

By George Lardner Jr.
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A once high-ranking Defense Department official said yesterday that he drafted contingency plans for dealing with the 1962 Cuban missile crisis that "may" have included Fidel Castro's assassination.

The former official, Maj. Gen. Edward G. Lansdale (USAF-retired), hinted strongly, but refused to confirm, that the orders to draw up the plans came from the late Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy.

An expert in counterinsurgency tactics with long experience in South Vietnam and the Philippines, Lansdale said he was told to do "some planning for the President's consideration" about how to deal with Castro in light of reports that Soviet-made nuclear missiles were about to be installed in Cuba.

He said it was quite possible that the assassination of Castro was among the options he listed in a subsequent memo, but he said he no longer had a copy of the memo and thus could not definitely recall whether he included that in his suggestions.

Lansdale insisted, however, that "neither President Kennedy or any other Kennedy ever gave me any orders to plan the assassination of Castro."

"All I was doing was to try to respond and come up

with what was practical and what wasn't," he said in a telephone interview. "Who knows? I might have listed all sorts of possibilities and that [Castro's assassination] might have been one of them."

Castro has said that repeated attempts were made on his life and the lives of other high-ranking Cuban officials—some of them engineered by the Central Intelligence Agency—after he became premier in 1959.

Investigations of the CIA now under way have also compiled mounting evidence that both President John F. Kennedy and his brother, Robert, who were later cut down by assassins, were well aware of proposals to kill the Cuban leader.

Castro Death Plot Linked to '62 Crisis

High-ranking officials of the Eisenhower administration are also believed to have been involved in earlier assassination schemes.

A source close to the Rockefeller commission, which is investigating CIA violations of domestic law, said yesterday that there were not only repeated high-level discussions of Castro's assassination during the Eisenhower and Kennedy administrations, "but there's also evidence of overt acts—overt, covert acts, I guess you'd call them"—to kill the Cuban premier.

One of the schemes, ac-

ording to other informed sources, involved the CIA's recruiting of Mafia figures Sam Giancana, who had pre-Castro interests in Cuba, and Johnny Roselli, Giancana's West Coast lieutenant, during the waning days of the Eisenhower administration.

Although he was apparently not aware of any plot against Castro, the late J. Edgar Hoover, then director of the FBI, alerted Robert Kennedy in May, 1961, that the CIA was involved in backstage dealings with the Mafia.

A warning memo from Hoover, sources said, was apparently prompted by the FBI's discovery in the fall of 1960 of the CIA-sponsored surveillance of comedian Dan Rowan, a rival with Giancana at the time for the affections of singer Phyllis McGuire.

Robert Kennedy reportedly responded to the secret Hoover memo by ordering that it be "followed up vigorously." The Attorney General was eventually briefed by top CIA officials, apparently in 1962, on what Giancana and Roselli had done for the agency.

The Attorney General's only response, one source said, was to tell the CIA representatives, "next time you deal with the Mafia come to me first."

Lansdale was said to have drafted his plans later, after

an Aug. 10, 1962, meeting of a special group at which Castro's assassination was discussed but dismissed.

According to the Associated Press, the meeting was attended by then-Secretary of Defense Robert F. McNamara; Dean Rusk, then Secretary of State; John A. McCone, then CIA director, and McGeorge Bundy, President Kennedy's adviser on national security affairs. Robert Kennedy, the fifth member of the special group, was reportedly absent.

Listed as a top assistant to McNamara at the time, Lansdale was told after the meeting to come up with proposals, as he put it, about "what to do with a leader who had threatened the lives of millions of Americans by placing missiles aimed at this country."

Responding to questions, Lansdale said the orders came not from McNamara but from "someone much more intimate" with the President.

Asked whether it was Robert Kennedy, he said, "All the signs point to that, don't they?" He declined, however, to be more precise.

"I don't want to get into a sort of smearing thing right now for any individuals or any political partisans," Lansdale said.

He said he might have listed Castro's assassination as a possibility, especially "if I saw a lot of American lives at stake and casualties that could run into the millions." But he said he was positive that "I never had any part in planning any details."

Similarly, Lansdale said he did not recall to whom he sent his memo, nor did

he know whether President Kennedy ever saw it. Lansdale agreed, however, that he doubtless dispatched a copy to the official who told him to draw up the plans.

The Cuban missile crisis ended on Oct. 28, 1962, when Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev announced that he had ordered a stop to work on the Cuban bases and was having the missiles crated and returned to the Soviet Union.

Lansdale said that none of his suggestions "came to any fruition." At the same time, other accounts suggest that the idea of Castro's assassination was not at all new to the White House.

Watergate burglar E. Howard Hunt Jr., a former CIA officer, has said he proposed it in the spring of 1960, during the early planning for the Bay of Pigs invasion.

A former Defense Department intelligence officer, L. Fletcher Prouty, has said the CIA dispatched a two-man assassination team to Cuba even earlier than that, also while Eisenhower was President.

According to journalist Tad Szulc, then with The New York Times, President Kennedy raised the thought with him during a private conversation in November, 1961. Szulc said he told him it was a bad idea and quoted Kennedy as responding: "I'm glad you feel that way because suggestions to that effect keep coming to me, and I believe very strongly that the United States should not be a party to political assassination."

The Rockefeller Commission is expected to deal with the controversy in its forthcoming report to President Ford.

P. LARDNER, George
CIA 4.01 ASSASSINATION
CASTRO, Fidel
CIA 1.04 LANSDALE, Edu
KENNEDY, Robert F.
OR 81 MAFIA

P-Prouty, L. Fletcher
P-Szulc, TAD
CIA 7.02 Rockefeller
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