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16 October 1947

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. ARMSTRONG
GENERAL CHAMBERLIN
ADMIRAL INGLIS
GENERAL McDONALD

Subject: Intelligence Coverage of the Dominican Revolutionary Expedition

1. With the end of the abortive Dominican Republic revolutionary expedition in Cuba, I should like to take this opportunity to bring to the attention of the directors of the various agencies some comments on the intelligence coverage of that affair. These comments are not offered in any sense of destructive criticism or fault-finding with any agency but only in the hope that in any future, similar task all of us can do better. My own personal opinion is that this was not a very praiseworthy show, and the CIA is equally implicated with the other agencies. I have brought this subject to the attention of the responsible branches of CIA in order that we may avoid something similar the next time, and I hope that the individual agency chiefs will see nothing personal in this but may be able to take the necessary steps to avoid our being caught out on a limb.

2. It is submitted that the intelligence coverage in the field was inadequate and inaccurate in the following respects:

a. There was a lack of coordination between agencies in the field, both in Cuba and in the Dominican Republic resulting in inaccurate reports, uncoordinated between the field agencies. Beginning on 20 July, the following messages were received in Washington:

(1) On 20 July 1947 ALUSNA Havana reported that "150 Dominican exiles and Communists due to leave from Santiago de Cuba by schooner for Haiti within day or two."

(2) On 24 July 1947 USMILATTACHE Havana (Nr10768) cabled Washington "convinced Dominican revolutionaries will attempt to overthrow Trujillo Government between Aug 1 and 15th."

(3) On 26 July 1947 ALUSNA Havana cabled that "ship now reported Antilla Cuba ready depart on mission."

also see HS/HC-208
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(4) On 28 July 1947 (MIA C7 410) Ambassador Norweb in Havana reported "air operation section (of revolutionaries) has procured 'belly tanks' which will be used as incendiary bombs.....also demolition bombs."

It was not until 29 July, in spite of the seriousness of the situation as it then appeared and of the threat to lives and property of United States citizens in the Dominican Republic, that any attempt was made to utilize the facilities of the Naval Operating Base at Guantanamo for the establishment of the facts in the case through air reconnaissance. On that day the MA/Havana estimated the strength of the revolutionary forces assembling in eastern Cuba as from 4500 to 5000. He requested NOB Guantanamo to confirm this report, and on the following day, 30 July, requested Guantanamo to "locate and maintain contact." This request, before it could be fulfilled, went from the office of the MA/Havana to MID, WDCS, and was passed to ONI, thence to Office of Naval Operations, and finally through the Commander in Chief, Atlantic Fleet, to NOB, Guantanamo. MA/Havana stated on a recent visit to Washington that he had no direct official channels through which he could have made a direct request for air reconnaissance.

b. As far as is known, no attempt was ever made by any United States intelligence agency to gain first-hand knowledge of the strength, armament and capabilities of the revolutionaries except by air reconnaissance mentioned above, although reports based on second-hand knowledge were being sent in from Havana and from Ciudad Trujillo on the composition and intentions of the expedition.

c. Personnel assignments in the field were not coordinated. Despite reports of 14 to 16 revolutionary aircraft at three different airfields in Cuba believed intended for use in the air attack on the Dominican Republic, the Bureau of Naval Personnel on 24 August withdrew the Assistant Naval Attache in Havana for duty in the United States, and so far as is known has not assigned a replacement. At a time when the departure of the revolutionaries from Cuba for the Dominican Republic was considered highly possible by field observers, and CINCLANTFLT requested comments of commands concerned regarding possible landing by US marines, US Military Attache in Cuba, Dominican Republic and Haiti was granted a 45-day leave in the US. During a substantial part of the month of August (during which the revolutionaries were organizing their forces), the Chief of the Caribbean Section of the Department of State and the State Department desk officer for the Dominican Republic were absent from their posts in Washington.

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4. There appears to have been insufficient counterintelligence in the field in that in the embassies in Ciudad Trujillo and Havana there appear to have been information leaks which reached the agents of the Dominican Republic.

(1) 17 July 1947 (129) DOS to US Embassy Ciudad Trujillo "There is an influx of Venezuelans, Cubans and Dominicans into Ciudad Trujillo in connection with the alleged mass movement against Venezuela."

25 July 1947 (139) DOS to US Embassy Ciudad Trujillo. When Dominican Ambassador called on Assistant Secretary of State Armour he "mentioned large influx of suspicious looking persons into Puerto Rico." NOTE use of same word "influx" and recall that FBI, when it investigated Dominican Ambassador's charge, found no evidence of "influx" into Puerto Rico.

The Embassy in Havana failed to make any report of the activities of President Trujillo's principal secret operative in Havana whose job it was to cover the activities of Dominican revolutionaries in Cuba as well as those of the United States Embassy. The Embassy's first and only mention of the presence of this agent in Cuba was after he was shot by the revolutionaries, an event fully covered by the Cuban press.

(2) When United States intelligence agencies were having difficulty in locating the base of the Dominican revolutionaries in Cuba, the Trujillo government apparently found that they were able to get this information and informed the Department of State where the revolutionary activities were centered.

(a) Secret Naval message COMCARIBSEAFRON 5 Aug 1947 (050220Z): "Our evaluation search 4 Aug negative. Search 5 Aug same as 4 Aug except obtaining photos all vessels Cuban search section."

(b) Secret Naval message CNO 13 Aug 1947 (131613): "State Department received following.... information Dominican Embassy....revolutionaries and arms now believed located at Cayo Grande de Moa."

5. In spite of the poor coordination and liaison among intelligence agencies in Washington, indifferent reporting by field intelligence operatives and the known preoccupation of the White House with the revolutionaries' activities, no machinery had been set up either by

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CIA or any other agency for notifying the various departmental intelligence agencies of the lack of coordination and liaison or of the importance with which the affair was viewed in the highest governmental circles.

4. From 13 August 1947 until the final collapse and roundup of the revolutionary forces by the Cuban Army and Navy, accuracy of reporting and coordination in the field improved to a degree which might be termed not only satisfactory but excellent. The Embassies in Havana and Ciudad Trujillo and in Port-au-Prince were in touch with each other and with NOB Guantanamo. The latter base furnished daily air coverage of the revolutionary base on Cayo Grande de Noa, and the Commander in Chief, Atlantic Fleet, made arrangements to safeguard United States lives and property in the Dominican Republic in the event of a successful landing on that island. It is primarily, therefore, with the period from 20 July to 13 August that this report is concerned.

R. H. HILLENKOTTER
Rear Admiral, USN
Director of Central Intelligence

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