

Secret 1967 CIA Inspector General's Report on plots to assassinate Fidel Castro:

5 separate phases in Agency assassination planning, although the transitions from one to the other are not always sharply defined. Each phase is a reflection of the then prevailing Government attitude toward the Cuban regime.

- a. Prior to August 60: All of the identifiable schemes prior to about August 60, with one possible exception, were aimed only at discrediting Castro personally by influencing his behavior or by altering his appearance
- b. August 60-August 61: The plots that were hatched in late 1960 and early 61 were aggressively pursued and were viewed by at least some of the participants as being merely one aspect of the over-all active effort to overthrow the regime that culminated in the Bay of Pigs.
- c. April 1961 to late 1961: a major scheme that was begun in August 1960 was called off after the Bay of Pigs and remained dormant for several months, as did most other Agency operational activity related to Cuba.
- d. Late 1961 to late 1962: That particular scheme was reactivated in early 1962 and was again pushed vigorously in the era of Project MONGOOSE and the climate of intense administration pressure on CIA to do something about Castro and his Cuba.
- e. Late 1962 until well into 1963: After the Cuban missile crisis of October 1962 and the collapse of Project MONGOOSE, the aggressive scheme that was begun in August 1960 revived in April 1962 was finally terminated in early 1963. Two other plots were originated in 1963, but both were impracticable and nothing ever came of them.

We cannot overemphasize the extent to which responsible Agency officers felt themselves subject to the Kennedy administration's severe pressures to do something about Castro and his regime. The fruitless and, in retrospect, often unrealistic plotting should be viewed in that light.

Two points:

One, Elimination of the dominant figure in a government, even when loyalties are held to him personally rather than to the government as a body, will not necessarily cause the downfall of the government. This point was stressed with respect to Castro and Cuba in an internal draft paper of Oct 1961, which was initiated in response to Gen Maxwell Taylor's desire for a contingency plan. The paper took the position that the demise of Fidel Castro, from whatever cause, would offer little opportunity for the liberation of Cuba from Communist and Soviet Bloc control.

The second point, which is specifically revelent to our investigation, is that bringing about the downfall of a government necessarily requires the removal of its leaders from positions of power, and there is always the risk that participants will resort to assassination.

GAMBLING SYNDICATE: PHASE ONE

Genesis of the plot

First contact with Maheu
O'Connell named as Case officer
First meeting with Roselli
Briefing of Dulles and Cabell
First meeting between Maheu and Giancana
True identities of Giancana and Trafficante become known
Role of Trafficante
Early planning on the means of assassination
Gunn's involvement with lethal cigars
[] preparation of lethal cigars
Delivery of the cigars to Gunn
Roosevelt learns of the plot
Possible ways of packaging the poison
Decision to package the poison in pill form
Juan Orta is identified as the syndicate's man in Cuba
Gunn tests the pills on guinea pigs
Sequence preceding passing the pills to O'Connell
O'Connell receives the pills and passes them to Roselli
Harvey is briefed on the operation
Trafficante receives the pills and gives them to Orta
Identification of Orta
The Orta channel collapses
Varona is brought into the operation
Edward K. Moss
Roselli associates O'Connell with CIA
Funds are approved for passing to Varona
Money and lethal pills are passed to Varona
Varon's restaurant contact in Cuba
Edwards calls off the operation
Disposition of the pills
Listing of those witting of the operation

GAMBLING SYNDICATE: PHASE TWO

Why Harvey was briefed on Phase 1
Harvey put in charge of the Executive Action Capability
Harvey briefs Helms on the Executive Action Capability
QJWIN--planned assassination of Lumumba
Approval of Project ZRRIFLE
Bissell puts Harvey in charge of the Castro operation
Harvey is told he will head the Cuba task force
Harvey's first meeting with Edwards on the Castro operation
Termination of QUWIN
Harvey briefs Helms on Castro operation
Differing views on the turnover to Harvey
Harvey's first meeting with Roselli in NYC
Roselli and O'Connell go to Miami
Harvey leaves for Miami with lethal pills
Roselli is already in touch with Verona
Harvey takes over "a going operation"
Changes in gangster personnel participating
Maceo enters the operation
Harvey supplies weapons and equipment to Varona
Roselli reports that the pills are in Cuba
Varona sends a 3-man team to Cuba

Varona plans to send 3 militia men to Cuba
Harvey and Roselli agree to terminate the operation
Roselli comes to Washington to meet Harvey
Harvey's meeting with Roselli observed by the FBI
List of persons witting to this phase of the operation

The Wiretapping Incident

Giancana suspects Phyllis McGuire and Dan Rowan
Giancana asks Maheu to bug Rowan's room
Likely date of the bugging incidents
Maheu asks Edward Du Bois to do the job
Du Bois assigns Balletti and Harrison to do the job
Wiretap is made instead of microphone plant
Balletti is caught and phones Maheu for help
Maheu refers the FBI to CIA
Shef Edwards meets with an FBI representative
Edwards intervenes with Sam Papich on Maheu's behalf
Houston intervenes with the Justice Department
Houston briefs General Carter
Edwards and Houston brief the Attorney General

(May 1962; The AG obviously was told of CIA's operational involvement with gangster elements, because he requested a briefing on the details. On 7 May 1962 Sheffield Edwards and Lawrence Houston met with AG Robert Kennedy and, as Edwards put it, "briefed him all the way." Houston says that after the briefing Kennedy "thought about the problem quite seriously." The AG said that he could see the problem and that he could not proceed against those involved in the wiretapping case. He spoke quite firmly, saying in effect, "I trust that if you ever try to do business with organized crime again -- with gangsters -- you will let the Attorney General know before you do it." Houston quotes Edwards as replying that this was a reasonable request.)

Edwards sends a memorandum record of the meeting to Kennedy
(Houston recalls that during the meeting with the Attorney General the latter asked for a memo record of the meeting. Edwards believes the request was made later and by telephone. A memo was prepared and was signed by Edwards. The memo is dated 14 May 1962. It does not state the purpose of the operation on which Kennedy was briefed, but it does make clear the operation was against Castro and its true purpose may be inferred from the memo.

This briefing on a CIA operation embracing gangster elements, which presumably was terminated following the Bay of Pigs fiasco. Kennedy stated his view, reportedly quite strongly, that the AG should be told in advance of any future CIA intentions to work with or through US gangster elements. Kennedy believed he had such a commitment from Agency representatives.

In fact, however, at the time of the 7 May 1962 briefing of Kennedy on "Gambling Syndicate -- Phase 1," Phase 2 under William Harvey was already well under way. The AG was not told that the gambling syndicate operation had already been reactivated, nor as far as we know, was he ever told that CIA had continuing involvement with US gangster elements.)

Gambling Syndicate--Phase 2 is already underway
Helms is briefed on the meeting with the Attorney General

Edwards warns Harvey to clear with the DCI
Kennedy's request on 4 March 67 for a copy of the briefing memo
(*Senator Robert Kennedy's secretary, who was also his secretary when he was Attorney General, phoned the Director's office on 4 March 1967 and asked for a copy of the Edward's memo on the 7 May 1962 meeting with Kennedy when he was AG, at which time he was briefed on the Castro assassination operation. Kennedy knew of the Drew Pearson article of 7 March 67 and wanted to check his recollection of what he had been told by Edwards and Houston. The AG's copy of the memo for the record of that briefing is in the archives of the AG's office. Mr. Helms subsequently had lunch with Senator Kennedy. He took a copy of the memo with him and allowed Kennedy to read it. He did not leave a copy with Kennedy.*)
Chicago Sun-Times story of 16 Aug 63 re Giancana and the CIA
Chicago Daily News story of 20 Aug 63 re Giancana and the CIA
Helms sends McCone a copy of the Kennedy briefing memo
Rumors now connect CIA & gangsters in plot to kill Castro
The Long Committee (*a Senate Committee headed by Senator Long of Missouri investigating invasions of privacy and planned to call Maheu to testify.*)
Former Maheu employee called to testify
The Onassis-Niarchos fight over oil shipping rights
Maheu is hired by Niarchos and is supported by CIA
CIA intervenes on Niarchos' behalf
The Long Committee plans to resurrect the Onassis wiretap
Maheu applies pressures on CIA to avoid publicity
Maheu indicates he may brief his attorney

Schemes in Early 1963

Skin Diving Suit

Gift from Donovan to Castro
The suit is bought and made ready
The plan is overtaken by events
List of persons witting

Booby-trapped Sea Shell

Books on Mollusca are bought
The plans proves to be impracticable
Names of those witting

Project AMLASH -- Rolando Cubela

[] meeting with Cubela in Mexico City (Mar 61)
Cubela's role in the Cuban Revolution
Cubela Reported disaffected
Mexico City meeting inconclusive
Cubela and Juan Orta want to exfiltrate (Mar 61)
Cubela asks for meeting in Paris (Aug 61)
Cubela plans to attend Helsinki Youth Festival
Meetings in Helsinki (Aug 62)
Meetings in Stockholm
Cubela objects to the word "assassinate"
Paris meetings (Aug 62); S/W & demolition training
Meetings in Porto Alegre (Sept 63)
Paris meetings (Oct 63); Cubela wants assurance from US Govt
FitzGerald meets with Cubela in Paris (Oct 63)

(Desmond FitzGerald, then Chief, SAS, who was going to Paris on other business, arranged to meet with Cubela to give him the assurances he sought. The contact plan for the meeting, a copy of which is in the AMLASH file, has this to say on cover: FitzGerald will represent self as personal representative of Robert F. Kennedy who traveled to Paris for specific purpose meeting Cubela and giving him assurances of full US support if there is change of the present government in Cuba. According to FitzGerald, he discussed the planned meeting with the DD/P (Helms) who decided it was not necessary to seek approval from Robert Kennedy for FitzGerald to speak in his name.)

Differing versions of what FitzGerald told Cubela

(FitzGerald informed Cubela that the US is prepared to render all necessary assistance to any anti-communist Cuban group which succeeds in neutralizing the present Cuban leadership and assumes sufficient control to invite the US to render the assistance it is prepared to give. It was emphasized that the above support will be forthcoming only after a real coup has been effected. It was made clear the US was not prepared to commit itself to supporting an isolated uprising, such as an uprising can be extinguished in a matter of hours if the present government is still in control of Havana. (Note: those involved now recall the purpose of the meeting as being somewhat different from that appearing in written records prepared at the same time of the meeting. FitzGerald recalls Cubela spoke repeatedly of the need for an assassination weapon. In particular, he wanted a high-powered rifle with telescopic sights or some other weapon that could be used to kill Castro from a distance. FitzGerald wanted no part of such a scheme and told [] to tell Cubela that the US simply does not do such things. When he was told this, Cubela said he wanted confirmation from a senior US official, not a member of the CIA. FitzGerald says that when he met with Cubela in Paris he told Cubela the US Government would have no part of an attempt on Castro's life.))

Cuba cache approved for Cubela

The Black Leaf 40 scheme is discussed

Gunn converts a ballpoint pen into a hypodermic syringe

[] gives to Cubela in Paris while Kennedy is shot (Nov 63)

(As they were coming out of the meeting, [] and Cubela were informed that President Kennedy had been assassinated. Cubela was visibly moved over the news. He asked, "Why do such things happen to good people?" The contact report does not state the time nor the duration of the [] - Cubela meeting, but it likely that at the very moment President Kennedy was shot a CIA officer was meeting with a Cuban agent in Paris and giving him an assassination device for use against Castro.)

Cubela asks for a high-powered rifle with telescopic sight

Those witting of the Black Leaf 40 episode

Cubela cache put down (without rifles) (Mar 64)

Cubela requests a silencer for a FAL rifle

SAS requests TSD to produce FAL silencer on crash basis

Second Cubela cache put down (with FAL rifles) (June 64)

Arttime meets with Cubela intermediary

Arttime agrees to meet with Cubela personally

[] meets Cubela in Paris (Dec 64)

Explanation of how Arttime and Cubela were put together

Arttime and Cubela meet in Madrid (Dec 64)

Arttime agrees to furnish silencer

Arttime gives Cubela silencer and other special gear
Second name-line between Cubela and gambling syndicate operation
Headquarters terminates all contacts with Cubela group
Cubela and others arrested; plead guilty (Mar 66)

The charges
Castro asks for leniency
Testimony about the silencer
Cubela expects to be executed
Cubela sentenced to 25 years imprisonment
No mention made of Cubela's pre-Nov 64 dealings with CIA

Discussion of Assassination at High-Level Government Meetings

Special Group (Augmented) meeting of 10 August 1962

State: Dean Rusk, Alexis Johnson, Edwin Martin, Richard Goodwin, Robert Hurwitch

White House: Maxwell Taylor, McGeorge Bundy (Bill Harvey's notes record that Robert Kennedy was absent and that Bundy had his proxy.)

Defense: Robert McNamara, Roswell Gilpatric, Lyman Lemnitzer, Edward Lansdale

CIA: John McCone, William Harvey

USIA: Edward Murrow, Donald Wilson

Secretary: Thomas Parrott

(Parrott's minutes make no mention of the subject of assassination. Both McCone and Harvey recall that McNamara raised the subject. Harvey's notes taken at the meeting show it was also mentioned by Murrow, but the nature of the comments was not recorded. McCone says he took immediate exception to the discussion and promptly after the meeting called on Sec McNamara personally to emphasize his position. According to McCone McNamara "heartily agreed."

Following the 10 August meeting, and without reference to the reported exchange between McCone and McNamara, Lansdale addressed a memorandum on 13 August to William Harvey CIA, Robert Hurwitch (State), General Harris (Defense), and Don Wilson (USIA). The memorandum assigned responsibility for drafting papers on various subjects related to the Cuban operation. Harvey's assignment included: "Intelligence, Political (splitting the regime, {redacted})."

On 14 August, Harvey submitted a memo to the DD/P (Helms) reporting the Lansdale communication and what Harvey had done about it. Harvey's memo states that the excised portion had consisted of the phrase "including elimination of leaders." Harvey said he had protested the use of the phrase and proposed steps to be taken to have it excised from all copies. Harvey deleted the phrase from his own copy and assumes that instructions were given to other recipients to do the same. Harvey told us Lansdale repeatedly tried to raise the matter of assassination of Castro with Harvey over the next several weeks. Harvey says he always avoided such discussions. Harvey estimates that 5 people in Lansdale's office were generally aware of the sensitive details of Project MONGOOSE and of Lansdale's interest in assassination as an aspect of it.)

Special Group Meeting of 30 July 1964

McGeorge Bundy, Cyrus Vance, John McCone, Thomas Hughes
Desmond FitzGerald for the discussion on Cuba

Col. Ralph Steakley was present for another item on the agency, but it is not known if he was present when the Cuba item was discussed.

Peter Jessup as secretary.

(The minutes of the meeting record this in the context of the discussion of Cuba: "It was agreed that Mr. FitzGerald would contact Mr. Sam Papich of the FBI in regard to the earlier report of an alleged plot with Mafia overtones to assassinate Castro and which the AG agreed to handle as a matter of law enforcement." The reference is clearly to a 10 June 64 memo information report from DD/P to the Director.)

The Possible Ramifications of the Gambling Syndicate Operation

Declassified documents show that the CIA set up a mechanism in early 1961 for assassinating other foreign political leaders who opposed US policy.

Fabian Escalante:

I have said before and continue to believe that President Kennedy's assassination was also the work of that same criminal conspiracy, which was created for use against Cuba . Thus, it was used not only against Fidel Castro but against other leaders as well--even President of the US, John F. Kennedy.