Box 23
Folder 3
# 1

7 August 1978

Summary of HSCA Interview of Balmes Nieves (Barney) Hidalgo at CIA Headquarters, 28 July 1978, 10:00 A.M. Charles Berk and Dan Hardway representing the HSCA.

On 28 July 1978 at 10:00 A.M. Charles Berk and Dan Hardway of the House Select Committee on Assassinations conducted a three hour interview at CIA Headquarters with Barney Nieves Hidalgo, Junior. Mr. Hidalgo was provided with a copy of the CIA omnibus release letter prior to the beginning of the interview. Upon reading the release letter, Mr. Hidalgo stated that whatever Admiral Turner may seem to permit by the release letter's wording, the letter did not release Mr. Hidalgo from his self-imposed secrecy standards. Mr. Hidalgo further stated that he had heard of such a release letter in the press although he had not seen this specific release letter prior to the interview.

Mr. Berk explained to Mr. Hidalgo that whatever was discussed during the interview would be treated as confidential information. Nevertheless, Mr. Hidalgo replied that he might not respond to the questions asked of him. At this point Mr. Hidalgo was asked if he had discussed this interview session with anyoune prior to the beginning of the interview. Mr. Hidalgo said that he had not discussed the interview with anyone other than the CIA's contacting him in order to arrange a time and a place for the interview.

Mr. Hidalgo stated that he has no present connection with the CIA haveing retired from the Agency in 1970. When queried whether he is presently employed, Mr. Hidalgo would not respond to the question. He also would not provide his current address when requested to do so by Mr. Berk.

Mr. Hidalgo indicated that at the time of President Kennedy's assassination, he was a CIA case officer working at Agency Headquarters on Cuba related matters. When asked to identify his specific responsibilities as a case officer, Mr. Hidalgo responded that he had no specific responsibilities. Rather, he said that he was assigned to various Agency components on a day to day basis, traveling at the discretion of his supervisors. He related that he had been of use to Agency components concerned with foreign intelligence, counter-intelligence, and propoganda and psychological warfare. Moreover, Mr. Hidalgo did indicate that his work had taken him to Mexico during the years 1963-1964. Mr. Hidalgo refused to be more specific about his activities in Mexico.

Mr. Hidalgo explained that he had worked at times specifically on Cuba-related matters. In this regard, Mr. Hidalgo declared that he had been involved in the Bay of Pigs operation as the counter-intelligence officer for the Brigade. He stated that his work was both in the field and at Headquarters. He stated that he had been indirectly responsible for Brigade 2506. He stated the 2506 designation represented the sixth person he had interrogated and cleared for operational use in the Brigade. 2506 had subsequently met an unexpected death resulting in his operational designation being adopted by the Brigade as its name. It was Mr. Hidalgo's belief that the Castro government had effected one penetration against the Brigade. However, though once known to him, he could not recall the name of the penetration agent. Mr. Hidalgo said that the invasion site was changed because this agent had found out the information about the original site.

Mr. Hidalgo stated that in his work for the Agency, he had traveled to both New Orleans and Miami. He stated that he often used New Orleans

as a transfer point. However, he said this work had little to do with the Bay of Pigs activities. Rather, these trips involved the handling of a CIA agent who had been in the Cuban Intelligence Service (DGI).

Mr. Hidalgo recalled that during his CIA career he had succesfully developed expertises in a number of operational procedures. When asked if his expertise included interrogation and surreptitious entry, Mr. Hidalgo would not give a direct response. He explained that he would not answer a question if he believed his answer would threaten the lives of otheres or would endanger the national security.

When asked to define what made him successful at his various CIA endeavors Mr. Hidalgo replied that his success was measured by the fact that he was never caught. He further remarked that if we thought Espionage is a gentleman's game we are wrong; it is not a gentleman's game.

Mr. Hidalgo was queried whether he recalled the CIA cryptonym "AMMUG/1". He stated that the cryptonym was familiar to him. He further stated that he recalled AMMUG/1 defected from the DGI to the CIA in April 1964. At this time Mr. Hidalgo was shown DIR 16369, 23 April 1964, a CIA cable describing AMMUG/1's defection in [redacted] while enroute to Prague, Czechoslovakia. This cable indicated that AMMUG/1 was knowledgeable of DGI operations and personnel. After reviewing this cable, Mr. Hidalgo was asked to assess the significance of AMMUG/1's defection to the CIA. Mr. Hidalgo refused to answer this question. (Two hours later in the interview, this qusetion was again posed to Mr. Hidalgo. He then responded that AMMUG/1's defection was of great significance to the Agency. However, he would not further elaborate.) Mr. Hidalgo did state that he was not sent to [redacted] to bring AMMUG/1 back to the United States. That

task was handled by [Harold Swenson,] Chief WH/SA/CI, Hidalgo's immediate superior. Mr. Hidalgo refused to provide any information about Mr. [Swenson's] present whereabouts to the HSCA staffers.

Mr. Hidalgo was asked to describe Mr. [Swenson's] relationship with AMMUG/1. He responded that it would be best to ask Mr. [Swenson] that question. Mr. Hidalgo was also asked to describe the relationships of [Daniel Flores] and Joseph Piccolo (both CIA case officers who handled AMMUG/1) to AMMUG/1. Once again, Mr. Hidalgo deferred to [Swenson] for an answer to this question.

Mr. Hidalgo was next asked what specific information AMMUG/1 provided the CIA concerning Lee Harvey Oswald. Mr. Hidalgo replied that he would rather not answer that question. Mr. Hidalgo was then asked if he knew whether Mr. [Swenson] had tape recorded his debriefing sessions of AMMUG/1 while in [redacted] Mr. Hidalgo stated that this would have been standard operating procedure in a case of this kind. However, he said that he could not recall whether he had listened to the above referenced tape recordings or had read the transcripts of the debriefing sessions.

Mr. Hidalgo was next queried about when he first learned of AMMUG/1's deffection. He indicated that he first became aware of AMMUG/1's defection when he read the cable which described the defection on 23 April 1964 was circulated through the CIA Headquarters. Mr. Hidalgo said that hsi first personal contact with AMMUG/1 took place after AMMUG/1 was transported to Washington, D.C. during the last week of April 1964. Mr. Hidalgo stated that he debriefed AMMUG/1 (Hereinafter "A-1") during A-1's residence in Washington which he believed to have been for approximately six months.

Mr. Hidalgo refused to describe the operational uses to which A-1 was put by the CIA. Mr. Hidalgo also pointed out that as of November 2, 1964, he no longer maintained operational contact with A-1.

Mr. Hidalgo was asked to examine [ ] IN 68894, 24 April 1964, a CIA cable from [the [ ] station] which provided additional information on A-1 and his knowledge of the DGI. This cable identified certain DGI officers stationed at the Cuban Embassy and Consulate in Mexico City. Mr. Hidalgo stated that he had reviewed the above-referenced cable upon its receipt at CIA headquarters. Mr. Hidalgo refused to identify the cable's author nor would he provide any information on the DGI officers named on page 2, paragraph E, of the cable. Mr. Hidalgo declared he "just knew what the Agency knew at the time." He stated that he had no personal knowledge of the persons cited therein. At this point Mr. Hidalgo weakend his previous position as to his knowledge by stating that he was aware in 1964 of the DGI status of the two persons referred to, Alfredo Mirabal and Manuel Vega. He stated that he probably knew what their specific responsibilities were when the cable was disseminated but that he could not presently recall this information.

Mr. Hidalgo was then referred to page 3, paragraph 6, of the [ ] cable wherein it states that A-1 had brought out DGI documents from Cuba upon his defection. Mr. Hidalgo was asked if any of thes DGI documents referred to or concerned Lee Harvey Oswald or the JFK assassination. He responded that he had not reviewed all these documents but that those he did review did not refer to Lee Harvey Oswald or the JFK assassination. He did indicate, however, that the subject matter of these documents may hve been of interest to Oswald's case or the JFK assassination. Mr. Hidalgo once again deferred to Mr. [Swenson] when asked to elaborate on this point.

Mr. Hidalgo next examined an 8 May 1964 CIA Memorandum entitled: "AMMUG/1 Debriefing Report # 65", which detailed DGI responsibility for issuance of visas to persons seeking entry into Cuba. Mr. Hidalgo did confirm that Mr. [Swenson] had written the above-referenced memo and that the memo was an accurate summary of then available information.

In reference to the DGI visa issuance procedure, Mr. Hidalgo stated that a would be traveler to Cuba when seeking a visa at the Cuban Consulate would not necessarily have been in personal contact with a DGI officer. The DGI officer, however, would have been made aware of the traveler's presence due to DGI interest in all travelers to Cuba. He further stated that a DGI officer would have reviewed all visa applications.

Mr. Hidalgo could not recall if any specific word such as "Mauricio" was used in Mexico by visa applicants to indicate their affiliation with Cuban Intelligence.

When asked if A-1 had reported which DGI officer Lee Harvey Oswald had dealt with in Mexico City, Mr. Hidalgo would not answer. Mr. Hidalgo also would not answer if he had been stationed in Mexico. He did state that he had been in Mexico prior to 1965, probably during 1963, but not during September or October of that year.

Mr. Hidalgo was asked whether while in Mexico he knew either Win Scott or David Phillips. He responded in the negative and stated that Win Scott may in fact have been unaware of Mr. Hidalgo's presence in Mexico City because Mr. Hidalgo never went near an American installation in that city. He further stated that he did know Scott and Phillips and had been involved in operations with them. Mr. Hidalgo explained that he had contact with the Cuban Embassy in Mexico City but not to their

knowledge. When asked if this meant that he was running penetration agents into the Cuban Embassy Hidalgo refused to answer. When asked if this meant that he had done a surreptitous entry into the Cuban Embassy he also refused to answer. Mr. Hidalgo did state that while in Mexico he had been in contact with the Mexican federal police on one occassion.

Mr. Hidalgo was asked whether he knew Maurice Bishop. He responded affirmatively but indicated he did not know him as well as either Win Scott or David Phillips. Mr. Hidalgo said he became acquainted with Mr. Bishop at CIA headquarters. He stated that he did not know Mr. Bishop's Agency responsibilities nor had he worked with Mr. Bishop. Rather, he explained that he knew Mr. Bishop as just another person who worked at CIA Headquarters. Mr. Hidalgo indicated that he knew Mr. E. Howard Hunt in much the same manner as he knew Mr. Bishop. However, when Mr. Hardway continued to question Mr. Hidalgo about Mr. Hunt, Mr. Hidalgo countered by asking why the subject of Mr. Hunt had been brought up. He declared that the HSCA was "spinning its wheels" if it was investigating Mr. Hunt.

At this point Mr. Hardway queried Mr. Hidalgo on his knowledge of the following persons:

1) The true name of [Daniel Carswell]--He said he knew Mr. [Carswell] but would not discuss him;

2) Silvia Duran--Mr. Hidalgo said "sure do (know her) but I sure don't want to discuss it". He did state that he had had indirect contact with Ms. Duran but doesn't recall when this indirect contact occured. He explained that he had received information concerning Silvia Duran from [a CIA agent] in Mexico. Mr. Hidalgo said he put this information into report form. [The CIA agent] was [a woman] who maintained direct contact with the

Mexican Communist Party. Mr. Hidalgo stated that it was his understanding that [this woman] regularly reported on Duran. [This woman,] Mr. Hidalgo stated, was a close associate of Silvia Duran's. It was his belief that [this agent] had not worked in the Cuban Embassy in Mexico City. When asked to reveal [the agent's] name, Mr. Hidalgo responed that he could not recall the name. He did remember that [the agent's] Mexico City Station case officer had a hair lip and spoke with a lisp. When asked if this person was [Robert Shaw,] Mr. Hidalgo responded that it might have been Mr. [Shaw;]

3) William Harvey--Mr. Hidalgo stated that he was acquainted with Mr. Harvey. Mr. Hidalgo stated that he had been involved in operations with Harvey, but that he had never heard of "ZR" or "ZRRIFLE". The details of the operational cover of "ZRRIFLE" were sketched for Mr. Hidalgo by Mr. Hardway. When asked if he had ever been involved in anything of that nature Mr. Hidalgo responded that there was no way that he would talk about something like that;

4) Frank Sturgis--Mr. Hidalgo knew of Mr. Sturgis, but had no personal contact with him;

5) Tony Varona--Mr. Hidalgo knew of Mr. Varona as the result of past operational contact.

Mr. Hidalgo was next asked to examine an A-1 CIA debriefing report of 30 April 1964. This debriefing report identifies Alfredo Mirabal, Manuel Vega, and Ricardo Concepcion as DGI officers at he Cuban Embassy and Consulate in Mexico City. After examining the report, Mr. Hidalgo reiterated that he had no personal knowledge of these persons. He did state that he had previously seen the debriefing report, a verbatim translation from Spanish which Mr. Hidalgo had himself translated.

Mr. Hidalgo was questioned concerning a polygraph test administered

to A-1 on or about 11 May 1964. Mr. Hidalgo said that he was not present during administration of the polygraph but that Mr. [Swenson] and the polygraph operator were present. Mr. Hidalgo did recall reading the results of the polygraph but did not recall whether Lee Harvey Oswald was discussed. It was his belief, however, that Oswald would have been discussed because of the length of the polygraph session. Mr. Hidalgo also stated that he believes [John Whitten,] C/WH/3, would have been given access to the polygraph results on a need to know basis.

Mr. Hidalgo was again asked to describe the information which A-1 provided concerning Lee Harvey Oswald. Mr. Hidalgo again deferred to Mr. [Swenson] for such information. In an effort to refresh his recollection, Mr. Hidalgo was asked to examine a 5 May 1964 CIA blind memo prepared by Mr. [Swenson.] This memorandum in summary fashion set forth A-1's knowledge about Lee Harvey Oswald and the JFK assassination. Mr. Hidalgo remarked that he may have seen the memorandum previously. He stated that he did not know who wrote the memorandum but was confident of its accuracy. He stated that he did not recall reading any other reports similar to this one and did not know if any other reports of thsi kind had been prepared. (In fact, such reports were subsequently prepared.)

Mr. Hidalgo was next shown a CIA dispatch, [ ] 7763, 1 May 1964, indicating that twenty-two reels of tape recorded debriefing sessions of A-1 while in [ ] were being forwarded to Chief, Special Affairs Staff, from [the Chief of Station, [ ]] Mr. Hidalgo indicated that he had seen some of these reels. However, he said he did not know the Agency filing procedures for such tape recordings. He further stated he did not recall seeing the English translations of these reels.

Mr. Hidalgo was next shown a 17 July 1964 CIA contact report of a meeting with A-1, written by Joseph Piccolo. The report identified Mr. Hidalgo as being present at the meeting along with another CIA agent, [AMNIP/1.] The report reveals that AMMUG/1 [and AMNIP/1] had been shown a "Cuban mugbook" in order to identify various Cuban Intelligence Service officers and diplomats. Mr. Hidalgo stated that the report was accurate. When asked to identify [AMNIP/1] Mr. Hidalgo refused. He explained that [AMNIP/1] was also a DGI officer but that he had died at age 28 of an apparent heart attack. [AMNIP/1] had no history of heart disease, however, and Mr. Hidalgo evidenced the belief that [AMNIP/1's] death was fashioned by sinister hands.

Mr. Hidalgo further related that he could not recall whether a photograph of a red-haired negro had been shown to either AMMUG/1 or [AMNIP/1] during the session. He also said that he did not know how such a report would have been filed. He did not deal with filing procedure. When he could show that he needed a certain file a girl brought it to him. That's all he knows about filing.

Mr. Hidalgo was next shown a 9 April 1971 CIA contact report from [Eustace D. Kloock] indicating that AMMUG/1 had again been shown the "Cuban mugbook" and had identified various Cuban personalities. At p. 3, the 8th name from the top of the referenced contact report, Mr. Hidalgo was asked if the name Amdre Nicolas Aroma Ramos was familiar to him. He replied in the negative. He did recall, however, hearing the pseudonym "Ernesto" used in relation to DGI personnel in Mexico City.

In response to the question of whether he had known AMLASH/1 or ever acted as AMLASH/1's case officer, Mr. Hidalgo replied in the negative. When asked the same questions about [AMROD] his response was the same.

When asked his opinion of the DGI he characterized them as sinister, capable of any action, and stated that he knows that Castro had CIA agents executed. Mr. Hidalgo implied that [AMNIP/1's] death had been at the hands of Castro's agents.

Mr. Hidalgo was next shown a CIA document entitled "Information from AMMUG/1 on Agents", 21 August 1964, unsigned. The document discusses use of foreign organizations by the Cuban Intelligence Sevice for recruitment of agents. Mr. Hidalgo was asked whether the FPCC had ever been a front organization for the DGI. Mr. Hidalgo said he believed this to be the case but this was only a belief on his part.

Mr. Hidalgo was next asked about his knowledge of Gilberto Policarpo Lopez. Mr. Hidalgo responded that he recognized the name but had no other memory of the man. He stated he did not know whether Policarpo was ever associated with the Agency.

Mr. Hidalgo was also asked if he knew Antonio Veciana. The response was negative. He was asked if the name was at all familiar. His response again was negative. Mr. Higalgo did say that the name "Sam Kail" was familiar but he did not have any other memory associated with it.

Mr. Hidalgo was next shown a CIA report # EE390, 28 June 1963 written by [Carlos Blanco.] Mr. Hidalgo could not identify [Blanco.] [Blanco's] report made reverence to Teresa Proenza. Hidalgo commented that he name "rings a bell" but he could recall nothing more. He also stated that the name Luisa Calderon, cited on p. 3 of the above-referenced report, was familiar to him but he knew no more about her than indicated by the short description set forth therein. Mr. Hidalgo was then asked if he could identify what a "Black Tape" 201 file is. Mr. Hidalgo said he could not recall that type of file.

Mr. Hidalgo was next shown a CIA Memo for the Record, LX-2467, 11 March 1965, providing information on Luisa Rodriguez Calderon, and based on a debreifing of A-1. Mr. Hidalgo stated he was not familiar with the document. He further stated that he had never seen the transcript of Calderon's 22 November 1963 conversation [intercepted [by the CIA] in Mexico City. He explained that when this report was written he was no longer working on Cuba-related assignments.

Mr. Hidalgo was next shown CIA dispatch [22] 4675, 15 June 1966, which indicates that A-1 debriefing information was being forwarded by a "split transmittal". Mr. Hidalgo could provide no information on the meaning or routing of this dispatch.

Finally Mr. Hidalgo was asked about his knowledge of June Cobb, [an alleged CIA and FBI informant] in Mexico City circa 1963. Mr. Hidalgo stated that Cobb [s CIA case officer] was a woman he could describe but he prefered not to. The interview was concluded at 1:00 P.M.

Hidalgo was asked whether he would consent to be interviewed again by HSCA staff. He responded affirmatively but indicated that his position in answering HSCA questions would remain unchanged.