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SA/DDK Cuba file



CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

25 April 1963

MEMORANDUM FOR: Special Group

SUBJECT : Low-Level Reconnaissance of Cuba

REFERENCE : (a) USIB-D-41.14/35, dated 20 April 1963, subject: Priority Requirements for Low-Level Reconnaissance of Cuba

(b) Memorandum for Special Group, dated 23 April 1963, subject: Reconnaissance over Cuba (OCI No. 1428/63)

(c) Memorandum for Special Group, dated 23 April 1963, from DNRO, subject: Request for Approval of Low Level Reconnaissance of Cuba

1. Since mid-March the United States Intelligence Board has stated a priority intelligence requirement for low-level reconnaissance of Cuba based on specific targets developed by its Committee on Overhead Reconnaissance. The request for highest level approval of these flights has been deferred since that time in order to avoid any possible interference with the Donovan mission. This mission has now been completed.

2. On 23 April 1963, the request to obtain approval for low-level reconnaissance of Cuba was reconsidered by the Special Group. The basis for this reconsideration was a re-analysis of the requirements by COMOR (reference a) and a CIA study summarizing the intelligence from reconnaissance

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of Cuba during the past six weeks (reference b). To satisfy the COMOR requirements the DNRO requested approval (reference c) for 6 low-level sorties involving 12 aircraft to cover the priority targets. Action on this request was deferred. The presence of Governor Harriman's mission in Moscow was one reason for deferring action.

3. In addition to the six sorties to cover the 10 priority targets mentioned in paragraph 2 above, there are about 15 installations, facilities or activities which have been identified through high-level photography or collateral intelligence - the exact nature of which cannot be determined. Therefore, it is to be expected that following the successful completion of the six low-level flights and read-out of the product, requests will be made for authority to cover by low-level photography the remaining targets of interest. For this reason the specific priority within the total list of targets of interest (which has been questioned in USIB and elsewhere) is not considered pertinent by the Director of Central Intelligence since it is considered that all such targets should be covered by low-level photography within a reasonably short period of time. After this operation is completed, additional low-level photography will be requested when and if high-level photography and/or collateral intelligence indicate that situations exist which demand exploration by low-level flights.

4. At its meeting on 24 April 1963, USIB reconsidered this problem and unanimously reaffirmed the priority intelligence requirements for low-level reconnaissance as expressed in reference (a). In view of these facts, I should like to strongly recommend that approval be given to carry out required low-level reconnaissance of Cuba. Without such reconnaissance the intelligence community cannot exercise its responsibility for providing the desired assurance to higher authority that activities are not occurring in Cuba which could have serious consequences to the security of the United States.


JOHN A. McCONE
Chairman, United States Intelligence Board