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F.I. 044 2/28

FEB 28 1966 06:56PM

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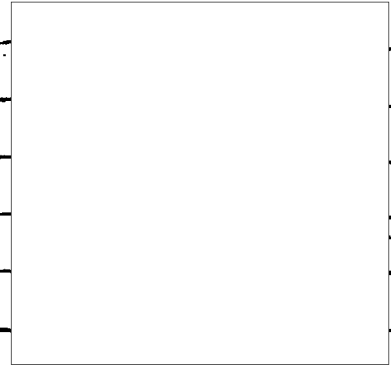
FROM: [Redacted]

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SUBJECT: Cuban Shootdown

TO: (ADDRESSEE / ORGANIZATION / OFFICE / EXTENSION)

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- 2. Maj Gen Hughes, D/OIA
- 3. Maj Gen James King, J-2
- 4. Lt Gen Estes, J-3
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Chronology of BTTR Shootdown, 24 February 1996

- 0928 Brothers to the Rescue (BTTR) files six flight plans telephonically, initially for a 1015 planned departure.
- 1000- Cuban fighters airborne in reaction to believed incursion into Cuban territorial airspace by
1200 aircraft operated by BTTR. Cuban fighters return to base without making contact with any aircraft.
- 1148 BTTR updates three flight plans to reflect intended 1230 departure. Other three flight plans automatically expired at 1215.
- 1313 Three US-based BTTR aircraft depart Opa Locka Airfield, Miami:
- | Aircraft | Number | Color |
|----------|--------|------------------------------|
| 1 | N2506 | Light Blue |
| 2 | N2456S | White and Blue |
| 3 | N5485S | White and Blue w/ Red Stripe |
- 1446- Three BTTR aircraft inform the Havana Air Traffic Control Center that they intend to operate
1457 south of the 24th parallel. Control Center warns aircraft not to fly south of 24th parallel because the area was "active and dangerous." BTTR aircraft respond they are aware of danger but will be flying south of 24th parallel anyway.
- 1507- US Customs radar shows the three BTTR aircraft operating south of the 24th parallel.
1516 US Customs radar also shows two fast-moving aircraft airborne north of Havana. Subsequent information identifies them as a MiG-23 and a MiG-29 that departed San Antonio de los Baños Airfield.
- 1518 US Customs radar shows Aircraft 1 as approximately 1 NM north of Cuban territorial airspace (approximately 12 nautical miles from the Cuban coast) and heading south. Aircraft 2 and 3 are approximately 8 NM north of Cuban territorial airspace and headed east.
- 1519 Data derived from US Customs radar shows Aircraft 1 has entered Cuban territorial airspace.
- 1520 Cuban fighters request permission to fire on a white and blue Cessna 337 aircraft. Cuban ground controllers give pilot authorization to destroy aircraft.
- 1521 The MiG-29 pilot reports that Aircraft 2 has been destroyed.
- 1524 US Customs radar shows no Aircraft 2 on scope. US Customs radar last observed Aircraft 2 at 2326N 08229W (approximately 5 NM outside Cuban territorial airspace).
- 1524 The MiG-29 pilot visually acquires Aircraft 3.
- 1526 Aircraft 1 reverses course and exits Cuban territorial airspace. Cuban ground controllers give authorization to destroy Aircraft 3.
- 1528 Mig-29 pilot reports Aircraft 3 is destroyed. US Customs radar shows no Aircraft 3. US Customs radar last locates Aircraft 3 at 2337N 08232W (approximately 16 NM from Cuban territorial airspace).
- 1709 Aircraft 1 lands at Opa Locka Airfield in Miami.

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Cuba Aircraft Shootdown of 24 February 1996
Timeline of Events
 (All times local)

Information from US Customs, supplemented by observations from ships in the area, indicates that two US civilian aircraft, shot down by a Cuban MIG-29, were in international airspace; the lead US plane which returned safely to Miami did enter Cuban airspace as part of an operation conducted by the Florida based emigre group Brothers to the Rescue (BTTR).

The MIG-29 apparently made no effort to contact the emigre pilots, wag its wings or escort them from the area before requesting permission to fire.

10:00 am - Noon During the hours leading up to the shootdown, we know that Cuban fighter aircraft had been conducting air patrols in reaction to what they believed to be an incursion into Cuban air space. The Cuban aircraft returned to their base making no contact with any aircraft.

11:48 am BTTR updates their flight plans to reflect intended 12:30 departure.

1:13 pm According to the FAA, three BTTR aircraft take off from Opa Locka airfield in Florida.

2:57 pm BTTR aircraft number one contacts the Havana civilian air traffic controller and informs it that the BTTR aircraft planned to operate south of the 24th parallel. The Cuban air traffic controller acknowledges receipt of the flight plan and informs the aircraft of the danger in operating south of the 24th parallel. BTTR aircraft made it clear that they were aware of the danger each time they crossed the parallel but were, as usual, flying in anyway.

3:01 pm All three BTTR aircraft are operating south of the 24th parallel.

3:07-3:16 pm One MIG-23 and one MIG-29 Cuban aircraft are airborne north of Havana.

3:18 pm BTTR aircraft number one is approximately 1 nm north of Cuban territorial airspace and heading south. The other two BTTR aircraft are approximately 8 nm north of Cuba's territorial airspace and headed east.

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 CL REASON:
 DECL ON:
 DRV FROM:

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3:19 pm BTTR aircraft number one penetrates Cuba's 12 mile territorial airspace.

3:22 pm BTTR aircraft number one penetrates 3 nm into Cuba's territorial airspace.

Approx. 3:23 pm The MIG-29 reports to its control tower sighting a small white and blue aircraft (BTTR aircraft number two) flying at a low altitude. The MIG pursues and identifies the aircraft as a Cessna 337.

3:21 pm The MIG-29 pilot reports that aircraft number two had been shot down. US Customs radar shows that BTTR aircraft number two is no longer on scope at 3:24. The shutdown occurs approximately 5 nm north of Cuba's 12 mile territorial airspace.

The crew of a Norwegian-flagged cruise ship, located in international waters, sees the explosion of this second aircraft from 6-7 nm away, and places the shutdown at approximately 8 nm outside of the Cuban territorial limit.

The crew of a US-registered fishing boat, also in international waters, observes the downing of the second aircraft. The fishing boat arrives at the crash site and sees an oil slick and an orange float.

Approx. 3:26-3:28 pm The MIG pilot notes he has BTTR aircraft number three in sight, requests permission to destroy it, receives permission, and reports the aircraft destroyed. At 3:31 pm the plane disappears from US Customs radar. This occurs approximately 16 nm north of Cuban territorial airspace (approx. 28 nm from the coast).

The crews of the cruise ship and the fishing boat observe a MIG fire a missile and destroy aircraft number three. The cruise ship places the downing of the plane at about 11 nm outside of Cuba's twelve mile territorial limit. Approximately 15 minutes later, the cruise ship passed within 2-3 nm of the crash site and observed an oil slick but no debris.

5:09 pm BTTR aircraft number one lands at Opa Locka.

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The continuing flow of intelligence since Saturday, the day of the shoot down, has caused us to modify some of our estimates, and the IC will continue to make revisions as data improves. But four key judgments we made by Sunday morning have only been strengthened since then.

First, the two unarmed US civilian aircraft were shot down by air-to-air missiles from a Cuban MIG-29 in international airspace. We relied on US Customs radar to make this determination originally. Since then, independent radar displays from the Caribbean Regional Center and NORAD Southeast Sector confirm this conclusion. And a Norwegian-flagged cruise ship and a US-registered fishing boat on the scene also placed the down aircraft in international waters.

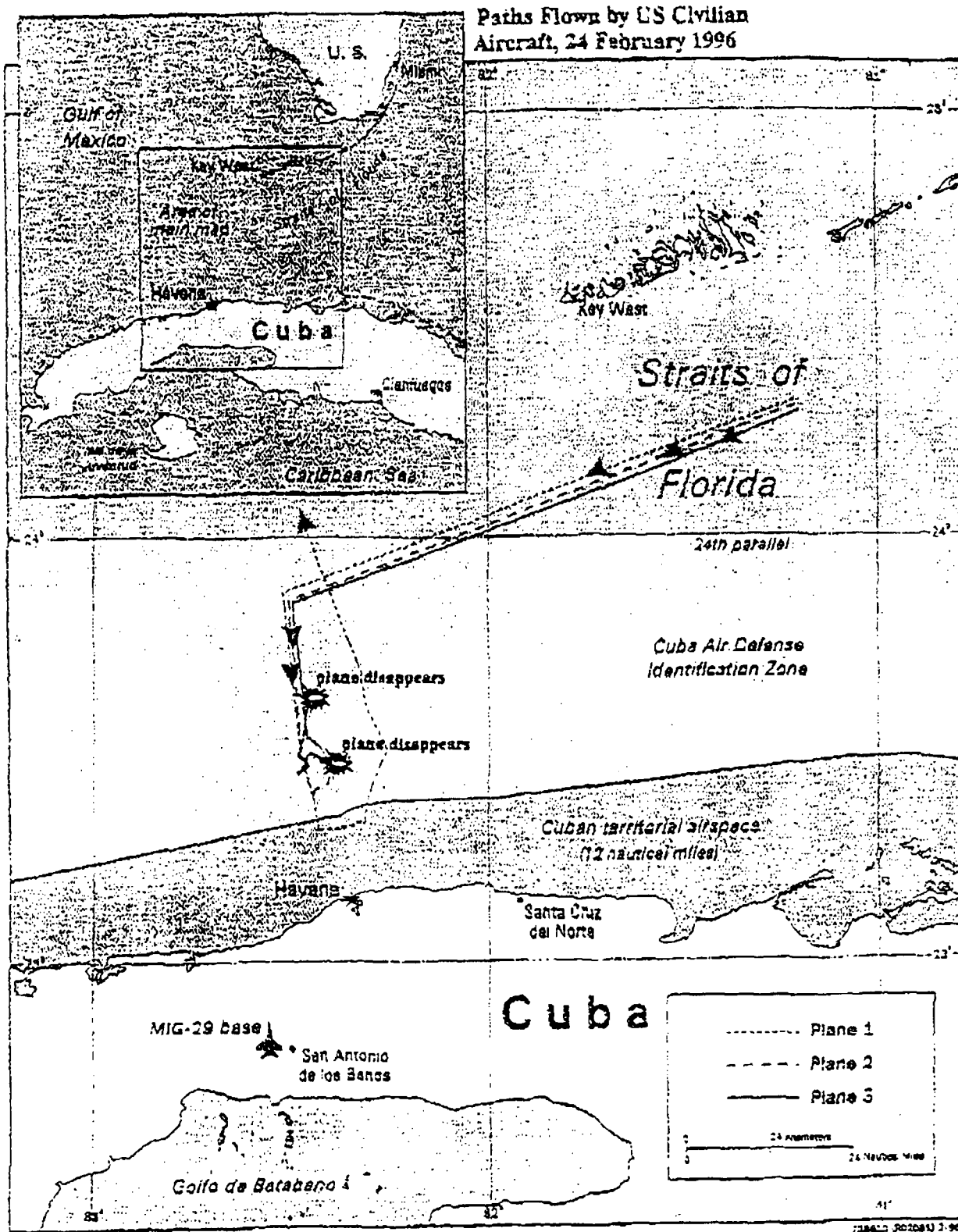
Second, the MIG-29 did not contact the civilian pilots, wag its wings, or try to escort them from the area--as required by international law--before requesting and receiving permission to fire.

Third, the lead US civilian aircraft did penetrate about 3nm into Cuban airspace before returning safely to Miami.

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Cuban Shootdown of Two US Civilian Aircraft, 24 February 1996

