

~~SECRET~~

APPROVED FOR RELEASE
DATE: OCT 2002

17 DEC 1963

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Meeting at the White House 19 December 1963

PRESENT: The President

The State Department: Under Secretary George W. Ball, Deputy Under Secretary U. Alexis Johnson, Ambassador at Large Llewellyn Thompson, Assistant Secretary for Inter-American Affairs Edwin Martin, Coordinator of Cuban Affairs John H. Crimmins.

The Defense Department: Deputy Secretary Roswell Gilpatric, Secretary of the Army Cyrus Vance.

Joint Chiefs of Staff: General Wheeler.

USIA: Deputy Director Donald M. Wilson.

The Treasury Department: Secretary Douglas Dillon.

The White House Staff: Executive Assistant to the President McGeorge Bundy, Messrs. George Reedy and Williams Moyers and Gordon Chase.

CIA: General Marshall S. Carter, Messrs. Richard Helms and Desmond FitzGerald.

1. The President arrived at the meeting approximately five minutes early -- prior to the arrival of several members of the group including Mr. Bundy. Without a formal introduction I commenced the scheduled briefing on the Agency Cuban program at the urging of the President and despite the activities of the Presidential photographer.

2. The President appeared interested in the number of agents inside Cuba but made no particular comment concerning the program until the subject of economic denial was introduced. He asked to be told what additional measures could be taken to step up the denial program. I said that the

~~GROUP 1
Excluded from automatic
downgrading and
declassification~~

~~SECRET~~

PRESERVATION COPY

principal soft spots among free world countries appeared at the present time to be Canada, the U.K. and Spain. The President requested a memorandum setting forth specifics concerning leaks of economically strategic items from these three countries together with recommendations as to what could be done to stop these leaks. He requested Under Secretary Ball to prepare to make demarches to the governments of these three countries as well as any others engaged in the Cuba trade contrary to our interests. He appeared particularly interested in the subject of economic denial and returned to it several times.

3. After hearing a brief description of our progress in connection with promoting disaffection among the Cuban military, the President said that it did not seem to him that we had gone very far along this line and that one day those concerned in Cuba matters, including himself, would have to face the "grand jury" (of domestic public opinion) to account for our progress in our attempts to find a solution to the Cuban situation. I pointed out that the program being presented was, with the exception of the economic denial item, entirely a covert program and, if run at full capacity, would tax the capabilities of the clandestine services -- in other words, that if new and broader measures against Cuba were to be undertaken, they would have to be within the overt field.

4. After a brief description of the sabotage and harassment program the subject of the proposed Matanzas raid was discussed. After hearing the pros and cons the President stated that he did not feel that the present time was a good one to conduct an operation of this magnitude which carried a less than 50 percent chance of success. He said that he felt that such an operation, if pinned directly on the U.S., might cause the Soviets to move in the wrong direction with respect to Cuba, i.e., increase their economic aid or their military presence. Recognizing that a cessation of raids would have a bad morale effect within Cuba, he agreed that low risk operations, with admittedly lower economic and psychological impact, should be conducted. He further stated that planning for such operations as Matanzas should be continued. General Wheeler raised the possibility of air strikes against major targets by autonomous groups. This was discussed and it was agreed that in view of the fact that preparations would take at least three months, these preparations should proceed and the question re-examined at the time that capabilities have been perfected.

5. On the question of autonomous groups the President asked the cost of these operations (five million dollars). He also asked the cost of Cuban operations for the current year (21 or 2 million dollars) and the total Agency budget.

6. The intelligence summary concerning Cuba prepared by General Carter for the meeting was examined.

7. Mr. Bundy then reviewed current U.S. policy vis-a-vis Cuba. He then went down a check list of possible new courses of action taken from the Department of State paper prepared for the December 13 Standing Group meeting. Unilateral actions presented were:

- (1) Air attacks by our autonomous groups. No further discussion.
- (2) Selective relaxation of U.S. controls against exile groups in Florida. No comment on Mr. Bundy's generally unfavorable presentation.
- (3) Military feints. No comment on generally unfavorable presentation.
- (4) Low-level reconnaissance flights. Comment by Assistant Secretary Martin concerning the value of keeping open the franchise for low-level flights. Acknowledgement of certain value to the intelligence community. No decision requested.
- (5) Extension of efforts to eliminate free world shipping from the Cuba trade. No decision requested.
- (6) Presidential declaration concerning U.S. policy on Cuba designed to stimulate anti-Castro dissidence in the armed forces. Mr. Bundy's comments indicated that there was room for a stronger statement than that made by President Kennedy in Miami.
- (7) Talks with the Soviets and the Cubans. Not elaborated and no comment.
- (8) Other forms of covert actions. Not specified or elaborated.

8. In connection with bilateral and multilateral actions involving the cooperation of the OAS and nations of the Caribbean, Mr. Bundy stated that the nature and import of the recently discovered arms cache in Venezuela constitutes a point of departure for such actions as search and seizure on the high seas or an OAS-sponsored quarantine against arms shipments.

EO 12958 3.4(b)(1)>25rs
(C)

Mr. Martin then briefed concerning OAS action with regard to the arms cache. He said that the committee appointed by the OAS to investigate had called for additional evidence from the Venezuelan government which would take two to three weeks to assemble. He said that he felt that the OAS report would be out in mid-January although the question of Cuban defense against the Venezuelan charges had not yet been resolved. Mr. Bundy referred to the efforts being made to increase the effectiveness of surveillance of arms smugglers in Central America and referred to the possibility of an OAS-sponsored search and seizure on the high seas.

9. Under Secretary Ball stated that the Department of Justice has warned that a number of students, some of more respectable stripe than the last group which visited Cuba, were planning to try to visit Cuba during the Christmas vacation and that there is evidence of larger numbers planning to do the same thing during the summer. He said that the Attorney General was bothered by this and had suggested the relaxation of present rules concerning travel to Cuba. Mr. Ball said that the Department of State is tentatively opposed to such relaxation particularly because of its effect on Latin American countries. The President strongly concurred with the Department of State position. He said that he did not propose to change or relax present regulations.


Desmond Fitzgerald
Chief, Special Affairs Staff