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26 November 1960

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Preliminary Debriefing Report on AMPANIC-7
Activities in Cuba

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1. The substance of this preliminary report covers debriefing sessions held with AMPANIC-7 from 7 through 15 November 1960. Both Mr. Pekich and the undersigned participated in these debriefing periods. The pertinent aspects of these debriefing sessions are summarized into four specific categories:

- a. AMPANIC-7's operational activities in Cuba from his initial arrival in Cuba 5 August until his departure 5 November 1960.
- b. Internal assets developed in Cuba for future operational use.
- c. Problems encountered by A-7 while operating in Cuba.
- d. Projected future assignment in Cuba.

2. Mr. James Pekich, who was AMPANIC-7's case officer during his initial training in Washington, was contacted by phone from Miami by subject on 7 November. Subject reported that he had arrived in the U. S. by boat 5 Nov. and was planning to leave that afternoon by plane for Washington. A room was booked at the Washington Hotel in anticipation of A-7's arrival that evening. At approximately 1800 hours, A-7 called Mr. Pekich on the agent phone from the Washington airport to announce his arrival and was directed to go to the hotel, where subject was subsequently contacted by Mr. Pekich and the undersigned.

3. Upon contacting A-7 at the hotel, it was clearly evident that he was in a highly emotional state which partly stems from his recent escape from Cuba. In his initial emotional outburst, A-7 stated that we had not lived up to our commitments to support his activities in Cuba; that he didn't like the idea of considering himself as being expendable; that he was not sure why we sent him to Cuba in the first place if we had no intentions to support his activities inside the country. In short, A-7 felt we had let him down completely and that he was fortunate in escaping without losing his life.

After Mr. Pekich succeeded in quieting down A-7 following this initial outburst, A-7 was first asked to describe how he managed to get out of Cuba without utilizing our channels to effect this exfiltration.

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Why did we send him?

Assignment?

Escape Story

A-7 stated that on 18⁰¹ October he had sent an urgent message to his Hava contact (AICRE-1) informing him that his situation was precarious and that he must get out of Cuba as soon as possible. According to A-7 his Agency contact was unable to provide any definite assurance that his departure from Cuba could be expedited. He then attempted to lay on unilateral arrangements to this end with first his operational contact, Benito FERNANDEZ, and later his mother-in-law introduced A-7 to a [redacted] a psychiatrist in Havana, who offered to assist him in getting out of Cuba. In the course of the next ten days, A-7's plans to get out of Cuba began to take shape, after [redacted] introduced him to (Dr. Francisco PRADO), a plastic^{06,08} surgeon who operates his own clinic in Havana. On 1 November a negro by the name of [redacted] drove to A-7's safehouse and took him to his own house located on (64th Street 23-25) in Marianao. On the morning of 2 November at 1100 hours, (Dr. PRADO) arrived at the Negro's house and told A-7 that he planned to leave for Key West Florida 5 November and would arrange to smuggle A-7 out of Cuba by hiding him in the motor room of his yacht. Arrangements were made between the principals for A-7 to visit the yacht 4 November to inspect his proposed hiding place on the yacht. In the interim period, A-7 stated that he began to suspect that he may have fallen into a trap and told the Negro that he was returning to the U. S. to bring Tony VARONA back with him to Cuba. A-7 felt this was a good gimmick to use in the event (Dr. PRADO) planned to turn him over to the G-2.⁰⁶ After inspecting his hiding place on the yacht, A-7 told (Dr. PRADO) he didn't like the idea of hiding in the motor room and suggested that he swim out to the boat, where he could be picked up at sea. That night (4 November) A-7 stayed at the home of [redacted] who had a house close to the beach at Santa Maria del Mar located about 25 Kilometers from Havana. On 5 November at 0630 hours, A-7 began his long swim in rough, choppy waters and was finally sighted by (Dr. Prado's) yacht, where he was taken on board the vessel. (A-7 states that he was completely exhausted when he was picked up by the vessel).

(Dr. Prado's) yacht ("SONIA") piloted by [redacted] reached Key West, Florida 5 November at 1445 hours. A-7 managed to slip away during the refueling of the yacht before the custom officials arrived and immediately took off for Miami. Upon reaching Miami, A-7 went directly to his wife's home for a reunion with his family. In querying A-7 further on how (Dr. Prado) managed to leave Cuba without any serious obstacles placed in his path by the SOG, A-7 stated that (Dr. Prado) told him that he received official approval for this trip to return a stolen vessel from his yacht club, (Casino Espanol) in Havana, which was being held for him by American authorities in Key West. Moreover, (Dr. Prado) told A-7 that he planned to leave the

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 ("SONIA") (worth about \$25,000) in Key West, Florida, which he hoped to put up for sale at some future date. (It would appear that (Dr. Prado) was afraid that all such vessels as his would subsequently be nationalized by the Castro regime.) Prior to his return to Cuba, (Dr. Prado) planned to stay at the West (Drive Harbor Island,) Miami - Tel: (PL 1-5310.)
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4. Efforts to debrief A-7 on his operational activities in Cuba were somewhat futile in this initial meeting in view of his unsettled emotional state. His primary concern appeared to be his wife and his rather strained relationship with his in-laws, who were now residing in Miami. In this connection, it should be pointed out that this emotional state appeared to stem, in part, from his inherent suspicions that his wife (21 years of age and relatively attractive) was being unfaithful to him. All indications are, however, that A-7 has no real basis for these suspicions; other than those conjured up in his own mind. In any case, he requested if it might not be possible to wire-tap his wife's house in Miami, so that he could have daily reports on her activities. While no promises were made, A-7 was assured we would attempt to look into this possibility, once we had more definite information that there were some grounds for his suspicions. (Note: Subsequent discussions with Security Office revealed that a wire-tap of A-7's house was a major project in itself and impossible to accomplish at this time without tying up considerable personnel.) A-7 was later told this after we assured him that his suspicions were groundless where his wife was concerned.

5. Following this initial meeting with A-7, it was apparent to both Mr. Pekich and the undersigned that time would be needed to restore agent's confidence in our capability to support his efforts in any future projected assignment in the field. Moreover, A-7's emotional state, which appears to stem from his problems with his in-laws and his concern about leaving his wife alone, must be fully resolved before attempting to dispatch him again.

6. In later debriefing session held from 8 to 15 November with A-7, considerable more light was thrown on the nature and scope of his operational activities in Cuba. As previously indicated in paragraph 1 of this report, A-7's activities are summarized as follows:

a. AMPANIC-7 Operational Activities in Cuba:

In line with his projected mission to organize resistance groups in Havana and Pinar del Rio for mounting sabotage operations against key target installations and assassination of prominent Cuban Communist members in the Castro entourage, A-7 appears to have made some progress in this direction from the time he arrived in Cuba in early August 1960 to his subsequent exfiltration 5 November. Upon arrival in Havana, A-7 began a series of meetings with leaders of the OA, Triple-A and MDC with a view to establishing some degree of rapport in the furtherance of his own personal objectives. It is significant to note that in a period of approximately 5 weeks, A-7 made contact with over 42 individuals, who represented various anti-Castro groups operating in the Havana and Pinar del Rio areas. A-7 frankly admitted that he had spread himself out too thin in this respect and that in many cases he should

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have employed cut-outs instead of attempting to contact certain individuals himself. Individual meetings were also held by A-7 with AMPANIC-5, (Dr. Lino Fernandez) and AMPUNG-1 with a view to establishing some degree of rapport and coordination of activities in the area. In this connection, A-7 claims he turned over a number of his assets over to AMPANIC-5, prior to his movement to the ESCAMBRAY, where he was subsequently picked up by G-2.

b. Internal Assets Developed in Cuba for Future Operational Use:

In attempting to sift out specific assets developed by A-7 during his activities in Havana, three of the more prominent individuals with whom A-7 was in direct contact should be listed.

- (1) (⁰⁶Benito FERNANDEZ⁰⁸): owner of the (Auto-Mart) and (Auto-Centro) (Garages) in Havana. A-7 used (FERNANDEZ) for planning the selection of suitable IZ's and DZ's in both Pinar del Rio and Oriente provinces, location of safehouses in Havana and use of his garages for storage of arms and military equipment which A-7 anticipated would be dispatched to him.
- (2) (⁰⁶Dr. Helio NARDO Baiz⁰⁸): a lawyer by profession, who has unlimited contacts in Pinar del Rio and who was working closely with A-7 to form a guerrilla group in the Sierra de los Organos. (NARDO) was also selected to handle the propaganda for the "Cuba Libre" group being organized by A-7 inside Cuba.
- (3) (⁰⁶Francisco ROBAYNAS Dominguez⁰⁸): a Cuban national who had served in the U.S. Army and who also fought in the Escambrays against Batista forces. (ROBAYNA) claimed he had a force of 150 men at his disposal and was planning to use them in a guerrilla action against Castro forces in the Pinar del Rio area. Moreover, once proper materiel support in the form of arms and other military equipment was made available to him by A-7, he felt he could marshal over a thousand men in this area.
- (4) In addition to the ⁰⁷above assets, A-7 ⁰⁶indicated that AM⁽⁰¹⁾(RE-1) (known to him as (Emilio Rodriguez) (George DePilot) (Juan Mendez) ⁰⁷ rendered him considerable assistance in moving securely about Havana in the course of his operational contacts. In the case of AM⁽⁰¹⁾(RE-1) ⁰¹ A-7 highly praised his abilities as a highly capable Case Officer; and he feared for his personal safety. He suggested that AM⁽⁰¹⁾(RE-1) ⁰¹ should be brought back to the U.S. for a rest period, before G-2 picked him up.
- (5) Finally, AMPUG-1 who was trained in sabotage techniques in the U.S. and was later assigned to A-7, was listed by A-7 as an asset, who could be channeled into more specific operations, once available materiel was forthcoming. He felt, however, that he and AMPUG-1 were at considerable odds on certain aspects of conducting operations.

in Havana, but felt he could resolve these differences upon his own return.

c. Problems Encountered by A-7 while Operating in Cuba:

Some of the more significant problems encountered by A-7 during the course of his operations in Havana are as follows:

(1) Security: In this connection, A-7 stated that despite the disguise given him, he had to be constantly on the alert from the danger of being picked up by G-2 or Castro police during the course of his numerous operational contacts. He cited several examples where he believed he was under surveillance by the opposition and subsequently succeeded in alluding this surveillance. He complained that his disguise, (hair-piece and mustache) rapidly deteriorated in the Havana climate and as a consequence he was forced to abandon this disguise toward the latter part of his stay in Havana. Similarly, he was forced to change his quarters continually, by moving from one safehouse to another as a security precaution, since he felt that it was generally known in Cuban circles that he was operating in the Havana area, and that he was probably already under the surveillance of Castro security forces.

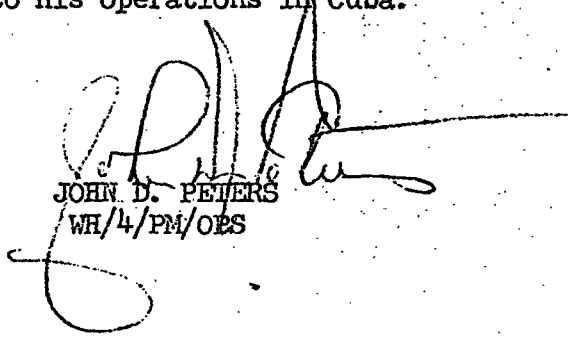
(2) Materiel Support: In the course of these debriefing sessions, one of A-7's chief complaints was that despite his urgent messages sent through his cut-out (AMIRE-1) to the Station that arms and other military equipment were sorely needed by his groups in Havana and Pinar del Rio, no action was taken to implement his requests. As a result, A-7 felt he was losing faith with his followers and this was one of the primary factors for returning to the States to discuss this aspect with Headquarters

(3) Need for Direct Communication: A-7 stated that without the services of a W/T operator who could be in direct communication with us, he is fully convinced that any subsequent return to Cuba in an operational capacity would be ineffectual. Hence, this would be one of the conditions laid on us that when he returned, a W/T operator would be assigned to him personally.

7. Projected Future Assignment of A-7 in Cuba: Predicated on the assumption that A-7 will be sent back to Cuba in the relatively near future, both Messrs. ~~Pekich and Peters~~, feel that his most significant contribution can be made in the Pinar del Rio area, where he appears to have known assets in the hills. This, however, does not preclude A-7 from also operating in Havana in developing sabotage operations with AMPUG-1, whom we assume will cooperate with A-7 despite their differences in how these operations should be conducted. Moreover, should the AMYUM complex decide to move into other provinces of Cuba where military action is to take place, A-7 would appear to be the logic

choice in taking over the operations in this area against Castro targets. In any case, a decision has been reached that A-7 should not be dispatched without a trained W/T operator who can be relied on to work closely on operations with A-7 inside the country.

8. Case Officer Comments: Despite A-7's tendencies to operate on a grandiose scale, his disappointment in the lack of support received on his initial mission to Cuba; and his display of emotional instability at times, it is believed that his efforts can be properly channeled to work effectively for us in Cuba. His motivation appears to stem from his personal ambitions to make his mark on this counter-revolution against Castro, where he can assure himself of a prominent position in the future government to be formed in Cuba after the overthrow of the Castro regime. A-7 has imagination and the will to succeed. His weakness is his inability to hide his personal ambitions from others who may work with him and who may have altogether different motivations and sense of values. Hence, it is believed that A-7 will encounter problems in handling people recruited or assigned to him in the course of his activities inside the country. AMPUG-1 can be cited as a good example, where a clash of personalities has apparently already taken place. In view of this, A-7 will have to be dealt with firmly and must be convinced that the success or failure of his projected mission will depend on his ability to develop confidence and loyalty among his followers once he is inside the country again. Similarly, A-7 must resolve his personal problem dealing with his wife and in-laws, which has had an adverse effect on him personally since his return, and may affect his operations inside Cuba. The next several weeks will, therefore, need be devoted to re-establish A-7's confidence in our ability to support his efforts in Cuba, once he is sent back, and working out his family problems to obviate any adverse psychological effect which may be detrimental to his operations in Cuba.


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