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11 May 1961

MEMORANDUM FOR:

Brig. General Chester V. Clifton
Military Aide to the President
The White House

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Mr. Dulles asked that the attached memorandum for the President be forwarded to you.

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Executive Officer

cc: McGeorge Bundy

Attachment: Memorandum for the President signed by Mr. Dulles dated 11 May 61, attaching extracts from an editorial by James Reston in N. Y. Times of 10 May 61 and comments thereto.

Distribution:

Original - Addressee w/att
1 - McGeorge Bundy w/cy att
1 - DCI w/cy att
1 - ER w/o att
1 - DDCI w/cy att
1 - c/wd/4 w/cy att
1 - DDP

E. R. file

61-3

MEMORANDUM FOR: The President

Attached are some extracts from an editorial
by James Reston in The New York Times of 10 May 1961
and comments thereto.

Allen D. Dulles
Director

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Distribution:
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[Redacted]

POINTS MADE IN RESTON ARTICLE OF 10 MAY

Point 1: "CIA officials imprisoned the Cuban refugee leaders during the landings."

The Facts:

At no time were members of the Council imprisoned or kidnapped as has been alleged. The truth of the matter is



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activities were taking place, the Cuban leaders were in deed asked to restrict themselves to the immediate surroundings of the former Commandant's quarters. It had been anticipated that this period of isolation would not exceed 48 hours. It turned out to have been about 50 hours. At no time was any outside pressure used. The Cuban leaders agreed to the desirability of remaining in seclusion during this period.

Point 2: "... CIA officials put out misleading information in their (the Cuban refugee leaders) name."

The Facts:

All information put out in the name of the Cuban leaders during the latter's isolation, was done so only after review and approval of the information by at least one member of the Cuban group. The information was that designed to keep the Cubans fighting and was in the form of official statements by the leaders or bulletins on the progress of the strike force and based on fact or such sketchy information as was available at that time.

Point 3: "When the landings started, American reporters in Miami were told that this was an 'invasion' of around 5,000 men. . . ."

The Facts:

No official of CIA, in accordance with security code, ever revealed prior to the invasion, any indication of the size of the strike force. On the other hand, it can also be said that no responsible Cuban exile leader of the unified opposition made any reference to the figure of a 5,000-man strike force. Unfortunately, however, with the American press utilizing uninformed Cubans in Miami without benefit of confirmation published the information. Once printed in Miami other publications reported the figure; thus, perpetuating the fiction of a huge strike force. This had no sanction by either the Cuban leaders or CIA.

Point 4: "When the landing . . . began to get in trouble, however, officials here in Washington put out the story - this time to minimize the defeat in the minds of the American people - that there was no 'invasion' at all but merely a landing of some 200-300 men"

The Facts:

Along the late evening hours of 19 April it was decided at Headquarters to correct the press by indicating through cleared assets, and as emanating from the Cuban exile leaders, the true size of the strike force as being in the neighborhood of a thousand. Here again there is no truth of the information that the Agency released the figure of 200-300 man force or that the force was merely to supply guerrillas. Further, the term "invasion" was one created and repeated only by the press; the Cuban exile leaders had specifically been cautioned not to use the term "invasion."

Point 5: "Both times the Castro Government and its Soviet advisers knew from their own agents in the Anti-Castro refugee camps and from their own observations on the beaches that these pronouncements were false and silly. And both times the American people were the only ones to be fooled."

The Facts:

No CIA official released any strike force figures on the military operation. As indicated in Point 4 above, the only figure released (and then leaked out as coming from the exiled Cuban leaders) was the true one, that is "in the neighborhood of a thousand."

Any "fooling of the American people" was a result of the American press using unconfirmed information.

Point 6: "Officials here not only encouraged the publication of false information on the Cuban exercise but resented publication of the fact that the CIA actually imprisoned Cuban refugees because the latter didn't like the way the CIA was running the show."

The Facts:

There is no basis in fact that Cubans were imprisoned because the Cubans did not like the way CIA was running the show. The records show that the only persons detained were those who were detained by their own Cuban leaders, as persons who were malcontents, AWOLs, agitators and deserters, and thus threatened the security and impaired the efficiency of the strike force. Some of these were removed from the scene to protect them from their Cuban colleagues, who threatened violence.

Point 7: "It (the press) knew that the U. S. Government was breaking its treaty commitments and placing the reputation of the United States in the hands of a poorly trained and squabbling band of refugees."

The Facts:

The Cuban military elements received excellent training by well qualified military advisors and were well-equipped with modern weapons. The troops were observed during training and maneuvers at length by representatives of the JCS who rated their performance as professional and whose chances of success were good. In addition, see attached cable from Colonel Hawkins, U. S. M. C. after his final inspection of Puerto Cabezas.

EVALUATION BY COLONEL HAWKINS ON 13 April 1961

1. My observations last few days have increased my confidence in ability this force to accomplish not only initial combat missions, but also ultimate objective of Castro overthrow.
2. Brigade and battalion commanders now know all details of plan and are enthusiastic. These officers are young, vigorous, intelligent, and motivated with a fanatical urge to begin battle for which most of them have been preparing in the rugged conditions of training camps for almost a year. I have talked to many of them in their language. Without exception they have utmost confidence in their ability to win. They say they know their own people and believe after they have inflicted one serious defeat upon opposing forces, the latter will melt away from Castro, whom they have no wish to support. They say it is Cuban tradition to join a winner and they have supreme confidence they will win any and all engagements against the best Castro has to offer. I share their confidence.
3. The brigade is well organized and is more heavily armed and better equipped in some respects than U. S. Infantry units. The men have received intensive training in the use of their weapons including more firing experience than U. S. troops would normally receive. I was impressed with the serious attitude of the men as they arrived here and moved to their ships. Movements were quiet, disciplined, and efficient and the embarkation was accomplished with remarkable smoothness.
4. The brigade now numbers 1400, a truly formidable force.
5. I have also carefully observed the Cuban Air Forces. The aircraft are kept with pride and some of the B-26 crews are so eager to commence contemplated operations that they have already armed their aircraft. My base commander informed me today that he considers the B-26 squadron equal to the best U. S. Air Force squadron.
6. The brigade officers do not expect help from U. S. Armed Forces. They ask only for continued delivery of supplies. This can be done covertly.
7. This Cuban force is motivated, strong, well trained, armed to the teeth, and ready. I believe profoundly that it would be a serious mistake for the United States to deter it from its intended purpose.