Panel was briefed by Mr. Richard Helms (Deputy DCI/Plans, CIA) and his assistants, Mr. Cord Meyer and Mr. Desmond Fitzgerald (head of CIA's headquarters staff dealing with Cuba). Highlights of the briefings were as follows:

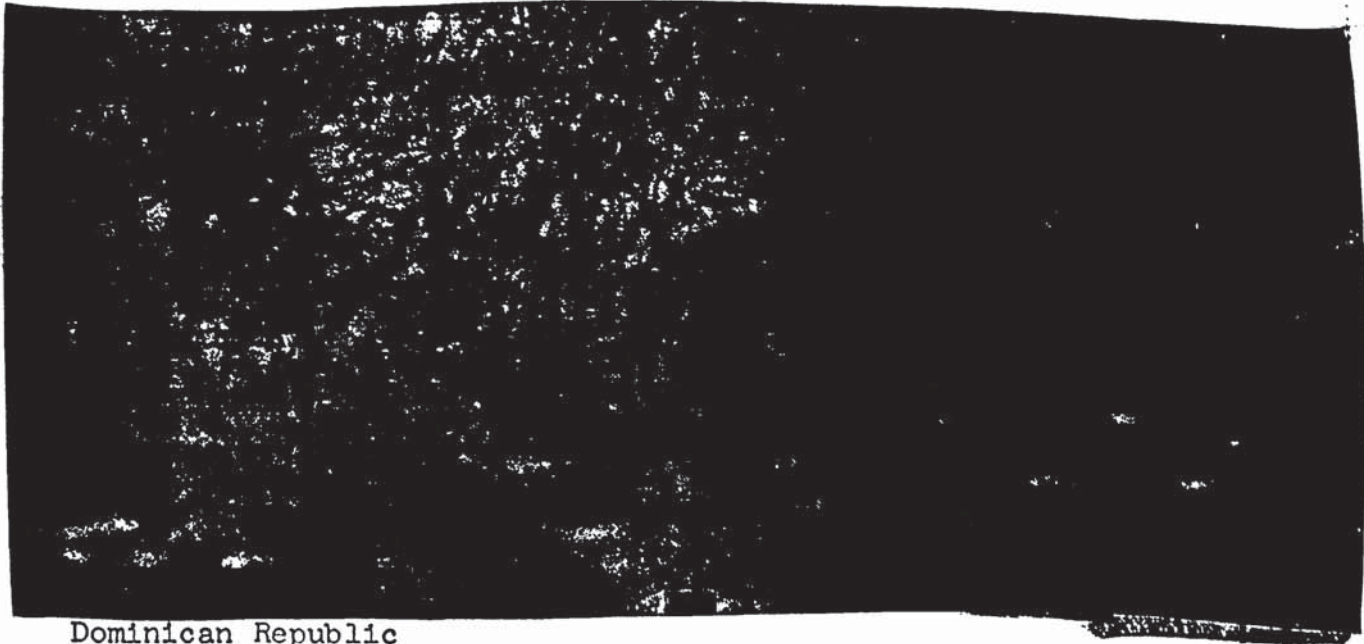
MESSRS: HELMS and MEYER



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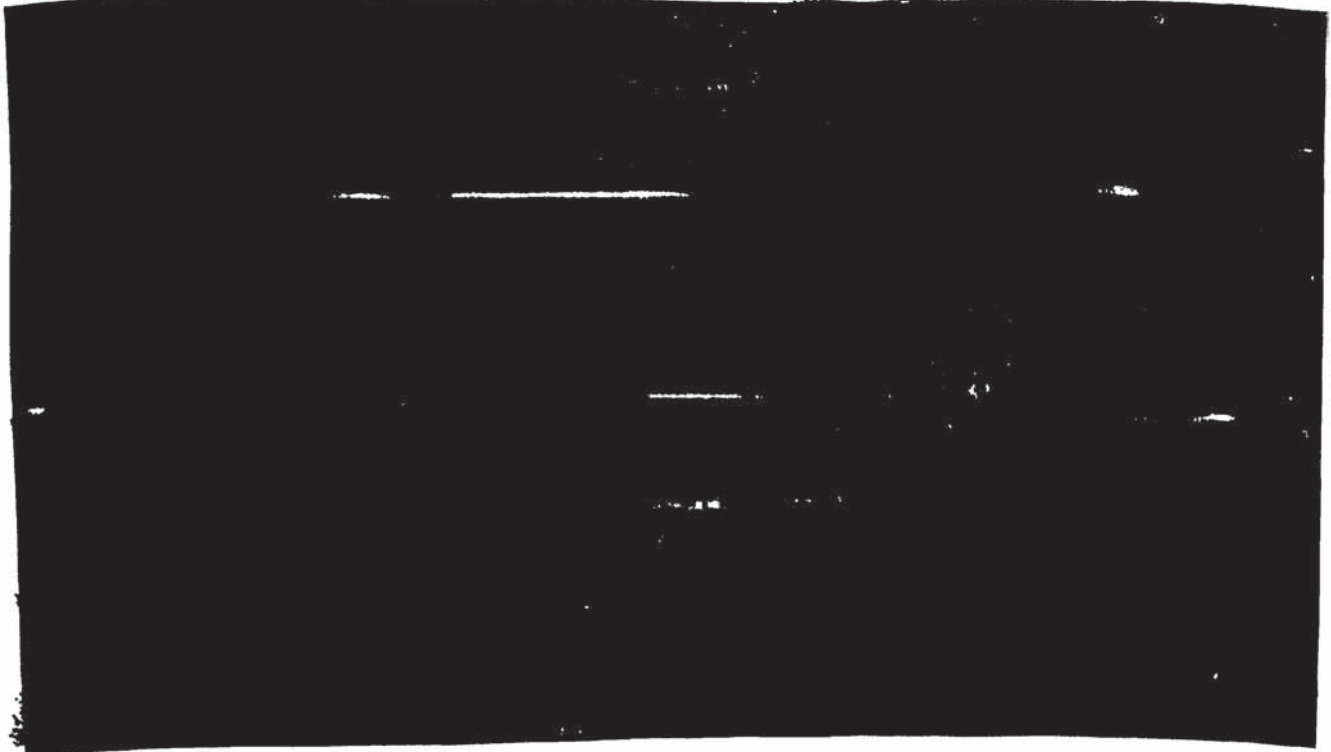
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Dominican Republic



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Vietnam

CIA's role in Vietnam during the past two years has been two-fold:

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(1) Total support of the war against the Viet Cong, including the training of some 43,000 irregulars (now turned over to U. S. Special Forces); support to the mountain people in operations against the Viet Cong; and CIA training of U. S. Special Forces in South Vietnam.


(2) CIA support of infiltration operations in North Vietnam. (Not a great success. High losses of teams.)

^a
In response to/question based on recent U. S. press allegations that CIA is attempting to overthrow the Diem government: "CIA has never engaged in any such operations whatsoever -- no instigation of the Buddhists -- nothing." CIA considers that anti-CIA expressions of this kind originate with Madame Nhu. The Viet Cong has been working on the Buddhists, but the Buddhist leader who took sanctuary in the U. S. Embassy has indicated that the Buddhist activity is motivated by a desire to unify what is a loosely-joined, individual-Pagoda-type religious movement.

August 20 saw the temple raids, martial law, and then the arrests of students. One U. S. reaction was an August 24 cablegram from the State Department (presumably hastily prepared) which, in nice diplomatic language to State Department representatives in Saigon, gave the word to "unload the Nhuss" -- i.e., indicate to the anti-Diem plotters among the Generals that they should get moving. However, the Generals proved to be lacking in any intention to pursue their previously-professed anti-Diem sentiments. CIA considers that the August 24 State Department cablegram was the result of a miscalculation of the General's true capabilities and intentions. CIA understands that subsequently the Executive Committee of the NSC has met frequently on the subject, and more recent State Department cables have reflected a revision of the earlier "unload the Nhuss" message.

As yet the political situation in South Vietnam has not had an adverse effect on the military effort, nor any increased Viet Cong moves to capitalize on the situation. (Mr. Helms departed at this point.)

Italy



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MR. FITZGERALD
(On the subject of Cuba)

In June the NSC Special Group approved a CIA proposal for a package of covert actions against Cuba. The covert program assumes that means short of military action are to be attempted on the premise that at the present rate of progress, the Castro regime will be even more firmly entrenched because the passage of time runs in Castro's favor.

Mr. Fitzgerald turned to a listing of the approved CIA covert actions, remarking that if they seemed familiar proposals which were previously under consideration, it should be kept in mind that they have now been approved as "interdependent" actions. The actions call for (1) covert collection of intelligence, (2) propaganda action to stimulate "low-key sabotage", (3) stimulate disaffection among the Cuban military, (4) an economic denial

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program aimed at precluding acquisition of spare parts for industrial machinery, and other products needed by Cuba, (5) a sabotage program of a general nature, and (6) support of anti-Castro autonomous groups, by giving them money and the means to act, but under an arrangement which insures against attribution to the United States, and which precludes operations from U. S. or British soil. (The CIA philosophy is to back only the potentially powerful and effective anti-Castro groups, and the military is felt to be the best bet.)

The CIA effort represents a shift from external raids to internal sabotage actions. CIA mounts about 10 "black" operations a month, and Castro security forces have taken their toll among the CIA teams. Three operations were conducted on August 17 and 18, and among other things the objective is to give encouragement to dissident Cuban elements such as military officers who see no professional future under Castro who is unloading military elements which aided him in his initial seizure of the government. (The Special Group, Mr. Bundy and other White House staff note the successful mounting of CIA's sabotage operations and have asked for more to be conducted. CIA has found it necessary to resist any such pressures for these operations to be increased beyond the present effective capacity which CIA has at this time.)

Again, referring to the Cuban economy, it is hurting badly. The United States has a monopoly on the spare parts for industrial machinery needed by Cuba, and the USSR cannot supply them. The Cuban electrical industry is particularly hard hit in this respect. Castro's re-emphasis on an agricultural step-up means increased efforts to produce sugar, a crop which presents a good sabotage target. Finally, the Soviet aid at a rate of \$1 million a day (military and economic) is not enough to keep the Cuban economy going. Cubans are not starving but they do not eat "comfortably" even in the larger cities. CIA finds that a major problem for their "black" teams is food re-supply in areas where the Cubans are hard put to feed themselves.

CIA assets being used against Cuba:

- Staff: [redacted] (Washington and Miami) 16
- U. S. contractor personnel: [redacted] 16
- Foreign nationals: 16 [redacted] (mostly Cubans)
- Personnel at overseas posts: [redacted] 16
- DD/I staff: [redacted] 16
- NPIC: a big effort on U-2 photography of Cuba.

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CIA considers that of all nationalities, the Cubans are the most unreliable (prone to exaggerate). The best information comes from non-Cuban agents.

There are [redacted] agents in Cuba, including friendly diplomatic personnel. There are [redacted] illegal teams working, one of which [redacted] has [redacted] sub-agents. There are [redacted] legal travelers working; [redacted] [redacted] agents in Cuban shipping; and there are [redacted] penetrations of [redacted] Cuban installations abroad.

As to Soviet shipping into Cuba, CIA has an agent in every port, but observers cannot say what is in the crates they see being off-loaded.

Since January CIA has disseminated 150 photographs taken by agents on-the-ground in Cuba. Also CIA has furnished its agents in Cuba more and better radio equipment.

CIA's estimate of bloc personnel in Cuba: 12,000 Soviet troops; 150 Chinese (mostly diplomatic personnel); an unknown number of Soviet civilian technicians; and "a lot" of Czech and other bloc technicians working with the Cuban military forces.

CIA considers that in the past 9 months progress has been made in (1) intelligence collection with respect to Cuba, and (2) effectiveness of the economic denial program. CIA feels that the "X" factor is the volatility of the Cuban people whose resignation to their lot under Castro would change overnight if they see evidence of successful sabotage operations against the Cuban government.

CIA penetration of the Cuban military got under way in April. An agent brought out a Cuban Army [redacted] [redacted]. The [redacted] says that there is a medium level acceptance among the military of the idea of overthrowing Castro, but although this view is held by individual members of the military they are fearful of communicating it to others within Cuba. [redacted] Defectors are naming military personnel to be contacted. There is, however, a fear of the Castro security system.

The subject of specific kinds and amounts of Soviet military equipment in Cuba is an area of the worst exaggeration and reporting by nonprofessional observers. However, there is no evidence of offensive missiles. There are 47 MIG-21's operated by Cuban pilots. Cubans are at the SA-2 sites and are being trained to operate them. We don't know what is in the caves, exactly. Neither CIA agents nor Cubans (nor even Castro) has access to the Soviet armored camps.

a
A. R. Ash

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