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CONTACT REPORT

2003

DATE: 19 May 1954, 1100 hrs.

PLACE: War Room

PERSONS PRESENT: Messrs. BARNES, [ ]

DISCUSSION:

[ ] started the discussion by stating that [ ] had arrived on 18 May about 1400 hrs. He was billeted at the Columbus Hotel and then given a 2-hour briefing by [ ] first determined (Thomas first determined) what story [ ] had given the pilots in Hawaii. [ ] had been able to recruit 4 pilots qualified to fly C-47s and 4 cargo kickers (two of whom are crew chiefs). He brought PHS for the pilots and background information.

The pilots had been approached by [ ] individually and on a personal basis as were the crew members. [ ] feels that the recruitment was completed by him of them on a personal basis, that they have confidence in him and accepted the job because of him. The commitments which he made were semi-firm but he told them not to burn their bridges behind them - leave a loophole in case something else should happen. The pilots were advised not to tell their employers their reason for leaving or where they would be going. [ ] could not be granted two months leave through normal channels by his organization unless he can produce some military orders. He said he felt the orders would have to be military and should be backstopped in case they were picked up by his boss.

At this point the pilots are only waiting for advice from [ ] before coming on. [ ] is to be in charge of their contract flying.

[ ] stated he had briefed [ ] for 30-40 minutes on our air support problems.

On 19 May [ ] was introduced to [ ] who questioned him about the approach which he had used in contacting the pilots and prospect crew and what they actually knew about their proposed job. [ ] said that they knew little of what they were to be doing; they were curious about why the pay was so high. [ ] told them that [ ] was a friend who was just trying to throw a little business his way and that there might be danger in the flying; that they would be flying south of Florida. He also told the prospective crews that [ ] wouldn't have called him if this hadn't been a good deal. [ ] asked [ ] if the pilots and crew would do the job if [ ] were not there and he said he felt that they would if there was a logical reason for him not remaining on the job. [ ] told [ ] that there was a possibility that they could get leave for him.

[ ] was asked what had to be done toward firming up the pilots. As soon as he has something definite to say, he will call and tell them. [ ] assured [ ] that they would have a definite answer in 2-3 days.

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[ ] said that if it was desired for the men to be on their way by 25 May they should be advised of the decision in 2 - 3 days.

[ ] asked about the possibility of getting fighter pilots since the [ ] colonel behind this thing had asked for F-47 and B-26 pilots, too. [ ] said that he had good contacts on the west coast and felt that he could recruit two pilots and crew chiefs for the F-47s and B-26s.

Discussion about the [ ] meeting then followed.

[ ] asked [ ] was he believed [ ] knows about the operations, formation, backing, financing, etc. of this operation.

[ ] said that [ ] had asked what kind of money the men would be paid in and had been assured that they would be paid in U. S. dollars. In accordance with SECURITY briefing, he was told that the [ ] colonel has a lot of money and that [ ] felt the big American companies were providing dollars. [ ] said he would not be surprised if the U.S. government were not interested in fighting communism down there. [ ] said this was only speculation on his part, he really did not know. However, the colonel in charge is well thought of and had been a member of the staff of the equivalent of the West Point of the country involved. No names were mentioned at this time. [ ] told him that he, himself, had been working on moving arms for the last several months and that this colonel now wanted air support (re-supply, drops, etc.). [ ] also told him that though the contact was for two months, they would be flying very little of that time. [ ] was also assured that if the period of flying extended beyond the 2 months time in the contract, salary would be paid on a pro-rated basis for the extra time. Terms of payment were discussed.

Mr. BARNES asked what type fellows the pilots were - airline pilots? National Guard? [ ] said that two of them have ATRs.

[ ] tried to ascertain from [ ] what [ ] actually knew about [ ] stated that he did not think [ ] was on active duty with the Air Force. [ ] said that he thought [ ] was really working for the guy down in [ ] - he does not associate the present group with the group who backed the previous show over in Japan. [ ] probably thinks that this is sort of a "Steve Canyon" deal.

[ ] was interested to know where the group was going to get F-47s.

[ ] told [ ] what the area of operations was to be. [ ] also told him that [ ] personally knew [ ] and was a friend of the [ ] colonel. [ ] was told that this operation would be run from an airport in [ ] what the length of the flights were to be; that we were fighting the Communist-controlled Guatemala; we were attempting to overthrow the Guatemalan government; that the U.S. government was not backing us in any way; that there were very few Americans involved in it.

[ ] requested [ ] not to discuss their conversations - that all the matters discussed were classified.

[ ] stated that he felt that there was only one possible pool of Latino pilots (those trained by PAA or Braniff). Latinos almost always fly as co-pilots though in Mexico, Argentina and Colombia they do fly as captains. The pool of Latino pilots who have flown C-47s in the last 120 days is very small. Most of the Latinos do not fly with instruments or at night.

Possible defection of Guatemalan pilots for our use was discussed.

[ ] said that if [ ] could be persuaded to supply both aircraft and pilots, it would be ideal.

In a C-47 American crew there will probably be someone in it who has flown the A-20, too, and could brush up on it in a few days. Ideal is for the pilots to double in this respect.

It was stated that it was most desirable to have complete control over the pilots.

[ ] then itemized the possibilities for American pilots:

1. One source would be MACKEY Airlines in Ft. Lauderdale - they fly the Caribbean area. Discussion on this possibility followed.
2. Second choice would be SEABOARD and WESTERN Airlines whose main office is in New York - they work in that area. This would be no problem since they (the pilots) could easily become current in the use of C-47 again.
3. On a personal basis, with a witting cut-out (as in prospect #1), the use of a United Airlines pilot on the same basis on which [ ] had contacted [ ]
4. Again on a personal basis - instructor of a U.S. Air Force contract school at Bartow would be a source of pilots.

[ ] conclusions:

1. "Take as a policy the Saturday discussion in which, if these guys are captured what can they disclose? They must be unwitting." This rules [ ] out as an operational pilot because of his previous activity on behalf of the Agency even though ostensibly unwitting.

2. [ ] excuse for being in the Far East was that he was an employee of CAT. [ ] said that [ ] was hired to fly a plane owned by the "group" but maintained by Caf on a contract basis and had been advised to use the "CAT" story only in case of necessity and had never used it. "Cover within a cover."

3. [ ] is not available unless we get military orders for him. [ ] and [ ] said military orders were not trouble but the latter said that if we had military orders he could not be used operationally.

[ ] said that as far as he was concerned security was OK. [ ] would not be used operationally; he does not know [ ] is with the firm; the other crew member would never have any reason to believe more than that they were working for the colonel who wants his country back.

Mr. BARNES felt that any alternative would present the same problems. As long as security requirements are satisfied we can use any crews we can find.

[ ] joined the discussion at 1240.

[ ] said that there would be 10-12 bundles, 300# pkgs. in the planes so that they would need a crew master and 2-3 helpers. [ ] said that two of the prospective kickers recruited by [ ] are qualified crew chiefs. [ ] felt two American kickers would be more effective than a mixed team. [ ] held out for 4 on a team - he now has 4 indigenous confirmed and [ ] has 4 Americans confirmed.

Security in using the F-47s was discussed - if they were placed on an isolated strip then they would be out of commo reach since no provision has been made for this.

There followed a lengthy discussion on the various planes to be used in the operations. Re-supply by air pre-D-Day is OK if by night.

As soon as [ ] gets an answer on this and the deal is firmed up, then it can be laid on for the 4 pilots and 4 kickers (two of whom are crew chiefs) to EOD. Two F-47 pilots and 2 crew chiefs for same in the US are be recruited by [ ] Orders for [ ] are to be written.

Meeting adjourned at 1315.

pm  
19 May 1954