

Box 10

Covert Operations

1954-1967

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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

January 11, 1963

MEMORANDUM FOR THE FILE

SUBJECT: CUBA (Review on 1/10/63 of Records of the
Special NSC 5412/2 Group)

On 1-10-63 the writer reviewed in the offices of Mr. Tom Parrott, Executive Secretary, Special NSC 5412/2 Group, the records of the Special Group which Mr. Parrott identified as relating to considerations given by the Special Group to reconnaissance and covert action operations with regard to Cuba. (Attached hereto is a copy, supplied by Mr. Parrott from his records, of a "Memorandum for the Record" dated 10/21/62 on the subject "Reconnaissance of Cuba" which Mr. Parrott had prepared for another purpose.)

There follows a detailed summary of the results of a review made by the writer of the Cuba items referred to in Mr. Parrott's summary memorandum, and of other items which the writer reviewed in the Special Group records pertaining to Cuba.

Minutes of Meetings of the Special Group
(Augmented) - "MONGOOSE"

Minutes of the July 12, 1962 Meeting
of the Special Group (Augmented)

Those present were the Attorney General, Mr. Johnson, Mr. Gilpatric, Mr. McCone, General Carter, General Lemnitzer, General Lansdale, and Dr. Cline (for part of the meeting).

The Group noted a paper presented by the State Department member concerning "Guideline for a post-Castro Political Program."

General Lansdale briefed the Group on the number of agents now in Cuba, including legal residents, plus infiltrated teams. It was decided that a CIA proposal, for resupply of agent teams and possibly of resistance groups, should be deferred pending a broader review of the entire situation. General Taylor specified, however, that if an urgent need arose for air supply at any time, the proposal could be made to the Special Group (Augmented).

Mr. McCone and General Lansdale stated that a sizable number of intelligence reports were coming out of Cuba, largely on political and economic matters. Mr. McCone emphasized

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that no high-level penetration of the Cuban Government had been achieved. In answer to a question from the Attorney General, General Lansdale said that intelligence indicated that although there was widespread dissatisfaction with Castro, there was no rallying point for active opposition.

The Attorney General and Mr. Johnson emphasized the need for an effort to obtain hard intelligence on subversive activities by the Castro regime in the Hemisphere, Mr. McCone noting that such efforts to date had been fruitless.

Dr. Cline showed the Group the extent of reconnaissance coverage of Cuba. Mr. McCone emphasized that this program has developed complete information on deployments and facilities for the Army, Navy, and Air Force, and he particularly noted that these missions have verified that there is sufficient logistic support for a 75,000-man military force. "No missile sites have been found."

The Group agreed on a complete review of MONGOOSE toward the end of July, with participation by the Secretaries of State and Defense. General Taylor emphasized that in the preparation for such review, there would be a need for summaries of results obtained to date, of intelligence developed, and of future alternatives opened to the United States (including possible activities in other parts of Latin America).

Mr. Johnson said that the State Department is investigating the possibilities for subsidizing Japanese purchases of Dominican sugar to divert purchases from Cuba and thereby deprive Cuba of a source of dollars, and Mr. Johnson asked that MONGOOSE operational representatives look into this further. Mr. McCone said that the CIA could use unvouchered funds for this purpose, but it would be illegal to use covert funds as a means of evading the intent of Congress.

Minutes of the October 4, 1962 Meeting
of the Special Group (Augmented)

Those present for this meeting with regard to Operation MONGOOSE were the Attorney General, Mr. Johnson, Mr. Gilpatric, General Lansdale, Mr. McCone, General Carter, and Mr. Wilson.

The Attorney General informed the Group that higher authority was concerned about progress on the MONGOOSE program and felt that more priority should be given to trying to mount sabotage operations. The Attorney General wondered if a new look were

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not required in view of the meager results obtained, especially in the sabotage field, and he urged "massive activity" within the entire MONGOOSE framework.

General Lansdale thought that another attempt should be made against the major target which had been the subject of three unsuccessful missions and he said that six new missions were in the planning stage.

Mr. Johnson said that the "massive activity" would have to come from within, and he hoped to be able to present soon to the Group a plan for giving Cuban exiles more of a free hand, fully realizing that this will give additional visibility to their activities. Mr. McCone reserved judgment on the feasibility and desirability of such a program, and Mr. Johnson agreed that he had reservations as well.

Mr. McCone said that he had received the impression that although high levels of our Government wanted increased activity, they still want to keep it at a low noise level, but Mr. McCone did not believe this would be possible and he felt that any sabotage would be blamed on the United States. Mr. McCone cited the enormous number of telephone calls directed at CIA at the time the skin divers landed in east Cuba, and the time that the Cuban exile students shot up the apartment house. Mr. McCone therefore urged that responsible officials be prepared to accept a higher noise level if they want to get on with operations.

The Attorney General, in partial rebuttal, said that the reasons people had such concern were (a) the fact that the skin divers were Americans, and (b) the fact that the student activity was irresponsible and foolish -- and if either of these had in fact been engineered by the United States it would have been a great mistake. The Attorney General also related the possibility of attributability to the importance of the particular undertaking, and he questioned whether we are going down the right road or whether more "direct action" were not indicated. He urged that alternative and imaginative plans be developed.

Mr. McCone said that internal restrictions are so rigid that internal uprisings would surely be brutally suppressed. (It was agreed that the current guidelines did not call for inciting such an uprising.)

Mr. McCone and General Carter explained the tremendous efforts necessary to insure that operations such as the sabotage operation previously authorized cannot be pinned directly on the United States. (After discussion, the Group agreed that it was not necessary to go to such extreme lengths to insure

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nonattribution, and that short cuts were desirable.)

Mr. Gilpatric informed the Group that the Defense Department was hard at work on establishing a Cuban brigade. Recruits would be trained from four to five months and then placed on call for any future action.

General Taylor reported that the Joint Staff is refining various contingency military plans based on a variety of possible situations, including Soviet action against Berlin; "the presence of bloc offensive weapons in Cuba"; an attack against Guantanamo; a popular uprising; armed Cuban subversion in the Hemisphere; and "the establishment of a direct threat to the United States."

Dr. Scoville and Colonel Steakley were present at this Group meeting for an item regarding reconnaissance of Cuba. It was pointed out that the CIA is "restricted to using its high-performance vehicle in the southeast quadrant of Cuba, because of SAM sites." It was questioned whether this was a reasonable restriction at that time, particularly when SAMs were almost certainly not operational.*

Colonel Steakley and Dr. Scoville described a spectrum of reconnaissance activities which could be undertaken, ranging from low-level, Navy fighters through drones, up to the Agency's capabilities, particularly equipped with new radar countermeasures. As a result of the discussion there was agreement that the Department of Defense and the CIA should get together on recommendations for targets within Cuba that require coverage, and on recommendations as to how to achieve this coverage. A meeting was set for the following Tuesday when Defense and CIA were to be prepared to discuss all possibilities, including requirements, capabilities, vulnerabilities, etc.

There was some discussion of the desirability of mining Cuban waters, using nonattributable mines appearing to be home-made and laid by small aircraft operated by Cubans.

It was agreed that the Attorney General would act as Chairman of the Special Group (Augmented) for the time being.

It was agreed that four major points which had emerged from this meeting were: (1) we ought to go all-out for increased intelligence; (2) there should be considerably more sabotage; (3) restrictions on attributability can be relaxed so that training and preparations can be subject to short cuts; and (4) all efforts should be made to develop new and imaginative approaches to the possibility of getting rid of the Castro regime.

* In the "Memorandum for the Record," October 21, 1962, on the subject

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"Reconnaissance of Cuba" it is stated: "The DCI pointed out that the Agency is now restricted to using the U-2 in the southeastern quadrant of Cuba, because of SAM sites. It was questioned whether this was a reasonable restriction at this time, particularly since the SAMs were almost certainly not operational." Beside this item in the summary memorandum, there appears the penciled notation "Also agreed should go all out for intel."

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Minutes of the October 9, 1962 Meeting
of the Special Group (Augmented)

Present for this meeting were the Attorney General, Mr. Bundy, Mr. Johnson, Mr. Gilpatric, General Taylor, Mr. McCone, Mr. Wilson, Dr. Charyk, Dr. Scoville, Colonel Steakley, and Colonel Ledford, CIA.

The Group discussed various possibilities of accomplishing reconnaissance of Cuba, ranging from low-level coverage by tactical aircraft to high-performance aircraft and drones. Overflights and peripheral flights were discussed. It was agreed that the first priority is one high-performance mission in the western part of the island, to be accomplished by all-out ELINT support, and depending on the results of this, a number of similar sorties might be mounted. (The first mission was later approved by higher authority, with the decision on the second proposition left open. The entire package was to be discussed at the USIB and by the Chiefs on Wednesday, October 10.)

Along with the minutes of this October 9 Meeting there was in file a memorandum from Mr. Parrott to Mr. Bundy, dated October 11, 1962. It was reflected in Mr. Parrott's memorandum that Mr. Gilpatric had called at 2:15 P.M. to say he and Mr. McCone had finally agreed that the one high-performance flight would be flown as a military flight with a SAC pilot. CIA had wanted to stick to the existing system for the first flight, simply to avoid any delay. The SAC pilot would require some additional training because the equipment in the improved vehicle was new to him, but Mr. Gilpatric and Mr. McCone apparently felt that this was an acceptable delay and it was hoped to get the flight off over the weekend. It was further stated in Mr. Parrott's memorandum that it seemed agreed that within the terms of the authorization given by higher authority it would be necessary to go back for approval of the next phase: contemplating two or three more high-performance missions, and Mr. Gilpatric seemed to feel that the discussion which had taken place with higher authority was explicit enough to get an emergency authority by telephone. Mr. Parrott further informed Mr. Bundy that the Cover Committee (Messrs. Charyk, Hilsman, Scoville, Parrott, "et al") had met that morning and had agreed on a new cover story for a military pilot and a revised cover story for civilian pilots, and with the necessary changes it was thought that the cover story would be ready that afternoon. Mr. Parrott pointed out to Mr. Bundy that, on the military side, the flight is characterized as military reconnaissance of the periphery of the target area, with particular reference to the Secretary of State's recent comments to the OAS Ministers to the effect that we are increasing surveillance activities. (A penciled note on the file copy of this

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memorandum read: "Later was delayed due to disagreement on account of training required."

There was also an October 12, 1962 addendum to the above-mentioned October 11 memorandum from Mr. Parrott to Mr. Bundy, stating: "Later." The memorandum related that, according to Mr. Knocke, Mr. McCone had decided the day before (October 11) that these flights must be either entirely overt or entirely covert, and he didn't particularly care which so long as they were accomplished as soon as possible. In Mr. McCone's absence, General Carter had come to an agreement with General McKee, Vice Chief of Staff of the Air Force, along those lines on October 11; later, however, Mr. Gilpatric said that this was not his understanding of the terms of authorization from higher authority. Mr. Gilpatric felt that the idea was that a uniformed pilot should operate the Agency's vehicle.

On October 12 at 12:45, General Carter had a meeting with Mr. Bundy and at that time General Carter stated that the Agency operation was ready to go except for weather, and that this would hold it up until at least Sunday, and meantime the SAC pilot would have received the necessary training. It was agreed that if the pilot was sufficiently trained by the earliest time the mission could be mounted, the flight would go, with all other arrangements within the Agency framework. If the pilot were not ready by the time the vehicle was ready, the mission would be mounted as a completely Agency operation, i.e., with a civilian pilot. According to Mr. Lay, the USIB had taken the following actions at its October 10, 1962 meeting with respect to the targets listed in the COMOR paper of October 6: (1) The Group I targets were not discussed by USIB, the implication being that there was no problem from the point of view of USIB's jurisdiction. (2) Groups II and III should be covered as rapidly as possible initially, and after that the frequency of coverage would be further examined. (3) COMOR was to re-do the section of the October 6 paper dealing with Group IV, with targets to be broken out in categories of priority, and USIB would consider this new paper on October 17. USIB did not consider any operational aspects, but confined themselves to the importance of the targets and the frequency of coverage.

Minutes of the Special NSC 5412/2 Group

The following summarizes the minutes of the Special Group Meetings which were identified by Mr. Parrott as including consideration of the subject of Cuba.

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Minutes of February 1, 1962 Meeting of the Special Group

This meeting was attended by General Taylor, Mr. Johnson, Mr. Gilpatric, and Mr. Helms.

On the subject of Cuba, the Chairman read his memorandum to higher authority dated January 26, summarizing progress up to that time. The memorandum from General Lansdale suggesting a different approach to the content of the minutes of the meeting of the preceding week on Cuba was discussed, and it was agreed that the minutes would stand as prepared. General Lansdale's report of February 1 on popular support for the OAS meeting was distributed. Mr. Parrott's summary states that the Cuba missions were stepped up from one per month to two per month.

Minutes of June 14, 1962 Meeting of the Special Group

This meeting was attended by General Taylor, Mr. Johnson, Mr. Gilpatric, and General Carter.

On the subject of "Request for Special Cuban Missions," it was stated that the COMOR proposal dated June 13, 1962 was approved. (A handwritten notation on the file copy of these minutes stated that "Higher authority informed June 15 about possibility of uprising," and there was also a notation that the June 13 memorandum regarding the COMOR request had been "rewritten for book.")

Minutes of the July 12, 1962 Meeting of the Special Group

The Group agreed to recommend approval of various requests for authorizations. In the case of Cuba, the minutes reflect agreement to continue with the presently authorized schedule of two flights per month. General Taylor asked that for the purpose of discussing this matter with higher authority, CIA should prepare a paper on Cuba, setting forth a summary of information which had been obtained to date, the number of missions mounted, what is proposed to be looked at in the future, and the frequency of further coverage desired.

Memorandum for the President from the Special Group,
July 20, 1962

The Special Group records contain a memorandum for the President from General Taylor dated July 20, 1962, bearing a handwritten notation by General Taylor, "Approved by H. A. (presumably 'higher authority') 20 July 1962." In essence,

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the memorandum to the President was as follows:

In the Special Group we are aware that we have been proceeding on a day-by-day basis in requesting authority for overflight reconnaissance. At our meeting yesterday, we took a long look ahead at the estimated requirements for the next few months and agreed that the following program is the minimum which meets military requirements Cuba: Two flights monthly all U-2 flights with CIA civilian pilots We would like to get your approval in principle of the foregoing program with the understanding that on the first of each month you will be presented with the specific flights recommended for that month.

Minutes of August 9, 1962 Meeting of the Special Group

Those present were General Taylor, Mr. McCone, Mr. Hilsman, and Mr. William Bundy.

On the subject of "Cuba Reconnaissance" it was stated that the Group agreed that the second mission authorized for August should be flown whenever the DCI decides that the immediate situation with respect to Soviet materiel justifies it. It was noted that this would use up existing authority for August, and if a third mission should become necessary later in the month, it should be considered on its merits at that time.

Minutes of August 30, 1962 Meeting of the Special Group

Those present were General Taylor, Mr. Johnson, Mr. Gilpatric, General Lemnitzer and Mr. Bundy.

The minutes reflect that in connection with the Agency's monthly forecast, General Carter mentioned that there might be an additional requirement for flights over Cuba. (In the "Memorandum for the Record," October 21, 1962, on the subject "Reconnaissance of Cuba," attached hereto, there appears beside the item dealing with this meeting the penciled notation "primarily low-level.")

Minutes of September 10, 1962 Meeting of the Special Group

Those present at this meeting, which took place in Mr. Bundy's office, were the Secretary of State, the Attorney General, the Acting Director of Central Intelligence, "and others."

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The Secretary of State expressed concern at the Agency's planned coverage of Cuba, involving extensive peripheral coverage as well as two legs directly over Cuban air space, all in one flight. He said he had no objection to the peripheral parts and, in fact, thought it useful to continue to establish our right to fly over international waters. On the other hand, he recognized the necessity of obtaining vertical coverage of the Isle of Pines and the eastern portion of Cuba at this time. He felt, however, that it was unwise to combine extensive overflying of international waters with actual overflights. He pointed out that the long peripheral flights would draw undue attention to the mission and, further, should the aircraft fall into enemy hands after an overflight had occurred, this would put the United States in a very poor position for standing on its rights to overfly international waters.

Taking these views into account, the Agency's plans to break this proposed coverage into four parts: the Isle of Pines; the area roughly east of longitude 77 west; and two legs along the coast, one north and one south.

Within this framework, higher authority gave approval this morning for two additional missions to be added to the one for which authority is currently outstanding. Priority will be given to the two overflights. (A notation on the file copy of these Special Group minutes states that as of this morning it appears that weather will not permit a flight until at least Friday, and longer range weather prospects are not very good, consequently it will be some little time before these three authorizations are used up.)

In connection with the minutes of this meeting, the Special Group records contain a note for the file dated October 25, 1962, stating that COMOR later recommended that the Bay of Pigs area should be looked at since it had not been seen since June Time over mainland would be 12½ minutes for a total of 75 miles depth of penetration, 13 miles nearest known SAM site, 35 miles away. The file note further stated that after considerable negotiation with the Department of State it was agreed that this additional coverage would be accomplished.

(In quoting the minutes of this September 10 meeting in a memorandum from Mr. Tom Parrott to Deputy Secretary of Defense Gilpatric dated November 30, 1962, there was an addendum which stated: "N.B. Mr. Bundy said on 13 September 1962 that he thought the intent of higher authority's approval was such that the entire number of four missions would be considered as being approved. This thus extends the outstanding authorizations from three to four.")

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Minutes of September 14, 1962 Meeting of the Special Group

Those present were Mr. Bundy, Mr. Johnson, Mr. Nitze, General Lemnitzer, and General Carter.

The minutes of this meeting reflect that a JCS representative (Colonel Steakley) outlined the capabilities for low-level coverage of certain targets in Cuba. It was noted that the Secretary of Defense did not wish this operation considered further until the results of Agency reconnaissance in the same area became available. General Carter said that special efforts will be required to identify certain installations, the nature of which is not clear at present. Colonel Steakley distributed charts for the monthly book, on supplementing ELINT coverage of Cuba which was begun today. The Group had no objection to these missions. It was agreed that the Joint Reconnaissance Center should keep an eye on all military reconnaissance or surveillance flights in the Cuban area. (The Special Group record of these minutes is contained in a memorandum dated November 30, 1962, from Mr. Tom Parrott to Deputy Secretary of Defense Gilpatric.)

Minutes of September 27, 1962 Meeting of the Special Group

Those present were General Taylor, Mr. Johnson, Mr. Gilpatric, General Lemnitzer, and General Carter.

CIA's October forecast of reconnaissance activities was noted. The special mission request for Cuba was approved. This brings the number of authorizations for this area back to four, i.e., four had been previously authorized and one has been successfully completed, leaving authority for three outstanding.

Minutes of October 15, 1962 Meeting of the Special Group

A memorandum prepared for the Special Group records by Mr. Parrott reflected that at a special meeting on this date two U-2 missions, designed to cover all of Cuba, were approved, and that these were concurred in by higher authority. It is reflected that after the 15th of October additional coverage was agreed on at other meetings, but the Special Group was not convened for this purpose.

Memorandum from Mr. Parrott to Deputy Secretary Gilpatric,
November 30, 1962

The Special Group records contain a copy of a memorandum (previously referred to) from Mr. Thomas A. Parrott to Deputy

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Secretary of Defense Gilpatric dated November 30, 1962. The memorandum began with the statement that it had been prepared in answer to Deputy Secretary Gilpatric's request on the preceding day for minutes of the special meetings of the Special Group which bore on Cuban reconnaissance, in order that Mr. Gilpatric and General Taylor might be informed. It was stated in the memorandum that Mr. Gilpatric and General Taylor had been present on August 30 and had then returned to the Group on September 27. It was further stated that at the meetings of the 6th and 20th of September the subject of Cuba reconnaissance did not arise. The memorandum then pointed out that the meeting of September 10 was not a regular meeting of the Special Group but had nevertheless resulted in particularly significant decisions. The memorandum then went on to set forth the minutes of the meetings of September 10, 14 and 27.

A. Russell Ash

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