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WH/COG 71-83

15 MAR 1971

MEMORANDUM FOR: Chief, Western Hemisphere Division

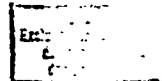
SUBJECT : Status of AMCALL-1 Ransom Negotiation

1. On 26 August 1970, \$120,000 ransom was paid for the release of AMCALL-1. \$70,000 of this amount was paid by the Agency and AMCALL-1's wife arranged to obtain the remaining \$50,000 from August Vanistendael, a prominent Belgian with high level Vatican connections interested in AMCALL-1 who presumably provided the additional money. Although there was no firm commitment as to the exact time AMCALL-1's release would be effected, AMECRU-1 anticipated his release within 60-90 days after payment of the ransom.

2. Although 6 months have now elapsed since AMECRU-1 delivered the money to the Cuban negotiator in Paris, there was no way to determine the reason for the delay in AMCALL-1's release until AMECRU-1 was able to return to Paris to discuss the matter with the GOC representative authorized to negotiate the ransom cases. Since AMECRU-1 now resides in Miami he is no longer able to maintain as close contact with the Paris official as was the case when he lived in Barcelona. However, he did arrange a trip to Paris in January to discuss the status of AMCALL-1 and other ransom candidates with the GOC

*original given
to Laybourne for Sternfield
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representative. While the talks were still in progress, the Madrid case officer in contact with AMECRU-1 met with him in Paris on 28 January. Since the Madrid Station has consistently been advised to avoid any indication of CIA interest in any ransom case, other than AMESOUR-1, little concrete information was obtained regarding AMCALL-1's status or the GOC time table for his release. After AMECRU-1 concluded his Paris talks the early part of February he left for Caracas where he is expected to remain until the latter part of March before returning to Miami. Although a full report on the results of his Paris negotiations can not be obtained until he returns to Miami, AMECRU-1 has been in touch with AMCALL-1's wife and QUPILL-1 the Madrid asset handling the AMESOUR-1 case. According to AMCALL-1's wife, AMECRU-1 advised her the GOC representative in Paris indicated the delay in releasing AMCALL-1 was partially based on the fear expressed by certain GOC officials of AMCALL-1's potential leadership in exile movements if he is freed. As a rebuttal to this GOC argument AMECRU-1 wrote a letter to Manuel Pineiro, the DGI Director in Cuba, stating that AMCALL-1 had no desire or intention of engaging in political activities after his release and wished to seek employment with some European social research organization. A letter from August Vanistendael verifying AMCALL-1's intentions, with assurance from Vanistendael that he would assist in resettling AMCALL-1 in Europe, was attached to AMECRU-1 letter to Pineiro. The Madrid case officer obtained copies of the AMECRU-1 letters to Pineiro from QUPILL-1 and forwarded them to Headquarters.

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3

3. AMECRU-1 also told AMCALL-1's wife that the GOC Paris representatives offered to return the ransom money if the interested parties were not satisfied with the current progress of the case. The ramifications involving any demand for return of AMCALL-1's ransom and termination of any further efforts to obtain his release are considerably greater than was the case with ANPANIC-7 whose entire ransom was provided by the Agency. In the case of AMCALL-1, there would be no way to demand return of our share of the ransom without exposing Agency interest until such time as the Catholic contributors indicate a desire to recover their \$50,000 investment. Not only did Vanistendael's letter fail to indicate any concern in this respect, but clearly emphasized his continuing deep interest in obtaining AMCALL-1's freedom. AMCALL-1's wife is also insistent that his chance of being released not be endangered during this precarious stage of the negotiation and that any decision concerning return of the ransom be determined by AMECRU-1's evaluation of GOC intent. Although AMCALL-1's wife has always been discreet and her relationship with the Agency cooperative and above reproach, her understandable anxiety over her husband could lead to extreme resentment should any attempt be made to recover the Agency's share of the ransom at this juncture. This would be particularly true if the Catholic contributors show no alarm over their investment or the present lack of progress made in effecting AMCALL-1's release.

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4

4. It is, therefore, suggested that the Agency has little choice but to await AMECRU-1's return to Miami where a detailed assessment of AMCALI-1's status can be obtained by AMBIGH-2, our contact with AMECRU-1.

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