

FOREIGN RELATIONS OF THE UNITED STATES  
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Cuba, 1961-1962

DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
Washington

Cuba, 1961-1962

331. Memorandum for the Record

Washington, April 26, 1962.

//Source: Central Intelligence Agency, DCI Files: Job 91-00741R, Box 1, Mongoose Papers. Secret; Eyes Only. Prepared by McCone. The memorandum apparently records a meeting of the Special Group (Augmented).

SUBJECT

Cuba

1. General Lansdale reported on the activities as per the attached report./1/ McCone expressed dissatisfaction with progress; stated nothing had been accomplished in putting Cubans in the Army for training and that no actions had been taken on matters decided two weeks ago. (In other words, I was very disagreeable.) McCone finally recommended more action; acceptance of attribution if necessary; establishment of training facilities; training of guerrillas and a more dynamic effort in the infiltration of both agents and guerrillas.

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.

/1/ 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 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.

/1/The sensitive operation referred to was described more explicitly in a report prepared by the Inspector General of the CIA on April 25, 1967. According to the report, "CIA twice (first in early 1961 and again in early 1962) supplied lethal pills to U.S. gambling syndicate members working on behalf of CIA in a plot to assassinate Fidel Castro." (Ibid., DCI Files: Job 85-00664R, Box 8, HS/CSG2679, Project Amlash)

The body of the report, which was based largely upon interviews with CIA officials with knowledge of these abortive attempts to assassinate Castro, indicates in fact that three such attempts were made, the first in late February-early March, a second in late March-early April, and a third attempt in April-June 1962.

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 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.

Sheffield Edwards/2/

/2/Printed from a copy that indicates Edwards signed the original.

338. Priority Operations Schedule for Operation Mongoose

Washington, May 17, 1962.

//Source: Department of State, ARA/CCA Files: Lot 66 D 501, Operation Mongoose, Phase I. Top Secret; NoFORN; Special Handling. Prepared by Lansdale. No covering memorandum indicating distribution has been found. The document is stamped to indicate that 12 copies were prepared. A handwritten notation indicates that the source text was Martin's copy. According to a brief memorandum prepared by McCone, the Special Group (Augmented) accepted the schedule on May 17 "for review, study and decision at the meeting on Thursday, May 24." (Central Intelligence Agency, DCI Files: Job 91-00741R, Box 1, Mongoose Papers) See the Supplement. No record of the May 24 meeting has been found.