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NATIONAL SECURITY AGENCY
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FORT GEORGE G. MEADE, MARYLAND 20755-6000

Serial: N5P/017/98
01 April 1998

Mr. T. Jeremy Gunn
Executive Director
Assassination Records Review Board
600 E Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20530

Dear Mr. Gunn:

(U) In response to your letter of November 28, 1997, we tasked appropriate elements of the NSA Operations and the NSA Archives elements to search for information responsive to your questions. In addition, a member of my staff reviewed our United States Intelligence Board (USIB) and USIB SIGINT Subcommittee record holdings. The following represents the composite response of these elements.

(TS-CCO) Question #1: What were NSA targeting priorities and capabilities against Cuba in Mexico City during the period 1963-1964? Including records of the U.S. Communications Intelligence (COMINT) Board, what records does NSA possess on tasking and results from these capabilities? In particular, did NSA target communications between Havana and Mexico City? (During the meeting Messrs. Hatch and Fogarty suggested that the Army Security Agency had a facility in the American Embassy in 1963 targeting the Cuban Embassy, although its operations did not meet with great success.) Mr. Hatch stated that Mr. (Howard K.? Harold? Johnny?) Johnson, a former NSA employee, might have more specific knowledge of such an operation and that you could contact him.

(TS-CCO) ANSWER: A record of the SIGINT Subcommittee of the USIB from August 1993 provides a recap of the USIB SIGINT Subcommittee's Priority National Intelligence Objectives. Included in this recap are objectives [requirements] to obtain information on 1) Soviet and Cuban military capabilities, 2) Soviet and Cuban capabilities, intentions, and efforts to initiate or support internal warfare in other countries, 3) critically important political, economic, and scientific and technical developments in Communist countries [USSR, Cuba]; actual or potential conflicts within the ruling groups, major developments in Soviet and Cuban external policy, and 4) the reactions of Latin American governments and peoples to developments in and with respect to Cuba.

DRV FM: NSA/CSS Manual 123-2
Dated: 24 February 1998
DECL ON: X1,X3,X5,X6,X7,X8

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(TSC) An NSA COMINT Technical Report (A5/A6 COMINT TECHNICAL REPORT #1-66- A Survey of Soviet Communications in Cuba) regarding SIGINT results of the targeting of Cuba was reviewed by Dr. Hall. This appears to be the most comprehensive record of our capabilities against Cuba for the 1963-1964 timeframe. Numerous Cuban cryptosystems were exploited during the early 1960s, including some Cuban military and illicit agent communications through depths or diagnosis and exploitation. NSA had an excellent capability to meet the SIGINT challenges of the 1960's. We had field sites in position to copy the signals of interest in Cuba, and those communication exchanges internationally between countries.

(TSC) Product reports based on the targeting of Mexican Diplomatic communications were reviewed by two members of my staff. Some of these reports were the result of targeting of communications between Havana and Mexico City. However, no records responsive to the John F. Kennedy Assassination Records Act of 1992 were located other than those already passed to the ARRB. There were no reflections in any of these products of any activity that might have been related to the assassination, only post-assassination reflections of U.S. political and protocol developments. NSA has approximately 12 shin boxes [4 linear feet] of Mexican Diplomatic records.

(S) In early December 1997 the ARRB staff was provided with the name and phone number of the U.S. Army Intelligence and Security Command (INSCOM) historian who has information regarding an Army Security Agency (ASA) collection site in Mexico City during the 1963-1964 timeframe. The INSCOM historian is Jack Finnigan who can be reached on 703-706-2630. Mr. Finnigan advised us of information contained in an ASA unit history report that was written by J. Johnson. In addition, I understand that members of your staff met in December 1997 with Mr. Frederick Berghoff, former Chairman of the National SIGINT Committee (previously known as the USIB SIGINT Subcommittee), who provided the ARRB staff with his recollections of NSA activities regarding the Central and South American Regions in the early-1960s.

(U) Question #2. What, if any, additional NSA capabilities were added to target communications sources within Cuba between November 1962 and the end of 1964? What information does NSA have on the targeting of communications sources within Cuba by CIA? Was there any liaison between NSA and CIA on this issue? NSA stated that it may have between six and twelve boxes of Cuba-related material. Of what do these records consist? May the ARRB staff examine these records?

(TS-CCO) ANSWER: The records of the USIB SIGINT Subcommittee for the period November 1962 through 1964 were recently reviewed. No SIGINT Objectives were included in the SIGINT Subcommittee's objectives regarding Mexico for the 1962-1964 timeframe. The August 1963 SIGINT Subcommittee record recaps SIGINT Objectives and the 5 and 18 November 1963 and the 10 January 1964 records indicate that requirements to target Soviet forces in Cuba and Soviet-Cuban Agreements were already receiving priority SIGINT coverage. The 2 December 1963 record appears to show a change in priorities because it presents "pertinent examples of actions underway or planned...": 1) increase in intercept and more timely consolidated reporting on Cuban military problems, 2) intercept and analysis of communications related to illicit...activity...seeking information on Cuban illicit nets in particular., 3) A new attack on the problem of tracing the movements of Cuban subversive agents and of travel by Cubans into the U.S., the Soviet Bloc and Latin America, 4) Additional ship and airborne intercept of Cuban communications is planned, and 5) Increased efforts to develop information on the technical characteristics of the internal military and paramilitary communications of all Latin American countries.

(TS-CCO) NSA collectors, based on their personal recollections, were alerted to put greater emphasis on Soviet Block and Cuban military targets to look for signs of increased readiness in their force posture. Analysts at NSA were also looking for signs of diplomatic reactions to, and foreign intelligence reporting on, the assassination. Any voice and cipher traffic was thoroughly processed from the surrounding timeframe. Analysts on targets that were unexploitable from a cryptanalytic standpoint reviewed traffic patterns to ensure that no deviations indicating unusual activity had been overlooked.

(S-CCO) A review of the United States Intelligence Board (USIB) records held by NSA shows CIA and NSA top-level Agency cooperation/coordination on intelligence targeting via the USIB. However, according to recollections of individuals working at NSA in the mid 1960s, liaison between CIA and NSA for the 1962-1964 timeframe was limited and no record of CIA/NSA cooperation/coordination at the working levels of the agencies was located. We searched for records of CIA targeting of Cuban communications, but no records were located. However, the USIB records make repeated reference to Committee on Overhead Reconnaissance (COMOR) Biweekly Report on High-Level Coverage of Cuba with the caveat that the information was distributed through restricted channels. Because we do not have copies of the COMOR reports, we are unable to determine if the tasking of these missions was limited to PHOTINT, or if SIGINT was also performed from the overhead vehicles. COMOR was the predecessor of the SIGINT Overhead Reconnaissance Subcommittee (SORS). The SORS committee is a subcommittee of the current U.S. SIGINT Committee. The Chairman of the SORS is Mr. John Berwin (phone number: 202-496-9828).

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(TSC) Regarding the "six to twelve boxes" discussed during our meeting with Dr. Hall and members of the ARRB Staff in November 1997, these boxes referred to are records regarding Mexican Diplomatic communications. As mentioned in response to Question #1, a recent review of these records did not result in locating any records not already identified as responsive to the JFK Assassination Records Act. The ARRB staff is welcome to examine these records as well as any other of the records mentioned in this letter. The records pertaining to Cuba and Mexico for this timeframe held by NSA have been researched and those believed to be responsive to the John F. Kennedy Records Act of 1992 have been provided to the ARRB.

(S-CCO) Question #3. What capabilities and targeting priorities did NSA have against Cuba outside of Mexico City and Cuba itself during the time period 1960-1964? What records of this targeting and any results might still exist?

(TSC) ANSWER: For the timeframe 1960-1964 NSA targeted and was successful in collecting Cuban communications to/from its Embassies and/or diplomatic missions in: Algiers, Athens, Bamako, Beirut, Belgrade, Berlin, Brussels, Bucharest, Conakry, Colombo, Copenhagen, Djakarata, Geneva, The Hague, Hanoi, Helsinki, Karachi, London, Lisbon, Moscow, New Delhi, Rome, Santiago, Sofia, Tel Aviv, Ulan Bator, Vatican City, Prague, Accura, Cairo, Paris, and Vienna. We maintain copies of SIGINT product reports, which are NSA reports based on the intercept of communications, for this period. Those reports deemed responsive to the John F. Kennedy Assassination Records Act of 1992 have been forwarded to the ARRB.

(TS-CCO) Question #4. What policy recommendations from the time period 1960-64 might still exist which reflect NSA policy making or tasking on Cuban diplomatic or military communications outside of Cuba?

(U) ANSWER: As stated previously, the USIB SIGINT Subcommittee records show the objectives (requirements for targeting) and are available for review by ARRB members or staffers.

(S-CCO) Question #5. Are there any COMINT Board recommendations or tasking on the targeting of Mexican communications during the period 1963-1964? Does NSA have any other independent knowledge of these targets?

(S-CCO) ANSWER: No recommendation specific to Mexico was located, however, the USIB SIGINT subcommittee record of 2 December 1963 presents as one of the "pertinent examples of actions underway or planned...." "Increased efforts to develop information on the technical characteristics of the internal military and para military communications of all Latin American countries".

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(TS-CCO) Question #6. Including all records of the COMINT Board, what records does NSA have that refer to the targeting of any Soviet assets in Mexico City that were in place during the period 1963-1964? What were NSA capabilities and targeting priorities against Soviet targets in Mexico City from 1963-1964?

(TS-CCO) ANSWER: No records referring to NSA targeting of Soviet assets in Mexico City were located. Our interest in Mexico and our capability against any targets in Mexico City was very limited.


(S-CCO) Question #7. Did NSA produce a Technical SIGINT Report (TSR) on Mexican capabilities in 1963?

(S-CCO) ANSWER: A search for any Technical SIGINT Reports or similar documents was performed in January 1998 but no records documenting NSA's capabilities against Mexican target for the period 1960-1964 were located.

(S-CCO) The ARRB staff was provided with the name and phone number of an INSCOM historian, Mr. Jack Finnigan (Phone Nr. 703-706-2630), who has information regarding an Army Security Agency collection site in Mexico City during the 1963-1964 timeframe. In addition ARRB staff members met with Frederick Berghoff, the former Chairman of the National SIGINT Committee, to obtain some "recollections" from Mr. Berghoff regarding NSA's interest and capabilities regarding Mexico in 1963.

(U) If you have any questions or need additional clarification regarding the information provided, please contact either Lee Schroyer or Claudia Collins of my staff on (301)688-6798.

Sincerely,


JOANN H. GRUBE
Deputy Director of Policy