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ORIGINA

STURGIS

PRESIDENT'S COMMISSION

ON CIA ACTIVITIES

- - -

1 of 2

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Thursday, April 3, 1975

Washington, D. C.

WARD & PAUL

Verba volant-scripta manent

Spoken words fly-written words endure

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the attempted assassination on two occasions of Fidel Castro and all the top military commanders that used to come to the Air Force Base. And remember that I had another job at the Air Force Base training the military police. And I also was still Chief of Security.

MR. OLSEN: Let me ask you, are you telling us that you participated as a Cuban Air Force officer, and Chief of Training military police and security and intelligence operations in the Cuban Air Force, that participated in an attempt to assassinate Castro?

MR. STURGIS: Yes, on two occasions, plus other military officials.

MR. OLSEN: When did those attempts take place, during the early part of 1959?

MR. STURGIS: Yes sir. I would say the first attempt -- and I set it up as an exercise, that if I was to get the green light -- which I did not anticipate that I would, because there is such a thing as getting a green light -- and there is another thing of doing something without the green light, in other words, they do it but don't get caught -- but I did set it up as an exercise, and I did have men on several occasions, like I said, as a training exercise, stationed at the gate with me there, with men stationed on the rooftops of the homes, -- my excuse was for the protection of the entourage, Fidel and the military commanders that he had with him, he had a hometown

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bunch with him when they came to the Air Force, even with General Bayo. And I felt that if I would get the nod to assassinate them, I could do it within 30 seconds, high tail it and everything.

MR. OLSEN: Was there something that you had drawn up in the way of exercise as the result of the discussions with the other Air Force officials?

MR. STURGIS: The Air Force and Army officials. This information was given to the American Embassy. I again did these exercises to try to get a diversion that if I would get the nod to do the execution, that I would have some means of diversionary tactics to draw attention away from the people who did the execution, and that I was there with my people to prevent it because of the security.

MR. OLSEN: Did you discuss these plans in advance with Colonel Nichols?

MR. STURGIS: No sir. At the very -- I would say about six weeks of the revolution was over with there was a great deal of discontent among many of the top ranking military officers. I knew these people personally, I was in with them at those meetings and various places, and that they discussed, we all discussed the assassination then. And some said, well, there are some officers that will be with the group, Fidel and Raoul and Che, that were not really with them. So they were split on the idea of assassinating them. So they asked my opinion.

And I told them, well, in war innocent people do get killed. If you are going to assassinate the man, the best place to do it is at the front gate when he approaches, and to just, if there is seven or eight jeeps, just to give everyone in all of the seven or eight jeeps, whether they are pro or anti -- if you are going to go ahead and kill him, people are going to get hurt.

MR. OLSEN: I didn't understand whehter you answered my question as to whether or not you had discussed in advance with Colonel Nichols.

MR. STURGIS: No sir, after the meeting with the different military commanders, I reported to Nichols the type of discussions that were made at those meetings.

MR. OLSEN: And what was Colonel Nichol's response?

MR. STURGIS: Can we go off the record?

MR. OLSEN: If you want.

MR. STURGIS: Let's go off the record.

He told me to stand by, don't do anything, stand by, stall.

MR. OLSEN: And did you then stand by and stall?

MR. STURGIS: Yes sir, I not only stood by, but then I proceeded to do these exercises without asking Colonel Nichols, I did those on my own, to prepare a special group of men to set this up.

MR. OLSEN: You prepared the exercise. Did you ever

get the green light from the people in Castro's Air Force and Army to go ahead with an attempt?

MR. STURGIS: Oh, they wanted to do it, sir. The only thing that held them back was me, I am the only one that held them back, because they wanted to kill him in a minute.

MR. OLSEN: And so they ere urging that this be done, but you were holding back on it?

MR. STURGIS: Right.

MR. OLSEN: And were you holding back on it at least in part because of the request made by Colonel Nichols that you would hold up on it, and not do anything?

MR. STURGIS: Right.

MR. OLSEN: Was any actual attempt made now to carry out an assassination on Premier Castro?

MR. STURGIS: The only attempt was what I was doing in these exercises.

MR. OLSEN: So that there was some planning, but no attempt?

MR. STURGIS: Well, let me say this. We are on a very thin piece of string there, because I was several times making those exercises, and I was really, because of my high position in the military. and because of the things that I knew -- and you must understand that I did break into the headquarters of the Cuban Army at Columbia Barracks, and did steal documents out of there. And I also at my own headquarters, in my files, I did

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photograph some things that were in my files from the past regime that was there, but also of other officers that were there that I could not trust, I wanted to see what kind of reports and things that were made. So I did photograph those. So I did make a breakin.

MR. OLSEN: What I am trying to do, Frank, is to draw a distinction, if I can, between some plans for, some setting up of exercises that would be preparatory to an attempt to assassinate Premier Castro, Che Guevara and Raoul Castro and others that might be with them. I am trying to distinguish that kind of planning and preparation for an actual attempt to carry it out.

MR. ROETHE: Were there any shots ever fired?

MR. STURGIS: No sir. As a matter of fact, in order to avoid that, because my people wanted to do it so badly, I had to take the ammunition away from them just to contain them.

MR..ROETHE: Was this an exercise that was going to be -- was this going to be a shooting?

MR. STURGIS: Oh, yes.

MR. ROETHE: So it was not a bombing or anything of this sort, strictly a shooting?

MR. STURGIS: A shooting.

MR. OLSEN: How soon before you left Cuba did this setting up of the exercises take place?

MR. STURGIS: It was within, I would say, four to six weeks.

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MR. OLSEN: Before you left?

MR. STURGIS: No, four to six weeks after we took over the country, July 1, four to six weeks was the first attempt. That was in the last of January or the first week in February 1959, four or five weeks.

MR. OLSEN: Did this fever about assassinating Castro, Raoul Castro and Guevara, subside after a little while?

MR. STURGIS: Oh,no.

MR. OLSEN: Did it keep on going all the time while you were in Cuba?

MR. STURGIS: Yes sir. I did arrange to train the same men for another attempt at assassination of him in the headquarters of the Air Force on the second floor.

MR. ROETHE: Before you go on to that, why did you never make an attempt the first time, why did you hold back?

MR. STURGIS: I was waiting for a nod from Nichols.

MR. ROETHE: And you never received that nod?

MR. STURGIS: I never received that.

MR. ROETHE: What got you started into a second attempt to try a different type of assassination?

MR. STURGIS: Yes, it would be a different plan to assassinate him. This came, I would say the last part of February, if I am not mistaken. Things came to a fever pitch. Even the American Government, through other agents inside of Cuba, in the military and so forth, were getting a lot of

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information about the Communist activity. And Fidel was coming on his big thing, you know, about talking against the Americans. And this was creating a lot of dissension with some of the top military brass.

MR. OLSEN: That is, the military brass of the Cuban Government?

MR. STURGIS: Of the Cuban military, yes. And at the same time I am trying to recruit Commander Camelo Cienfugo.

MR. OLSEN: You had attempted to recruit him?

MR. STURGIS: I attempted to recruit Commander Camelo Cienfugo, and also Commander Almejera. He was the National Chief of Police.

MR. OLSEN: And who was the first one, Cienfugo?

MR. STURGIS: Commander Camelo Cienfugo was the Chief of the Army -- I think Raoul was the Chief of the Armed Forces.

MR. OLSEN: Did you succeed in recruiting them?

MR. STURGIS: I met them at the Capri Hotel, where the show as at. And I got them stoned out of their minds. And we discussed money, how they would be willing to do, and so forth. I didn't want to get into it too much, because I had Camelo Cienfugo lined up more, he was thinking more in line with what I was talking about. Commander Almejeira got stoned out of his mind. And he just put his head on the table and went to sleep. That was it. And so I had a hard time keeping Camelo Cienfugo awake.

MR. ROETHE: At hose request were you trying to recruit these gentlemen?

MR. STURGIS: Remember Embassy told me, please try to recruit agents for them.

MR. OLSEN: You were attempting to recruit people who would provide the information for the Embassy?

MR. STURGIS: To provide agents for the American Embassy.

MR. ROETHE: You were not recruiting them especially for assassination attempt?

MR. STURGIS: No. Now, Camelo gave me enough information that night where I brok into the Chief of the Army headquarters -- he was Chief of the Army. I broke into their files, and I did photograph and steal documents.

MR. OLSEN: What did you do with those documents?

MR. STURGIS: I turned them over to the others.

MR. OLSEN: To Colonel Nichols?

MR. STURGIS: Yes.

MR. ROETHE: Were you operating here now for Colonel Nichols, or do you know if you were operating for CIA? Who was the creator of this policy, if you know, Colonel Nichols as a diplomat? Was he a diplomat at that time?

MR. STURGIS: Colonel Nichols was the American Military Air Attache, which could be a cover for the CIA.

MR. OLSEN: You don't know if he was CIA or not?

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MR. STURGIS: No. Again I say, nobody shows if they are CIA, unless you are working yourself as an employee.

MR. OLSEN: Let me turn here, Frank, to this area. Were you ever by Colonel Nichols requested to organize any activity other than recuriting people to act as agent for the American Embassy, were you ever asked to carry out any kind of activity in Cuba?

MR. STURGIS: No sir.

MR. OLSEN: You were never asked to carry out any assassination?

MR. STURGIS: No sir.

MR. OLSEN: Were you ever asked to carry out any attempt to overthrow the Castro Government?

MR. STURGIS: Well, let's not say overthrow the Castro Government. Colonel Nichols was very much, in his thinking, in the discussions with him, against the Castro Government. But then here you have a man that goes by the book.

MR. OLSEN: Let me ask you this. Were you ever asked to carry out any,action in Cuba on behalf of the American Embassy?

MR. STURGIS: No sir.

MR. OLSEN: Or Colonel Nichols?

MR. STURGIS: No sir.

MR. ROETHE: So your breaking in and obtaining those documents was something that you did on your own for information

MR. OLSEN: After you came back from Cuba at the end of June 1959 did you then settle in the Miami area?

MR. STURGIS: Yes sir.

MR. OLSEN: Did you take up employment in some normal job in Miami, or did you become involved right away?

MR. STURGIS: I was not employed, sir.

MR. OLSEN: Did you engage in any business for yourself at that point?

MR. STURGIS: Yes sir.

MR. OLSEN: Before we get to that, when you left Cuba, did you manage to take with you any substantial amount of money or wealth?

MR. STURGIS: No sir. I took some documents here that beloned to Commander Ricardo Lorie in his preparation to leave Cuba and come to exile. I helped to arrange for the escape of the Chief of the Air Force and his wife. As a matter of fact, I made contact with the American Embassy to see if they would accept him in the Embassy. And I was told by the Embassy people no. So I had to come here to make the arrangements for his escape with his brother Sergio Diaz Bruil, who in fact himself personnaly went to a yacht basin, Bertrand's Basin and rented a boat, I believe it was a sailboat. With the plans that both he and myself made, I proceeded to Cuba to pick up his brother, the Chief of the Air Force.

MR. ROETHE: Before we get back here in ths US, the

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of the mountains and in and out of the US.

MR. OLSEN: Frequently as a part of your revoluntionary activities?

MR. STURGIS: In order for me to get very close with Fidel personally, I went through a great risk in buying guns and equipment and smuggling guns and equipment to Cuba, both by air, by automobiles, and in Key West by the ferry. And I had an elaborate system made up.

MR. OLSEN: Let's go into that just a little bit. We are going back into the revoluntionary period, before the revolution succeeded, while you were working for Castro, while he was up in the hills. Who did you buy guns from in the US?

MR. STURGIS: I bought guns in Alexandria, Virginia.

MR. OLSEN: From whom?

MR. STURGIS: I believe the name of the company was ARMCO. And the owner was an ex-CIA agent.

MR. OLSEN: Named what?

MR. STURGIS: I forget.

MR. ROETHE: Was this ostensiby a private enterprise?

MR. STURGIS: At least I thought it was a private enterprise.

MR. OLSEN: He asked, was it ostnsibly a private enterprise. Was it actually a private enterprise?

MR. STURGIS: Let me say this here. Can I go back a little bit, Mr. Olsen?

And he did get the money.

MR. OLSEN: That is the kind of information that I have been seeking. I am trying to pin down what the money was for, who told it was CIA money, and what steps were taken that led to your getting the money.

Were there any other operations or expenditures that you had which you feel you are on strong, sound ground in saying were financed by the CIA?

MR. STURGIS: I was asked to do an assassination.

MR. OLSEN: By whom?

MR. STURGIS: Can I hold back on that?

MR. OLSEN: No, I would prefer that you tell us,if you will.

MR. STURGIS: It never was carried out.

MR. OLSEN: That is all right.

MR. STURGIS: I was contacted by this agent -- I am trying to go ahead and think of the date again, because again I will say, I had notes, and I keep them so far, and then I destroy them. And I did tell the Senate Watergate Committee that a friend of mine who was a CIA agent contacted me and asked me if I would do an assassination. And I told him, yes, I would. He said, good. Then, I will pass it on to my superior. And he made contact with me later, at a later date. I believe we had -- I am not sure -- I think we had either lunch or dinner at some ranch house.

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MR. ROETHE: Is this in Miami?

MR. STURGIS: Yes.

MR. OLSEN: First of all, can you go back and tell me when you were approached by this friend of yours.

MR. STURGIS: This is why I say, I can't remember by the exact date, and maybe by talking --

MR. OLSEN: How about, if you give us the season of what year?

MR. STURGIS: The seasons in Miami are all along all the year around.

MR. ROETHE: How about just the year?

MR. STURGIS: I can't remember the year.

MR. ROETHE: Are we talking about after you -- this is after you got back from Cuba, obviously.

MR. STURGIS: Yes, it had to be -- let me see if I can narrow it down just about what year. Let's see. It had to be either before the Bay of Pigs, which is 1961, or after the Bay of Pigs, which again could be 1961. So I would say approximately it would be 1961.

MR.OLSEN: Then, where were you approached?

MR. STURGIS: In Miami.

MR. OLSEN: And is this somebody, Frank, for the moment, let's defer to your wishes, or your reservations, at least, by naming them. But is this somebody whom you knew to be employed by the CIA?

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MR. STURGIS: No, sir.

MR. OLSEN: Is it somebody who you knew to be a contract agent of the CIA?

MR. STURGIS: No, sir. All I knew is that he was an agent, and at a later date, it was proven that he was an agent. So my contacts with this man throughout the years, how he worked, my close contact with him, in Miami, the way of operation, the way he handles himself, the people that he was in close contact with, that the top political and military people who were in exile that he was in touch with, the formation of the Bay of Pigs itself before the invasion, came through this particular man. He was part of the forming of this -- at least of the Revolutionary Council. And I was approached by him and I told Sam about it. I said, Sam, what do you think? The idiot -- I hope this never gets publicized.

MR. OLSEN: Trust us.

MR. STURGIS: I said, this idiot took me out, and we had some lunch, and he asked me if I wanted to do an assassination, or if I would do an assassination attempt for the outfit.

And I looked him square in the face and I told him, why did you come to me? And he says, well, Frank, like, who else? You are a man that the Chief knows your background, and I know your background, and I know you are capable. And you [illegible] a capable man. And if anybody can do it, you can do it.

But the thing is, would you be interested?

And I said, yes, I would be.

MR.OLSEN: Did he talk to you about a sum of money?

MR. STURGIS: No, no money was -- the discussion of money was not involved in it, because I would not do anything for money. And he knows better than to ask me, unless it would be, Frank, what do you need for your expenses?

MR.OLSEN: Who was the target of this assassination? Was it Fidel Castro?

MR. STURGIS: No. I don't know. What happened was that I had another meeting with him, and he said he would contact his Chief, and he would -- and he told me to contact him later on, and I think he gave me a certain day to contact him, and I said OK. You must remember that,how I know this man as an agent, because he does the same things as I do, in his wife, he types away, or at least, he has a wife who types away, he makes all the reports, and stacks them in a file cabinet. Ihave heard him talk to his case officer on the telephone. And to me that was very stupid of him in doing that even to me who was his friend. That is a stupid way of doing things. Because he did not suspect that I was in touch with Sam, he cannot know. And the only time that he suspected that I had anything to do with CIA is when we were in prison, and the man on the television said, yes, he used to work for the

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the CIA.

MR. OLSEN: When you say CIA, you were talking about the Watergate, not the other agent and me?

MR. STURGIS: I am talking about the agent and me, who was part of the Watergate group. And he was dumfounded and said, what, you work for CIA? And I said, yes, sir, you dumb bastard you, I was turning you in to my case officer.

MR. OLSEN: So neither one of you suspected --

MR. STURGIS: I knew he was an agent, but I didn't know that I was in contact -- I never used the word -- or at least I don't think I did, and I hope I haven't used it today -- thatI said I was an employee of CIA.

MR. OLSEN: No, I haven't even said that you were an agent of the CIA.

MR. STURGIS: Or that I was connected with the CIA.

MR. OLSEN: Now, who was the target of this conversation about assassination?

MR.STURGIS: I had a second meeting with him at the Ranchhouse, and he told me, he says, well, there is interest, Frank. He said, about this assassination, and I said, fine. I said.

And then he started to questioning, how would you do it? And I said, how do you mean how I would do it? There are several ways of trying to do assassination. The things have to know is who the person is, that is number 1, it is

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important, and where the person is at, which is important. And then, I will have to go ahead and go to the place where this man lives or what have you, after I know this information. And I said then, I can go ahead and tell you how I can do it. And he said, with a body, this and that, he will be discovered, you know we can't be connected with it. And I said, well, if you are worried about that, you do it. And he said, well, I can't do it. And I said, OK, beautiful. And I want --

I wanted to tell you something, I will do this, because you are a friend of mine, and because you asked me. But I will want more than that. And he said what is that? I said I want it from somebody higher than you, from somebody with authority. If you tell me -- and you are my friend, and I believe you -- but I want it more from somebody else that has some authority. You have a case officer.

I want your case officer to tell me to do an assassination plot, and I will do it. But coming from you, you are my friend, my buddy, but I have got to have more than that for my protection.

MR. OLSEN: Did he ever put you in contact with his case officer?

MR. STURGIS: I knew who his boss was.

MR. OLSEN: Who was his boss?

MR. STURGIS: Edwardo.

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Wait just a minute. I am sorry. I could be wrong there. I said the wrong thing.

If I am going after the Bay of Pigs invasion, if this did happen, as far as the date is concerned, after the Bay of Pigs invasion, Edwardo did quit the operation and go on some other assignment or what have you. So that means he was no longer in the Miami area. So this part I had to get a new case officer.

MR. OLSEN: Edwardo left Miami before the Bay of Pigs, didn't he?

MR. STURGIS: He left after -- well, I don't know I am sorry. Because there is a possibility that he may have been either in Miami or he may have been in the Headquarters in Washington. But I can't pin it down because I don't know exactly where he was at.

MR. OLSEN: Did he ever make contacts with this man's case officer?

MR. STURGIS: No, sir, because it had to be one of two people, it either had to be Edwardo, whom I had never met, or it had to be possibly (Jim Knowles 03) after Edwardo left.

MR. OLSEN: Did (Jim Knowles 03) take his place, then?

MR. STURGIS: I believe so, I believe (Jim Knowles 03) did take his place as this party's case officer.

MR. OLSEN: And then, you did not actually have any contact with his case officer?

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MR. STURGIS: When I told him that, I think I kind of stung him a little bit. And he said, well, OK, all right. Then, you will go through with it? And I said certainly, I will go through with it, I don't care who the hell it is. I said, you let me know. And hopefully, I was thinking of Fidel Castro, because I could have snuck into Cuba, I have done it so many times, and I would have taken a crack at killing Fidel.

MR. ROETHE: I missed something when I was out of the room. I take it you did not know the identity of the person whom you were being asked to assassinate?

MR. STURGIS: No, sir, I did not. I asked him -- you see, I didn't publish it, in other words, I was told no publicity. I was told, because Sam says, go ahead and work with him, and he said, let me know what is progressing.

MR. ROETHE: Is Sam what you would call your case officer?

MR. STURGIS: Sam is my contact, the man I was connected with.

MR.ROETHE: And you would always go to him before you would go ahead with some action like this?

MR. STURGIS: Oh, exactly. I wouldn't do anything unless I received an OK from somebody.

MR.ROETHE: Did you have any idea that this had anything to do with Cuba?

MR. STURGIS: It always had to do with Cuba.

MR. ROETHE: You were aware that this assassination had something to do with Cuba?

MR. STURGIS: I was thinking that it did, I could have been wrong. I was thinking that it could have something to do with Cuba.

MR.ROETHE: Did Sam seem to know anything about the subject -- about this, or did this seem to come as a surprise?

MR. STURGIS: It was a surprise. He was surprised that my friend approached me on something like this. And he said, don't say, no. I said, I will do it to anybody. I said Sam, if it is all right, if this case officer -- Sam said, tell me who the case officer is, and if it is true, OK.

MR.ROETHE: What was your motivation for saying that you would do this?

MR. STURGIS: You know what a whore is?

MR. ROETHE: Do I know what a whore is?

MR. STURGIS: Yes.

MR. ROETHE: I guess I do.

MR. STURGIS: I don't mean to go ahead and question you. I am sorry. But in intelligence a whore is an agent that they would want that would do anything. But he has got to be motivated by patriotism. And that he would do anything for his country, regardless of what it was.

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MR. ROETHE: Assuming that it was something that an official request made on behalf of the government?

MR. STURGIS: Well, you would think that if a case officer -- and you would be surprised how powerful a case officer -- what power a case officer has in his hands. He has got a lot of power.

MR. OLSEN: Thank you very much, Frank.

(Whereupon, at 6:00 o'clock p.m., the interview was concluded.)

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