

Memorandum

TO: Jeremy Gunn
FROM: Eric Scheinkopf
RE: Richard Bissell: Summary of Pertinent Testimony
Box 25, Folder 4
FILE NO. 4.02 Bissell

The "Summary of Pertinent Testimony" from the 1967 CIA IG Report and the transcripts of Bissell, Helms, Harvey, Bundy and Rostow is organized around the following four issues: 1. Executive Action: Early 1961, 2. the turnover of syndicate contact to Harvey, 3. authorization by the DCI, and 4. Presidential authorization.

Executive Action

The 1967 IG Report quotes Harvey as saying that early in the Kennedy Administration, Bissell discussed with him what Harvey refers to as "an Executive Action Capability" with Harvey's notes quoting Bissell as saying "The WHITE HOUSE has twice urged me to create such a capability." On February 19, 1962, Richard Helms, the new DDP, approves the handling of the project on a "special basis." Bissell recalls assigning ZRRIFLE to Harvey, does not remember specifically talking with anyone in the White House about the origin of the request but has no reason to believe Harvey's quote about urging the creating of this as wrong. Bissell has little doubt that this project was discussed with Walt Rostow and possibly McGeorge Bundy. While Bissell believes that President Kennedy knew of the project he admits that he has "no direct knowledge" of this fact.

This summary has an interesting section regarding Harvey's meetings. It says that Harvey has notes, not part of this file, of two meetings to discuss Executive Action which he is "almost certain" occurred in 1961. On January 25 Harvey met with the Chief of CIA's Technical Services Division, Sidney Gottlieb. The next day he met with [redacted] who recruited QJWIN. Harvey says these meetings occurred after his initial discussion of Executive Action with Bissell.

Bundy recalls being told about the development of an Executive Action capability "in a general way" as an untargeted "capability coming into being" as opposed to a mounted operation. As far as he could recall, he did not take the matter to the President. It was his belief that the chance that the conversation about Executive Action occurred before January 25-26, 1961 was "near zero" in view of the concerns which took up his time in the first week of the Kennedy Administration.

Turnover of Syndicate Contact to Harvey

According to the 1967 IG Report, ZRRIFLE continued separately from the CIA-Roselli poison pill assassination plot until 11/15/61. Harvey noted that on that date he discussed with Bissell the

application of ZRRIFLE to Cuba and that Bissell instructed him to take over Shef Edwards' contact with the criminal syndicate and to then run the operation against Castro. Bissell notes that "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." Also, Bissell doesn't remember telling anyone in the White House about bringing "a CIA officer together again with the criminal syndicate." The memo notes that Helms doesn't recall ZRRIFLE ever being contemplated as a capability to assassinate CASTRO.

Authorization with DCI

This section discusses how DCI Dulles was briefed by Sheffield Edwards on an operation to assassinate Castro using syndicate contacts. As the IG report notes, "The discussion was circumspect; EDWARDS deliberately avoided the use of any 'bad words.'...EDWARDS is quite sure that the DCI and the DDCI clearly understood the nature of the operation he was discussing."

Authorization Outside of the CIA in the Eisenhower Administration

This section dealt with who outside of CIA knew about the Castro assassination effort. Bissell said he met often with the SG in the fall of 1960 but never informed them that there was an effort underway to try to assassinate Castro. Therefore, the memo notes that the issue of President Eisenhower knowing about it rested on whether Allen Dulles informed him. Gordon Gray, who was Eisenhower's Special Assistant for National Security Affairs, did not believe Dulles would have told Eisenhower without informing him. Gray also felt that Eisenhower would discuss with him anything that came to his attention independently of Gray. Gray said that Eisenhower never discussed the issue of a Castro assassination with him.