

## MEMORANDUM

August 4, 1995

To: Laura Denk  
From: Frank P. Menna  
Subject: U.S. Customs Service

### HSCA References

- Vol. 2, p. 220  
Marina Oswald talks about going through Customs in New York. She claims she did not know of any rifle found in Lee's things as he went through Customs.
- Vol. 4, p. 473  
After the Cuban Missile Crisis in October of 1962, the US began to crack down on anti-Castro Cuban groups. In December of 1962, the Customs Service raided an anti-Castro training camp in the Florida Keys (No Name Key); Customs arrested 13 anti-Castro guerillas and seized their arms and explosives. In August of 1963, Customs continued their pressure on anti-Castro Cubans by cracking down on anti-Castro pilots in Miami. See Deadly Secrets below for a more detailed account of the No Name Key raid.
- Vol. 9, p.518  
On August 27, 1947, US Customs agents arrested Taylor Crossland for bringing 48 lbs. of opium into Texas from Mexico. Crossland implicated Paul Roland Jones as being part of the deal. Federal Narcotics agents interviewed Jack Ruby in 1947 about Jones. Ruby stated that he had known Jones for about 4-5 months and that his sister Eva Grant had introduced him to Jones.
- Vol. 9, p. 522  
Paul Roland Jones had proposed a business deal to Eva Grant. While Jones was in Chicago to discuss the deal with Grant, he met with Hyman and Jack Rubenstein. Customs requested the Bureau of Narcotics to interview Jack and Hyman about this meeting. The Bureau of Narcotics interviewed Ruby on October 29, 1947 (see Vol. 9, p.518 above).

- Vol. 9, p. 589  
Robert Ray McKeown was involved with former president of Cuba Carlos Prio Socarras; both assisted Castro in his struggle against Batista. McKeown engaged in gunrunning to Cuba. McKeown initially staged his gunrunning activities from Miami and Tampa, but pressure from government agents forced him to move his operations to Houston. In February of 1958, Houston Customs agents seized McKeown's boat, the *Buddy Dee*; local papers believed this boat was to be used for an invasion of Cuba. This episode is also described in The Coin of Contraband, the biography Houston Customs agent Al Scharff (see below). Also, McKeown has stated that Jack Ruby contacted him about smuggling people out of Cuba; McKeown asserts that on another occasion, Ruby also asked him for a letter of introduction to Castro. McKeown has also stated that Lee Harvey Oswald contacted him about buying some rifles and bazookas.
- Vol. 10, p.13  
Customs agents raided a secret training camp in the Florida Keys and arrested the anti-Castro guerrillas training there (No Name Key raid).
- Vol. 10, p.74  
The MDC, led by Batista Falla, preferred to work out of the Miami area because of its proximity to Cuba. As part of its crackdown on anti-Castro activity, Customs raided MDC headquarters in Miami on April 21, 1964 and confiscated a large cache of arms and ammunition.
- Vol. 10, p.109  
In August of 1959, Customs put Ferrie under surveillance because they suspected him of gunrunning. Customs also tapped Ferrie's phone. However, Customs dropped its investigation when it determined that Ferrie was merely planning a trip for his CAP "scouts."
- Vol. 10, p.202  
Rose Cheramie knew of a seaman who was bringing heroin to Galveston by boat. Customs tailed the seaman but eventually lost his trail. Customs then closed the case.

### Deadly Secrets

- p. 179  
Freelance mercenaries/gunrunners in the Miami area frequently dealt with Cuban exile groups. In one such dealing, a group of mercenaries agreed to sell a crate of arms and ammunition to the leader of an exile group for \$1,000. However, the mercenaries gave the Cuban a crate

filled only with concrete blocks and grass. Miami police, after conferring with Customs agents, arranged for the return of the money to the exiled leader.

· pp. 180-185

The Customs raid in the Florida Keys (see HSCA vol. 4, p. 473) foiled the International Penetration Force's (Interpen) plans to invade Cuba. Customs nabbed Little Joe Garman, Ed Collins, Bill Dempsey, and Gerry Hemming in the raid. Charles Ashman, a Miami attorney, successfully motioned to have the charges dropped. Other Interpen members include Robert K. Brown and Martin Francis Xavier Casey (who is known as the unofficial historian of the Florida mercenary activities against Castro).

### The Coin of Contraband

· pp. 420-423

Houston Customs Agent Al Scharff apparently was a very active and successful agent (hence the need for a 400+ page book about his adventures). Other Customs field offices (e.g. New Orleans and Miami) often consulted with him or asked him to participate in their cases. Scharff worked closely with other government agencies in tracking Carlos Prio Socarras's efforts to secure guns for Castro in 1958. Following arrests in Miami, Prio and his "rebels" decided to move their arsenal to Houston. Federal agents followed the rebels and arrested one of Prio's top lieutenants and two other Cubans in Pasadena, TX (near Houston). As more and more of Prio's arms arrived in Houston, Scharff and other Customs officials arrested more and more Cubans. Their efforts culminated in the seizure of the *Buddy Dee*, a 200-berth vessel that newspapers speculated was to be used for an invasion of Cuba. Through legal maneuvering and despite the protests of the Cubans' Miami attorney, Customs avoided having to show cause for the arrest of the Cubans and didn't have to place any details of the arrest on public record.

### **Investigation of Communist Propaganda in the United States - Part 4 (Foreign Propaganda - Entry and Dissemination in New Orleans, LA Area), Hearing Before the House Committee on Un-American Activities, 85th Cong., 1st Sess., Feb 14, 1957.**

· Customs tracked and opened parcels suspected of containing Communist propaganda. Although most of the mail opened was "transit mail" (i.e. mostly Mexican mail that passed through New Orleans on its way to South America), Customs did open some foreign mail sent to United States addresses.

**Customs Service Mail Opening, Hearings Before a Subcommittee of the House Committee on Government Operations, 95th Cong., 1st Sess., July 28; Sept. 12, 15, and 19, 1977.**

- pp. 25-26  
Although mail from US military stations overseas is considered domestic mail, the Postal Service turns parcels over to the Customs service for inspection. The Customs Service will turn over contraband that they find to other government agencies (for example, if Customs finds contraband in a parcel sent from a Naval base, Customs will turn the evidence over to the Navy).
  
- pp. 97, 101, 110  
Customs will often act on referrals/tips from other agencies (like CIA).

**U.S. Intelligence Agencies and Activities: Intelligence Costs and Procedures, Hearings Before the House Select Committee on Intelligence, 94th Cong., 1st Sess., July 31; Aug. 1,4,5,6,7, and 8, 1975.**

- p. 6  
Senator Charles Percy requested the GAO to obtain budgetary, organizational, and personnel information for all units, departments, and agencies of the federal government that perform police, investigative, or intelligence activities. GAO issued two reports to Senator Percy on June 9, 1975. One report dealt with police and investigative funding and personnel; the other covered intelligence funding and personnel. The latter report is/was classified "Secret." Since Customs participates in police, investigative, and intelligence activities, Customs may be discussed in the reports.

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