

CU-297

Memorandum from the Chief of Operations, Operation Mongoose (Lansdale) to the Special Group (Augmented)

Washington, July 25, 1962.

Subject: Review of Operation Mongoose

This is the Operations report at the end of Phase I. It has been compiled to assist you in reviewing Operation Mongoose thus far and in determining the best course of U. S. action for the future.

This Operations report contains the contribution of each major participant, on objectives, on the planning and operational activity to win these objectives, and on future possibilities to be governed by the policy framework. A National Intelligence Estimate (NIE 85-2-62) is being submitted separately for consideration in connection with this report.

As Chief of Operations, I am indicating in this covering memorandum what I consider to be the most significant aspects of our policy and program picture. The full report of each major participant is appended to ensure that you have access to the exact reporting as submitted.

OBJECTIVES

As desired by higher authority on 30 November 1961, the U. S. undertook a special effort "in order to help Cuba overthrow the Communist regime." After a review of operational planning and programming concepts, the Special Group (Augmented) provided guidelines on 14 March 1962 for Phase I, Operation Mongoose (roughly until the end of July 1962). The main objectives were seen as:

- a. The acquisition of hard intelligence on the target area.

Source: Kennedy Library, National Security Files, Meetings and Memoranda Series, Special Group (Augmented), Operation Mongoose, 7/62. Top Secret; Sensitive; Eyes Only. An attached distribution list indicates that 11 copies of the memorandum were prepared. Copies were sent to Robert Kennedy, Taylor, Johnson, Gilpatric, Lemnitzer, McCone, Harvey, Hurwitch, Harris, and Wilson. One copy was held by Lansdale.

See footnote 3, supra.

The appendices consisted of the reports made to Lansdale by the Operations officers of the Departments of State, Defense, CIA, and USIA, which are printed as Documents and

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- b. Undertaking all other political, economic, and covert actions, short of inspiring a revolt in Cuba or developing the need for U. S. armed intervention.
- c. Be consistent with U. S. overt policy, and remain in position to disengage with minimum loss in assets and U. S. prestige.
- d. Continue JCS planning and essential preliminary actions for a decisive U. S. capability for intervention.

ACCOMPLISHMENT

Elements of the U. S. government were organized to reach the goals set for Phase I. My assessment of where we are on each objective is noted under appropriate sub-headings below. In general, this has been a remarkably quiet operation, well within the "noise" and "visibility" limits imposed.

Higher authority has been kept informed of progress through the Special Group (Augmented), by frequent reports. The Special Group has provided policy guidance, as required, in Phase I.

The Chief of Operations has coordinated the efforts of participating departments and agencies, through meetings of the Operational Representatives and by constant review of progress. The Operational Representative of each major U. S. participant in Operation Mongoose are William Harvey (CIA), Robert Hurwitch (State), Brig. Gen. Benjamin Harris (Defense), and Don Wilson (USIA).

My assessment of the organization, planning, and actions to reach the goals in Phase I:

Intelligence. CIA had the main assignment to acquire the "hard-intelligence" desired. The headquarters and field staff of CIA are now well organized for a major effort for this aspect of Operation Mongoose, being strengthened by a number of CIA officers experienced in "denied area" operations elsewhere in the world. Planning and actions rate superior, in a professional sense of intelligence collection.

CIA established the Caribbean Admission Center at Opa-Locka, Florida, [redacted] It undertook a priority [redacted]

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plan to collect information on the target from third country areas in Latin America and Europe. Inside Cuba, the recruitment and placement of third country nationals and initiation of Cuban collection nets, particularly in urban centers, has made Operation Mongoose numerically the largest U. S. intelligence agent effort inside a Communist state.

NSC

However, the effort in more remote provincial areas of Cuba, where guerrilla resistance was expected to be spotted, recruited, and organized, was short of the hoped-for goal; this was due to the regime's security precautions and, to some degree, to policy limitations on the risks to be assumed.

Defense contributed the majority of personnel to staff the Caribbean Admission Center, stepped-up SIGINT collection under NSA despite changes and improved sophistication of Cuban communication procedures, and brought into play the available assets of Service intelligence organizations, in coordination with CIA. State stepped up its information collection from diplomatic and refugee organization sources. Justice (FBI and INS) and USIA provided significant support to the Caribbean Admission Center.

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Political. State appointed a representative to devote full-time to Operation Mongoose and to develop the required political actions. During Phase I, the Punta del Este conference was a major U. S. political action to isolate Castro and neutralize his influence in the Hemisphere, but was not developed within the context of Operation Mongoose. The successful visit of President Kennedy to Mexico was another major U. S. political action, with a potential impact upon our special goals, but was not developed within the context of Operation Mongoose. Two Operation Mongoose efforts in political action were attempted in Phase I: to counter Castro-Communist propaganda exploitation of May Day and to arouse strong Hemisphere reaction to Cuban military suppression of the hunger demonstration at Cardenas, in June. Ambassadors in Latin America were asked to undertake a special effort, as possible, with the help of their Country Teams; political action results in both instances were mostly negative, due to lack of capability and the local attitude in Latin American countries.

State is responsible for refugee political policy matters, assisted by CIA in daily liaison. This is an area of major interest to Operation Mongoose, since the Cuban refugees have an open objective of overthrowing the Communist regime in Havana and recapturing their homeland.

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They are given open U.S. assistance to remain in this country, yet are participating in covert actions in a limited way. Only a fractional opening has been made to release the frustrated energy of these refugees in freeing their homeland and in creating a favorable political climate in Latin America for the liberation of Cuba. Policy limitations of "audibility" and "visibility" apply directly in considering the handling and use of this dynamic refugee potential.

As a working document for U.S. operational guidance, State developed a definition of a political program for a free Cuba, with the understanding that any real political program must be developed by the Cubans themselves.

Psychological. Psychological activities for Operation Mongoose make use of existing assignments of responsibilities within the U. S. government: State, having the policy role, chairs an inter-agency Cuba Psychological Operations Group which meets weekly; USIA disseminates any U.S. government information (VOA and Press Service) and generates "gray" or non-official information (5 million cartoon books and thousands of Spanish books on Cuba disseminated in Latin America); CIA passes information appropriate for "gray" and covert psychological channels (radio, mailings to Cuba, and dissemination inside Cuba).

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Conditions and events in Cuba have provided many effective themes, which have been promptly and sharply exploited by available means in the Western Hemisphere. However, the U.S. still lacks the capability of effectively getting information to the majority of the Cuban people. Our short-wave broadcasts are highly regarded by the Cuban people, but short-wave receiver sets are limited inside Cuba. Our medium-wave broadcasts compete against stronger Cuban signals; it was felt that greater U.S. competition in medium-wave broadcasts could lead to Cuban interference of U.S. commercial broadcasts over a fairly wide area of the U.S. Clandestine broadcasts [from a submarine] (appearing as broadcasts by Cuban guerrillas inside Cuba) have been initiated; they are in their infancy, and have a long way to develop before their messages are believed and get passed among Cubans by word-of-mouth. Dissemination of leaflets and propaganda inside Cuba [by balloon or aircraft] has not received policy approval.

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Economic. State has the main responsibility for developing economic actions. State has chaired an inter-agency working group, which generated

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the U.S. trade embargo, denial of bunkering facilities, increased port security, and control procedures on transshipment, technical data, and customs inspection. Diplomatic means were used to frustrate Cuban trade negotiations in Israel, Jordan, Iran, Greece, and possibly Japan. Under Resolution VIII adopted at Punta del Este, the OAS has established a special committee to study "the feasibility and desirability of extending the suspension of trade with Cuba to other items (than arms)," State has prepared a program to be submitted to this OAS committee in the future.

The evidence is that Cuba's economy is suffering. Trade with the Communist Bloc and others has kept it limping along, despite scarcity of U.S. goods, the bad drought limiting agrarian crops, increased worker non-cooperation and the regime's bungling of economic control measures. Critical spare parts still arrive in Cuba, including shipments from British and Canadian firms. Chartered shipping from Free World sources still plays a major role in Cuba's trade, and the U.S. has little hope of cutting this life-line to Castro.

Guerrilla. CIA had the main responsibility for assessing resistance potential inside Cuba and to start quietly organizing such resistance as feasible. The CIA plan has been to set about doing this through introducing small teams into the Cuban countryside, "over the beach" from boats. Each team is tasked first to stay alive, while getting established in an area. Once able to live in an area, it then starts a cautious survey of potential recruits for a resistance group. Names of such recruits are sent to CIA for checking. As recruits join, they are trained on the ground by the team, and then continue the survey. This is slow and dangerous work.

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CIA reports that 11 teams will have been infiltrated by the end of July and that 19 maritime operations have aborted. Of the teams in, the most successful is the one in Pinar del Rio in western Cuba; its success was helped greatly by a maritime re-supply of arms and equipment; the fact that it is a "going concern" and receives help from outside has attracted recruits. Its potential has been estimated at about 250, which is a sizeable guerrilla force. With equally large guerrilla forces in other Cuban provinces, guerrilla warfare could be activated with a good chance of success, if assisted properly. However, the teams in other provinces have not been so successful; our best hope is that we will have viable teams in all the potential resistance areas by early October. Bad weather, high seas, and increased security patrols will make the infiltration of teams and their re-supply from small boats a hard task.

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Sabotage has not taken place, on a U. S. -sponsored basis. Planning for such action by CIA has been thorough, including detailed study of the structures and vulnerabilities of key targets. [Sophisticated actions, such as the contamination of POL has been frustrated by lack of cooperation of nations where POL would be vulnerable to action.] Commando type raids would take maritime means which now have priority use in support of CIA teams being infiltrated inside to survey and create a guerrilla potential. CIA has reported that there is now some capability inside Cuba for sabotage action, that target selection has been under further careful review, and that a proposal is forthcoming to be submitted for policy approval. MSC

Intervention Planning. The JCS were given the responsibility for planning and undertaking essential preliminary actions for a decisive U. S. capability for intervention in Cuba. This "Guidelines" objective has been met, fully. Also, U. S. military readiness for intervention in Cuba has been under continuing review within Defense, being improved wherever feasible. In addition, rumors during June of a possible uprising inside Cuba led to further planning for a contingency where a non-U. S. inspired revolt might start inside Cuba; inter-agency staffing of U. S. planning for such a Cuban contingency is being completed, under Defense leadership.

Assets. Whatever we decide to do in the future depends, to a large degree, on the assets available to us. Our own U. S. assets in organization, personnel, and equipment are sufficient to liberate Cuba, given the decision to do so. Assets among the Cubans, to liberate themselves, are capable of a greater effectiveness once a firm decision is made by the U. S. to provide maximum support of Cubans to liberate Cuba, and the Cubans start being helped towards that goal by the U. S. There are enough able-bodied and properly motivated Cubans inside Cuba and in exile to do the job. There is wide-spread disaffection in Cuba, with strong indications that economic distress and demoralization of population is causing real concern and strain for the regime's control officials. Firm U. S. intention to help free Cuba is the key factor in assessing the Cubans themselves as an operational asset for Operation Mongoose.

At the close of Phase I, my concern is strong that time is running out for the U. S. to make a free choice on Cuba, based largely on what is happening to the will of the Cuban people. Rightly or wrongly, the Cubans have looked and are looking to the U. S. for guidance on what to aspire to and do next. They wonder if we are not merely watching Cuba closely, as

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a matter of our own security, undertaking some economic proscription, and isolating the Castro/Communist gang from contaminating the Hemisphere. Along with recognition of our humanitarian sympathies, this seems to be the fear among Cuban refugees, although they are still hopeful.

If Cubans become convinced that the U. S. is not going to do more than watch and talk, I believe they will make other plans for the future. The bulk of Cuban refugees in the U. S. are most likely to start getting serious about settling down for life in the U. S., dulling their desire to return home with personal risk involved. The bulk of disaffected people inside Cuba will lose hope and incentive for futile protests against the regime and start accepting their status as captives of the Communists. Some Cuban activists will not accept the loss of their homeland so easily and may seek release from frustration by liberation operations outside U. S. territory and control. The recent wildcat Cuban scheme to bomb Habana from Central America is an example.

Our probes of the guerrilla potential inside Cuba have been hampered by similar morale factors. Cubans sent to risk their lives on missions inside Cuba feel very much alone, except for their communications link back to the U. S. They are unable to recruit freedom fighters aggressively by the time-proven method of starting an active resistance and thus attracting recruits; U. S. guidelines to keep this short of a revolt have made the intention behind the operation suspect to local Cubans. The evidence of some intent is seen in the recent maritime re-supply of the team in Pinar del Rio. We brought in extra weapons, for which there were immediate recruits; if we were to exploit the evident guerrilla potential in this province, it appears likely that we would have to furnish supplies by air and probably open the U. S. to strong charges of furnishing such support to Cuban resistance elements.

Therefore, we have been unable to surface the Cuban resistance potential to a point where we can measure it realistically. The only way this can be done, accurately, is when resistance actually has a rallying point of freedom fighters who appear to the Cuban people to have some chance of winning, and that means at least an implication that the U. S. is in support. Word-of-mouth information that such a freedom movement is afoot could cause the majority of the Cuban people to choose sides. It would be the first real opportunity for them to do so since Castro and the Communists came to power. There was little opportunity for the Cuban people to join an active resistance in April 1961; there is less opportunity today. If the Cuban people are to feel they have a real opportunity, they must have something which they can join with some belief in its success.

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PROJECTION (PHASE II).

As a help towards the making of a U. S. decision on a future course of action, the Operational Representatives developed working statements of four possibilities; at my request they have commented on the positive and negative factors worth considering for each possible course, and it is suggested that these thoughtful statements are worth reading in full. The working statements of the choices open to the U. S. are as follows:

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- a. Cancel operational plans; treat Cuba as a Bloc nation; protect Hemisphere from it, or
 - b. Exert all possible diplomatic, economic, psychological, and other pressures to overthrow the Castro-Communist regime without overt employment of U. S. military, or
 - c. Commit U. S. to help Cubans overthrow the Castro-Communist regime, with a step-by-step phasing to ensure success, including the use of U. S. military force if required at the end, or
 - d. Use a provocation and overthrow the Castro-Communist regime by U. S. military force.

RECOMMENDATION.

It is recommended that this review of Phase I be considered by the Special Group as providing the operational basis for guidelines and objectives for Phase II. It is a matter of urgency that these be arrived at by the Special Group, to permit developing specific plans and schedules for Phase II.

5 The White House copy of this memorandum, which was presumably General Taylor's, was marked by McGeorge Bundy at this point with an arrow pointing to option b.