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CIA

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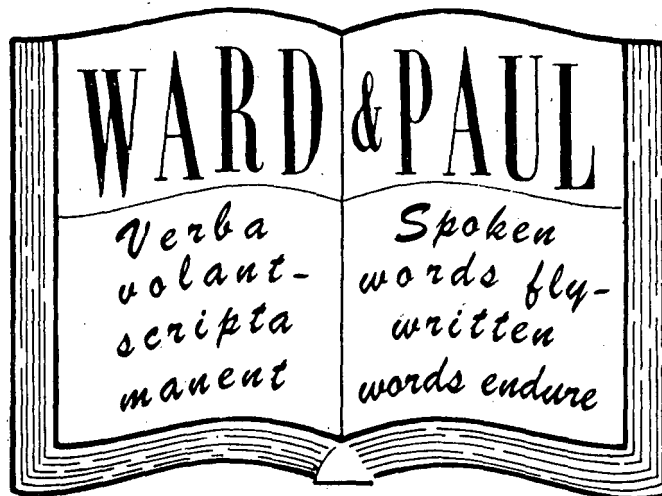
PRESIDENT'S COMMISSION  
ON CIA ACTIVITIES

1 of 2

Monday, March 17, 1975

Washington, D. C.

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HANBACK:amt

A

C O N T E N T S

TESTIMONY OF:

PAGE

Clark M. Clifford

1569

Laurence R. Houston

1647

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1588

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1 the next eight years of President Eisenhower's Administration.  
2 There were some strengthening acts, as far as unification  
3 were concerned, under President Eisenhower which I think were  
4 exceedingly desirable. I do not know of any legislative  
5 action during those eight years regarding the intelligence  
6 community.

7 Then my next relationship to this subject came in  
8 the spring of 1961. President Kennedy was then President,  
9 and he phoned and asked that I come over. And I went over  
10 at once. It was just after the Bay of Pigs, and in all of  
11 the years I had known him I had never seen him as serious as  
12 he was on that occasion. The substance of his comment was  
13 that he had just had a major disaster and he said that the  
14 reason for the Bay of Pigs being such a catastrophe was one,  
15 he said -- and this is in effect -- I made the wrong decision;  
16 two, I made it because I had the wrong advice; three, I got  
17 the wrong advice because the facts upon which the advice was  
18 based were wrong; and the facts were wrong because our  
19 intelligence was faulty.

20 He indicated that he had been informed that as soon  
21 as the invading group reached the shores of Cuba that the  
22 people would rise up against Castro, they would be down on the  
23 beaches tossing roses at our men, and then they would  
24 triumphantly march through the streets of Havanna. Well, it  
25 was a real tragedy, and he said that I cannot endure another

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1 one. He said I could not survive another disaster of this  
2 kind. So he said I am creating an intelligence board, and  
3 he had already talked to Jim Killian of MIT and he said I am  
4 making him the head of the board and I have gotten some  
5 scientists and some military men and others, and I want this  
6 board first to investigate, I want them to investigate all of  
7 the foreign operations of the CIA, and I want you to recommend  
8 changes that will improve that operation.

9 So that the Vice President can pick up the theme,  
10 I had gone through, Governor, the earlier phases of my  
11 experience with the intelligence operation, and then I had  
12 gotten through down to the fact that I was away for a  
13 number of years during the Eisenhower Administration, and now  
14 I had gotten down to the spring of 1961 when President Kennedy  
15 called and told about the disaster that had befallen him at the  
16 Bay of Pigs. And he said that I must not have that happen  
17 again. He said I was startled and shocked at the fallacies  
18 in the intelligence information that we received, and I want  
19 to take whatever steps I can to improve it.

20 So he appointed the President's Foreign Intelligence  
21 Advisory Board, which you are thoroughly familiar with because  
22 of your service upon it. We met at the time, met with him,  
23 and he told us of the seriousness which he attached to the  
24 function of the Board. He issued a directive at the time to  
25 the military services and to the CIA and other government

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1 great contributions to that. We had two very fine men, Dr.  
2 William Baker of the Bell Laboratories, and Dr. Ben Lamb  
3 of Polaroid. They worked very closely, and the Board  
4 encouraged them, got all the money from the President that they  
5 needed. We improved that a lot. We also got a great deal of  
6 information in what is known as SIGINT, COMINT, ELINT and  
7 RADINT -- signal intelligence, communications intelligence,  
8 electronics intelligence and radar intelligence. The NSA has  
9 spotters all through the world and they pick up all of the  
10 radio signals that go out, and when the Soviets launch a  
11 test missile we follow it from its inception, we follow its  
12 whole flight, we determine whether it was successful or not.

13 We know down to the day almost the degree of success  
14 that the Russians have had in MIRVing their missiles. All of  
15 that is very valuable. I remember being in [redacted] one time  
16 and going into a room and here sat three hundred [redacted]  
17 all of them with those great puffy earphones on, and all they  
18 were doing was monitoring any kind of signal that came out of  
19 China. And it is very good. You pick up troop movements,  
20 you pick up plane flights, you pick up missiles tests. None  
21 of it is quite as good, of course, as having the Deputy  
22 Premier being a CIA operative, but we are pretty well going  
23 to have to give up that thought. We thought, the Board did,  
24 that we could penetrate Cuba, and we gave a lot of time to  
25 that. At no time did I ever hear anybody suggest that Castro

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JFK Act 5 (g) (2) (D)

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1 was going to be assassinated, or that there was any plan to  
2 assassinate Castro. But we were concerned about Cuba.  
3 President Kennedy was concerned about Cuba. We wondered  
4 whether or not there might be something going on between  
5 Cuba and the Soviet Union as later did. And I guess, I think  
6 I can remember six or seven teams who were wonderfully well  
7 trained and sent to Cuba at various times, landed at various  
8 locations, and every one of those teams were rolled up. Not  
9 one of them endured. And the reason is that Castro set up an  
10 extraordinarily effective counterintelligence system. That  
11 is, he has a head of Counterintelligence, and in each  
12 province, he has a deputy, and under that man in each town or  
13 each city or hamlet there is another top man and then in each  
14 block there is a man, or in each precinct, and then in each  
15 block, and if the block is a large block, even down to two  
16 or three sections, and their main job is intelligence.

17 It exists in the towns, it exists out in the country,  
18 and if a stranger puts his face in Cuba today, in twenty-four  
19 hours I think this person is apprehended and he is brought in  
20 for interrogation.

21 So, we have to find other means and other means were  
22 found. You will remember that Cuban-U.S. confrontation that  
23 came later, and the presence of the Soviet offensive missiles  
24 in Cuba being discovered by our satellite type intelligence.  
25 We photographed ships at sea with devices on their deck, very

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1 carefully covered, and we covered the unloading of them, we  
2 kept flights going all of the time, because cloud covers  
3 sometimes interfere with it, until we had absolutely irrefu-  
4 table evidence that the Soviet Union had offensive missiles  
5 in Cuba.

6           Thereafter, it seems to me that the Foreign Intel-  
7 ligence Advisory Board maybe the last two or three years I  
8 was on it, it seemed to me we had done about what we could do  
9 to take care of the large areas of important operations, and  
10 then I thought to some extent, the last two or three years,  
11 that our efforts did not produce much. I left the Foreign  
12 Intelligence Board at the beginning of 1968 when I went over  
13 to the Pentagon.

14           MR. BELIN: That was to become Secretary of Defense?

15           MR. CLIFFORD: Yes. And there in the Pentagon I had  
16 some contact with the intelligence community, not too much.  
17 That is handled mainly by the Deputy Secretary of Defense. He  
18 gets the daily briefings and then sifts them through and  
19 informs the Secretary of those items that are of immediate  
20 moment. I did set a meeting a week with a representative of  
21 the CIA and he came over, we had a set time, Thursday mornings  
22 at 10:00 o'clock, and he came over and we kept that every time  
23 I was in town, and I got an hours briefing, so that I kept  
24 up closely with that. I felt that was reasonably valuable.

25           We were not getting good intelligence from Vietnam.

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1599

1 that you never heard of any attempt at assassination plots  
2 that might be planned by the CIA if any were planned?

3 MR. CLIFFORD: No, at no time. We had something  
4 of a joke on the Board. Ambassador Robert Murphy, for whom  
5 we all had the greatest respect and a great fondness,  
6 wondered why the CIA could not do in Ho Chi Minh. He did not  
7 think it would be too difficult a task, and every now and then  
8 he brought it up and said, I can't understand why that can't  
9 be done, but it was something of a humorous bit after awhile,  
10 but that's the only time I ever remember it coming up, and on  
11 no serious occasion did the Board ever suggest action of that  
12 kind, nor were we ever informed that any effort of that kind  
13 was made, nor was it even being considered.

14 When the teams were sent to Cuba over a period of  
15 some two years and were rolled up, their function was not to  
16 commit any assassinations. Their functions were to make an  
17 effort to establish an intelligence base in Cuba that would  
18 be effective and help us to know what was going on in Cuba,  
19 being only 90 miles from our shore.

20 MR. BELIN: But you indicated earlier that sometimes  
21 in the intelligence community that the people who were super-  
22 vising know what the people who are being supervised tell  
23 them. Is that a fair characterization of what your earlier  
24 statement was?

25 MR. CLIFFORD: I think so. I think we knew then that

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