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DATE: 11-14-2017

JFK Assassination System
Identification Form

Date: 6/1/2015

Agency Information

AGENCY : FBI
RECORD NUMBER : 124-90154-10005
RECORD SERIES : HQ
AGENCY FILE NUMBER : CR 62-9-210-25

Document Information

ORIGINATOR : FBI
FROM : HAV
TO : HQ
TITLE :
DATE : 03/13/1959
PAGES : 5
SUBJECTS :
AMERICAN GAMBLING ACTIVITIES IN CUBA
MICHAEL MCLANEY
DOCUMENT TYPE : PAPER, TEXTUAL DOCUMENT
CLASSIFICATION : Unclassified
RESTRICTIONS : 4
CURRENT STATUS : Redact
DATE OF LAST REVIEW : 10/30/1998
OPENING CRITERIA : INDEFINITE
COMMENTS : MEMO

DATE: 11-14-2017
STANDARD FORM NO. 64

Office Memorandum • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

62-9-210

TO : Director, FBI (62-75147-210)
FROM : Legat, Havana (64-153)
SUBJECT: AMERICAN GAMBLING ACTIVITIES IN CUBA
ANTI-RACKETEERING

DATE: March 13, 1959
2/19/85 SP6 BJA/KCI #20326
ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED
DATE 6/30/80 BY SP4 Jem/ate

Reference Havana letter January 8, 1959. Since the submission of reference letter, the following information has been developed concerning the activities of American gamblers in Havana:

The gambling casinos in Cuba were closed from January 1, 1959, the date of the overthrow of the BATISTA regime, until February 19, 1959, when certain casinos were permitted to reopen by government decree. Contacts with numerous sources affiliated with American gamblers in Cuba indicated that during the period gambling casinos were closed very little overt effort was made on the part of any of the American interest holders to obtain permission to reopen. On January 8, 1959, HAV-31 advised that American casino operators intended to have casinos and hotel employees bring pressure to bear on the Cuban Government to permit the reopening of gambling casinos.

Subsequently numerous demonstrations were held by employees of the various gambling casinos petitioning the government to permit the reopening of the casinos in order to provide employment for the hotel and casino workers. Permission was finally granted on February 19, 1959, for the following casinos to reopen: Tropicana, Sans Souci, Comodoro, Riviera, Hilton, Nacional, Capri and St. Johns. The Deauville, Sevilla-Biltmore and Plaza casinos were not granted permission to reopen.

HAV-31 advised on February 21, 1959, that the government decree allowing certain gambling casinos to reopen had been brought about by the strong threats made on the part of the hotel employees' unions to go on strike unless their demands were heard and the casinos reopened. Source noted that the Cuban Government began February 11, 1959, to confiscate all slot machines in all gambling casinos in Havana.

32 cds
3-20
7 - Bureau (1 each: Miami info. New York WFO Boston Newark)
1 - Havana
DJB:MEG
(8)

sent by 3/24/59
0-25
REC-81
MAR 18 2 53 PM '59

copies made of serial
2/10/78 JSS
re Midway
for review at FBIHQ by
HSCA re 12/22/77 request.
(See Buf 10 #62-117290)
25

53 MAR 24 1959

EX-136

MAR 17 1959

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HOTEL NACIONAL CASINO:

On January 15, 1959, HAV-31 informed ^{Fla} that there had been a realignment in the ownership of the Hotel Nacional casino and that interests were now held only by MICHAEL ~~MCLANEY~~, CHARLES ~~SCHWARTZ~~, and (FNU) ~~RAFFERTY~~. Source stated that RAFFERTY was reported to be from Miami. ^{Fla}

Havana newspapers under date of February 19, 1959, reported that MICHAEL McLANEY, one of the interest holders in the Hotel Nacional casino, had been detained at Rancho Boyeros airport upon entry into Cuba from Florida because he had \$15,000 in Cuban money in his possession. This money was confiscated from McLANEY. AL FRANCIS, an employee of the Hotel Nacional casino, advised on March 9, 1959, that McLANEY had not been able to obtain the return of the \$15,000 from the Cuban Government.

HOTEL CAPRI CASINO:

^{Cuba} On January 6, 1959, Vice Consul Hugh D. Kessler of the Citizenship-Protection Section of the American Embassy, Havana, advised that NICHOLAS ~~DI~~ COSTANZO, one of the interest holders at the Capri casino, had been arrested by members of the militia of the July 26 Movement two or three days after the overthrow of the BATISTA Government. Vice Consul Kessler said that \$1,000 was "seized" from DI COSTANZO and he was instructed to get out of Cuba. Mr. Kessler said that DI COSTANZO had left Cuba.

On February 26, 1959, HAV-31 advised that since the re-opening of the Capri casino, NICHOLAS DI COSTANZO was being represented by a nephew named ANGELO (LNU).

SANS SOUCI CASINO:

^{Cuba} On February 13, 1959, PCI Guido de Phillips, former employee of SANTO TRAFFICANTE, advised that the gambling element had received information that FIDEL CASTRO, Prime Minister of Cuba, did not desire that SANTO ~~TRAFFICANTE~~, JR., continue his gambling operation at the Sans Souci Night Club because it was well known that TRAFFICANTE had been closely associated with ^{Cuba} ROBERTO FERNANDEZ MIRANDA, brother-in-law of former Cuban President FULGENCIO BATISTA. Source stated that movie actor ERROL ~~FLYNN~~ had apparently endeared himself to FIDEL CASTRO by publicizing a visit he had made to CASTRO when CASTRO was in Oriente Province prior to the overthrow of the BATISTA Government. Source stated that CASTRO had asked ERROL FLYNN to recommend a reliable person to operate the Sans Souci casino. FLYNN, according to source, got in touch with RONA WARNOCK, P. O. Box 152, Marysville, Washington. Source described WARNOCK as a punch board operator in the Washington-Oregon area. Source stated that WARNOCK subsequently came to Cuba and offered TRAFFICANTE \$175,000

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but that the New York-New Jersey Syndicate which TRAFFICANTE represents wanted \$250,000 for the Sans Souci. PCI De Phillips advised on March 10, 1959, that the "deal" between TRAFFICANTE and WARNOCK had fallen through since TRAFFICANTE decided to make a false sale of the Sans Souci casino and actually retain it himself. Source stated TRAFFICANTE still retains possession of the casino and that it is now in the name of a front. Source did not know the front's identity.

HOTEL ST. JOHNS CASINO:

On February 26, 1959, HAV-31 advised that the St. Johns casino had operated for two or three nights after being given permission to reopen by the Cuban Government, but it had again been closed. Source stated that the new Cuban Government was of the belief that one JUAN LARRAMENDI, a Cuban hoodlum, had an interest in the casino.

On March 2, 1959, HAV-33 informed that LARRAMENDI had never had any interest in the St. Johns casino and the present owners of the casino expected to be able to show documentary proof of the actual ownership to the Cuban Government and obtain permission to reopen within a few days.

HOTEL HAVANA-RIVIERA CASINO:

The ^{Cuba} Hotel Havana-Riviera casino is presently being supervised by CHARLES BARON who recently purchased an interest in that casino. MEYER LANSKY is at present in the United States. On March 12, 1959, JACK LANSKY was detained by the Cuban police and as of the morning of March 13, 1959, he was still being held.

HOTEL HAVANA-HILTON CASINO:

On ^{3/12/59} March 9, 1959, HAV-33 advised that the Havana-Hilton casino had reopened but that neither JOE SILESI nor his brother, CHARLES, had been observed at the casino. He said the operation of the casino was being handled by Cuban gamblers, RAUL GONZALEZ JEREZ, and ANGEL GONZALEZ GONZALEZ.

HOTEL PLAZA CASINO:

PCI Guido de Phillips, mentioned ^{Cuba} above, advised on March 10, 1959, that he had been informed by JOE STASSI, one of the major interest holders at the Hotel Plaza casino, that STASSI had made a "pay off" to an official of the Cuban Government (unidentified) in the amount of \$50,000 in order to obtain permission for the Plaza casino to reopen.

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Source stated that although the Plaza casino now had permission to reopen, they had no "bank roll" with which to operate and that STASSI and other interest holders are contacting individuals in the United States in an effort to obtain a new bank roll.

HOTEL COMODORO CASINO:

This casino, in which SANTO TRAFFICANTE, is the major interest holder, is patronized principally by Cubans and is managed by BENNY FERNANDEZ who was brought to Cuba by TRAFFICANTE from Tampa, Florida. HAV-33 advised on March 9, 1959, that there had been no indication as yet of resuming gambling activities in this casino.

TROPICANA NIGHT CLUB CASINO:

HAV-31 advised on February 26, 1959, that the Tropicana gambling casino had reopened and that the manager of the casino continued to be LOU McWILLIE, an American gambler from Dallas, Texas. This casino is owned by Cubans. *Cuba*

The following casinos continue to remain closed: St. Johns, Deauville, Sevilla-Biltmore and Plaza.

WHEREABOUTS OF AMERICAN HOODLUMS CONNECTED WITH GAMBLING ACTIVITIES IN HAVANA:

Both HAV-31 and HAV-33 have advised on numerous occasions since January 1, 1959, that SANTO TRAFFICANTE, although remaining in Cuba, is staying "out of sight." PCI Alberto Suarez Aleman, who is employed at the apartment house where TRAFFICANTE normally resides, advised on March 11, 1959, that TRAFFICANTE has only visited the apartment house on a few occasions to pick up clothing and that TRAFFICANTE's family returned to Florida in the early part of January, 1959.

MEYER LANSKY (Miami Top Hoodlum) is in Florida. He left Cuba on January 5, 1959. JACK LANSKY did not leave Cuba until after gambling casinos had received permission to reopen on February 19, 1959, and he returned to Cuba during the early part of March, 1959.

WILLIAM GUSTO *X* BISCHOFF (former Miami Top Hoodlum) has left Havana and HAV-33 advised on March 2, 1959, that he had received information that BISCHOFF was in Miami and did not intend to return to Cuba. *Fla*

1912-1-1002

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Willa Fla
HAV-31 advised on March 9, 1959, that although CHARLES TOURINE (Miami Top Hoodlum) had not been observed in Havana, it was rumored he had returned. Source said JAC SILESI (New York Top Hoodlum) had returned to the Hotel Havana-Hilton. Source said that JOHN WILLIAMS (Boston Top Hoodlum) had not been observed in Havana recently. *MASS Cuba*

MISCELLANECUS:

NY On January 27, 1959, HARRY J. GOODFRIEND, FBI #4762865, DOMINICK DI QUARTO, FBI #110556B, and ROCCO REGONE were taken into custody by Cuban Secret Service police at the Presidential Palace in Havana. In an interview with Cuban police authorities, these individuals indicated they had come to Havana in order to see President MANUEL URRUTIA in an effort to obtain a gambling concession from URRUTIA. DI QUARTO is reported to be a New York "bookie" and a member of the STROLLO-MAURO mob in Greenwich Village. *Cuba*

CI On January 30, 1959, Vice Consul Hugh D. Kessler, previously mentioned, stated that Congressman VICTOR ANFUSO of New York had made inquiry concerning GOODFRIEND, REGONE and DI QUARTO. In this regard, investigation conducted by the Havana office in another matter indicated that ANFUSO might have contacted JOSEPH CATALDO, with alias, "Joe the Wob," a member of the STROLLO mob when ANFUSO made a trip to Havana in the latter part of 1958. GOODFRIEND, REGONE and DI QUARTO were released by Cuban police on January 30, 1959. *Cuba*

HAV-31 advised on February 4, 1959, that JOSEPH NESLINE (WFO Top Hoodlum) had been in Havana for several days and that the purpose of his trip was to assist American gamblers in Havana in getting casinos reopened. Source stated NESLINE was reported to be friendly with FRANK FIORINI of Norfolk, Virginia, a member of the 26th of July Movement. NESLINE was reported to be working through FIORINI in an effort to get approval from the Cuban Government for casinos to reopen. *Cuba*

Extra copies of this letter have been prepared for forwarding by the Bureau to the following offices for information: New York, Miami, Washington Field, Boston and Newark.

Pending.