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Office Memorandum • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

TO :  
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Director, FBI (62-75147-210)  
Legal Attache, Havana (64-153)

DATE: May 13, 1959

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AMERICAN GAMBLING ACTIVITIES IN CUBA  
ANTI-RACKETEERING

Reference Havana letters dated March 13 and March 24, 1959, and Havana cables dated March 18 and May 6, 1959.

Since receiving permission to resume their activity on February 19, 1959, the various gambling casinos in Havana in which Americans have interests have been experiencing numerous problems. Fundamentally, most of these problems have been traced to lack of customers in the casinos. The anti-American sentiment expressed publicly by some Cuban leaders, the searching of tourists as they enter Cuba, and the slow tourist season have, for all practical purposes, brought the tourist industry to a halt in Cuba. In addition, Cuban labor unions continue to make demands for back pay and increased pay for casino and cabaret employees. Many casino operators have attempted to renegotiate their rental contracts in an effort to reduce overhead expenses. Nonetheless, the Sans Souci night club has closed; the Comodoro casino is alternately open and closed; and the St. Johns, Plaza, and Sevilla Biltmore casinos have been unable to reopen because of financial problems.

Many of the top hoodlums associated with gambling have disappeared from the Cuban scene, at least temporarily. These are MEYER LANSKY, WILLIAM GUSTO BISCHOFF, CHARLES TOURINE, JOSEPH SILESI, and JOHN WILLIAMS. There is no definite indication that any of them will return. On May 6, 1959, JACK LANSKY, Miami Top Hoodlum, and DINO CELLINI, Manager of the Havana Riviera casino, were arrested by Cuban police. It appears possible they may be deported from Cuba.

PCI ARTHUR NEWMAN (CONCEAL), Credit Manager, gambling casino, Hotel Nacional, advised on May 7, 1959, that MEYER LANSKY had issued instructions that, if JACK LANSKY is deported to the United States, they are to lock the doors of the Havana Riviera Hotel and "throw the key away."

- 11 - Bureau (1 each: Boston, Albany, New York, Philadelphia, Salt Lake City, Washington Field, Newark, Miami)
- 1 - Havana

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Havana 64-153

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5/13/59

Hotel Nacional Casino

The March 14, 1959, edition of "Informacion", Spanish language newspaper in Havana, Cuba, carried an article reporting the arrest of MIKE McLANEY, operator of the gambling casino in the Hotel Nacional, and one XENIA THOMADAKIS. THOMADAKIS reportedly arrived in Havana with \$37,000 in Cuban pesos and had indicated this money was destined for the Hotel Nacional casino.

The March 19, 1959, edition of "The Havana Post", English language newspaper in Havana, carried an article indicating that MIKE McLANEY had been released on March 18, 1959, without charges being brought against him.

On March 13, 1959, Vice Consul HUGH D. KESSLER, Citizenship Protection Section, American Embassy, Havana, advised that on March 13, 1959, he had interviewed MIKE McLANEY while McLANEY was under arrest. At that time McLANEY indicated that on January 15, 1959, he had sent the cash on hand of the casino in the Hotel Nacional to the United States via the SS "City of Havana" for safekeeping. McLANEY stated that around February 1, 1959, he had returned to Havana, bringing with him \$15,000 in Cuban pesos for use in the casino but that this money had been confiscated by Cuban authorities upon his arrival in Cuba.

On March 26, 1959, PCI NEWMAN, mentioned above, advised that MIKE McLANEY was trying to work out a "deal" with the owners of the Hotel Nacional in order that he might obtain a reduced rental and in order to induce the hotel to assume part of the cost of the shows.

On April 1, 1959, Hav-31 informed that the principal backers of MIKE McLANEY in the gambling casino of the Hotel Nacional casino are LOU CHESLER, an individual named (FNU) ROSENBLUM, and a prominent Italian hoodlum from New York whose identity is unknown. *Cuba* *(u)*

On April 13, 1959, PCI NEWMAN informed that McLANEY had made a new "deal" with the Hotel Nacional management by which the hotel will bear a larger share of the expenses in connection with the cabaret and floor shows.

- 2 -

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

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DATE: 11-14-2017

Havana 64-153

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5/13/59

Hotel Capri Casino

The March 14, 1959, edition of "Informacion", Spanish language newspaper in Havana, carried an article reporting the arrest of ELAINE MITCHELL, an American, at Rancho Boyeros Airport for attempting to enter Cuba with \$20,000 in Cuban pesos. Reportedly MITCHELL was to deliver this money to the Hotel Capri casino.

*U.S.A.*

The Havana English language newspaper, "The Havana Post", on March 19, 1959, indicated that in connection with the detention of Miss MITCHELL, ANGELO DE CRISTOFARO, the operator of the Capri casino, had been detained but was released on March 18, 1959. DE CRISTOFARO is the nephew of NICHOLAS DI COSTANZO, wa "Fat The Butch", the principal interest holder in the Capri casino.

*NP 24  
Y 114  
Cuba*

On March 23, 1959, Hav-31 advised that CHARLES TOURINE, Miami Top Hoodlum, had returned to the Capri casino. On March 23, 1959, Hav-33 informed that TOURINE had been observed in the Capri casino on March 14, 1959. Hav-33 noted that JOHN WILLIAMS, Boston Top Hoodlum, was reported to have left Cuba.

*Florida Cuba Cuba*

*X (u) mass*

On March 25, 1959, Hav-31 advised that CHARLES TOURINE was expected to "sneak" out of Havana within the next few days after that date with the assistance of an individual having a private plane. Source noted that TOURINE and other interest holders in the Capri casino were going to try to handle licensing and rental contract negotiations from Miami.

*X (u)*

On April 6, 1959, Hav-33 informed that CHARLES TOURINE and NICHOLAS DI COSTANZO were no longer in Havana. Source noted that MARVIN KRAUSE appeared to be operating the casino.

*X (u)*

*Cuba Kentucky Nevada*

On April 16, 1959, Hav-31 informed that CHARLES TOURINE had sold his interest in the Hotel Capri casino to NICHOLAS DI COSTANZO.

*X (u)*

On April 13, 1959, PCI NEWMAN stated that CHARLES TOURINE was in Miami, Florida, and it did not appear that he would return to Havana in the near future because he had sold his interest to NICHOLAS DI COSTANZO.

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DATE: 11-14-2017

Havana 64-153

CONFIDENTIAL

5/13/59

The Hotel Capri casino has recently been carrying advertisements in the Havana newspapers indicating that the President of the casino is ANGELO DE CRISTOFARO, described as the owner of the Colonial Lumber Company, Yonkers, New York; the Vice-President is MARVIN KRAUSE, described as co-owner of the Hotel Riviera in Las Vegas and of restaurant businesses in Cove City, Kentucky; and the Secretary is HENRY SAAVEDRA, owner of the Metropolitan Furniture Company, Tampa, Florida.

Cuba

Sans Souci Casino

On March 23, 1959, Hav-33 informed that SANTOS TRAFFICANTE was reported to have made a false sale of the Sans Souci night club to EUFEMIO FERNANDEZ ORTEGA, former Chief of the Secret Police during the regime of CARLOS PRIO SOCARRAS. Source noted that there were indications the casino might close in the near future because of its inability to meet the employee payroll.

Cuba

Cuba

Cuba X (u)

On April 14, 1959, PCI ALBERTO SUAREZ ALEMAN (CONCEAL), doorman, Calle 12 No. 20, Havana, advised he had been informed by Mrs. SANTOS TRAFFICANTE that the Sans Souci night club was closed and would remain closed because of lack of business. Source stated that Mrs. TRAFFICANTE indicated that the Comodoro casino also might be closed in the near future.

Cuba

Hotel Deauville Casino

PCI NEWMAN, mentioned above, advised on March 26, 1959, that the Hotel Deauville casino, in which SANTOS TRAFFICANTE, mentioned above, has an interest, had received permission to open but had not done so.

On April 22, 1959, Hav-31 advised that the Deauville casino had reopened, and it appeared from the newness of the equipment that it might have been obtained from the Hotel St. Johns casino.

X (u)

On May 4, 1959, Hav-33 advised that on April 25, 1959, SANTOS TRAFFICANTE had been observed in the Deauville casino. Source said that the three owners of the Deauville casino are TRAFFICANTE, EVARISTO GARCIA, and a new owner, EUGENIO LEAL. Source said that LEAL has a past reputation for dealing in narcotics and that many of the Cubans frequenting the Deauville casino are known narcotics traffickers.

Cuba

Cuba

X (u)

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Havana 64-153

5/13/59

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Hotel St. Johns Casino

*Cuba* On May 6, 1959, Hav-31 advised that CALEEL SIMON and ANGELITO GONZALEZ had obtained a license to reopen the St. Johns casino. Source noted, however, that as yet the casino had not received permission to reopen. Hav-31 had previously advised on April 22, 1959, that it was rumored that JACK YOUNGBLOOD might obtain permission to reopen the St. Johns casino on a 50-50 basis with the Cuban Government as a reward for some work he had done or would do in the near future for the Government. It should be noted that WALTER ALFRED YOUNGBLOOD, aka Jack Youngblood, was recently arrested by police authorities in Miami, Florida, in connection with an alleged plot to kidnap ROLANDO MASFERRER, former Cuban Senator. *Cuba*  
~~(u)~~ *Cuba*

Hotel Havana Riviera

The Havana Spanish language newspaper "El Mundo", under date March 18, 1959, reported that 92 slot machines had been confiscated at the Havana Riviera Hotel by the Cuban Secret Police.

On March 23, 1959, Hav-33 informed that there was almost no gambling activity in the Havana Riviera casino. ~~(u)~~

On March 26, 1959, PCI ARTHUR NEWMAN, mentioned above, advised he had received information from JACK LANSKY while in Miami, Florida, that MEYER LANSKY, major interest holder in the Havana Riviera Hotel and casino, was in a hospital in Miami recovering from a heart attack and that the LANSKYs' mother also was hospitalized with a broken hip.

*Cuba* On April 6, 1959, Hav-33 informed that SID JACOBS, who had previously been SANTOS TRAFFICANTE's top assistant at the Sans Souci night club, was now working at the Hotel Riviera casino. Source noted that in the absence of JACK LANSKY the casino was being operated by CHARLES BARON and DINO CELLINI. Source said that it was reported that FIDEL CASTRO had visited the casino on April 4, 1959, and received a check from the casino in the amount of \$20,000 for the Agrarian Reform movement. *Cuba*  
~~(u)~~ *Cuba*

On April 13, 1959, PCI NEWMAN advised that MEYER LANSKY had been released from the hospital in Miami and was confined to a wheelchair at home.

On May 4, 1959, Hav-33 advised that JACK LANSKY had returned to Havana on April 30, 1959, and that he was again at the Hotel Havana Riviera. ~~(u)~~

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Havana 64-153

CONFIDENTIAL

5/13/59

*U.S.A.* On May 6, 1959, Hav-31 advised that JACK LANSKY and DINO CELLINO had been arrested by Cuban police and that there were indications they would be deported to the United States. *X (u)*

On May 7, 1959, PCI NEWMAN advised that FRANK ERICKSON definitely has an interest in the Havana Riviera gambling operation but that the exact extent of this interest is unknown to him. Source noted that at the time JACK LANSKY and DINO CELLINI were apprehended by the police, SANTOS TRAFFICANTE was at the Havana Riviera casino. Source said that when TRAFFICANTE learned that the Cuban police also were looking for him, he discreetly walked out of the Riviera and went into hiding. *Cuba*

Hotel Havana Hilton

*Cuba* On March 12, 1959, Hav-31 advised that JOE SILESI and LARRY SNOW had both returned to Havana and were operating the Hotel Havana Hilton casino. On March 23, 1959, Hav-33 advised that although SILESI had returned to Cuba, he was making only rare appearances at the Hilton Hotel and that RAUL GONZALEZ PEREZ was fronting for him. *X (u)* *Cuba Florida*

On March 26, 1959, PCI ARTHUR NEWMAN advised that the Havana Hilton casino was having financial difficulty but was hopeful of obtaining a rental reduction which would allow them to continue operation. *Cuba*

On March 25, 1959, Hav-31 advised that JOE SILESI was expected to leave Havana for Miami, Florida, in the immediate future. *X (u)*

*Cuba* On April 13, 1959, PCI NEWMAN, mentioned above, stated that JOE SILESI had left Havana and had gone to Miami, Florida, but that his brother, CHARLES SILESI, was still working in the casino at the Hotel Havana Hilton. Source noted that JACK FRIEDLANDER, who formerly worked at the Hotel Plaza casino, was employed at the Hotel Havana Hilton casino. PCI NEWMAN said that the operators of the Havana Hilton casino had obtained \$500,000 credit from the Cuban Government and that this sum represented money belonging to ROBERTO MENDOZA, one of the Cuban interest holders in the casino, which money had been frozen by the new government. *Cuba*

Hotel Plaza Casino

The Hotel Plaza casino has remained closed since the overthrow of the Batista regime on January 1, 1959. On May 7, 1959, PCI NEWMAN, mentioned above, advised that ANGELO BRUNO, one of the interest holders in the casino of the Hotel Plaza, had visited in Havana for a few days recently and had advised source that the Hotel Plaza casino had received permission to reopen in June, 1959.



DATE: 11-14-2017

Havana 64-153

5/13/59

Hotel Comodoro Casino

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The March 18, 1959, edition of the Havana Spanish language newspaper "El Mundo" carried an article reporting that 40 slot machines in the Hotel Comodoro casino had been confiscated by the Cuban Secret Police.

Hav-33 advised on March 23, 1959, that BENNY FERNANDEZ <sup>Cuba</sup> is the Manager of the Hotel Comodoro casino. Source noted that the principal interest holder in this casino is SANTOS TRAFFICANTE and that TRAFFICANTE's nephew, SANTOS JOSE TRAFFICANTE, had been observed in the casino on frequent occasions in the past. <sup>Cuba</sup> X(u)

On March 26, 1959, PCI NEWMAN, mentioned above, informed that SID JACOBS <sup>Cuba</sup> owns a small interest in the Hotel Comodoro casino.

On April 6, 1959, Hav-33 informed that there was very little business in the Hotel Comodoro casino and that there were indications the casino might close in the near future. X(u)

Tropicana Night Club Casino

The principal interest holders in the Tropicana night club casino are all Cuban. The casino is managed by a Dallas gambler named LOU MacWILLIE. <sup>Texas</sup>

The April 1, 1959, edition of the Havana Spanish language newspaper "Informacion" carried an article reporting that 2,168 bottles of alcoholic beverages had been confiscated at the Tropicana night club by the Cuban Internal Revenue Service because these bottles failed to bear any tax stamps.

Oriental Park Race Track

On April 16, 1959, PCI PEDRO P. TAPIA (CONCEAL), racing director, Oriental Park Race Track, advised that both gambling casinos at the race track are closed and that GEORGE LEVINE, who formerly operated them, was reported to be presently in New York City. <sup>Cuba</sup>

Extra copies of this letter have been prepared for forwarding by the Bureau to: Albany, Boston, New York, Newark, Philadelphia, Salt Lake City, Washington Field (one each), and Miami (two).

- P -

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- 7 -

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*[Handwritten initials]*