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MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: First Meeting of Branch 4 Task Force, 9 March 1960

PARTICIPANTS: Col. J. C. King, CWH; J. D. Esterline, C/WE/4 [redacted]
 Office of Security; Col. B. H. Vandervort, OTR; [redacted]
 Office of Communications; Mike Ting, Comptroller; Scudder Georgia,
 DDS; Mr. Robert Macre, PP Staff; Ralph W. Brown, Office of
 Logistics; [redacted] PP Staff; Col. Charles Cocke, OF/MPD,
 [redacted] TSD; Casimiro Barquin, DPD; Mr. E. A. Stanulis
 WH/4/PM

1. Mr. Esterline briefed the group on the current situation in Cuba with the report that an alert has been sounded to initiate Phase One of the unified evacuation plan in Cuba. He added that this group would be working largely together in operational programming and planning.
2. Col. King told the group that the DCI is presenting a special policy paper to the NSC 5412 representatives. He mentioned growing evidence that certain of the "heads" in the CASTRO Government have been pushing for an attack on the U. S. Navy installation at Guantanamo Bay and said that an attack on the installation is in fact, possible.
3. Col. King stated that the first problem in this operation is how to reach the mass of Cubans with the truth. To date, he said, we have been denied use of certain American islands that might be useful for either PP or PM activities. In addition, a number of Chiefs of State of friendly smaller countries are, at the moment, unwilling to "stick their necks out further to support an operation directed at the overthrow of the CASTRO regime. They are in fact, worried that their respective countries may soon be the victims of Cuban exploitation. He said that unless Fidel and Raul CASTRO and Che GUEVERA could be eliminated in ~~one~~ package - which is highly unlikely - this operation can be a long, drawn-out affair and the present government will only be overthrown by the use of force.
4. Returning to the basic operational premises, Col. King said that the first problem is to reduce the base of support of the CASTRO Government with the masses (reportedly the regime now enjoys the support of between 60 and 70 percent of the population). An additional problem is that opposition forces have no real leader and are divided into many parts with some of them ^{more} susceptible to merger than others. Three groups appear to be satisfactory for initial exploitation and each of these has been asked to come up with names of potential candidates for paramilitary and allied training. After training, this group could become the instructor cadre to train additional Cuban covert action groups.

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5. The DCI, Col. King said, has approved the training of the instructor cadre at a U.S. military installation. The principal installation under consideration at this time is Fort Sherman in the Canal Zone which is under the control of the U.S. Army's Jungle Warfare Training Center. The DCI has also approved the Phase Two training, that is the training of Cuban action groups, in non-U.S. territory. A given area in one of the Caribbean countries has been offered and is under consideration. Col. King expressed the opinion that the minimum time that will be consumed in this training will be between 6 and 7 months. It is hoped that during this period the acceptable opposition groups will have been merged and will have formed a government-in-exile to which all trained elements could be attached.

6. Col. King, addressing himself to the enemy's capabilities and programs, said that CASTRO will unquestionably continue to train and arm various worker and student groups who can be mobilized into militia elements in support of the regular military establishment of Cuba. He added that reports indicate that CASTRO has more arms and ammunition available to him now than BATISTA had at the height of his power and warned that under no circumstances should we underestimate the capabilities of the enemy. He said that the Cuban operation would be far more difficult and complicated than the previous one conducted by this Division and that before this problem is solved, major operations will be necessary.

7. Capsulizing various intelligence reports, Col. King said the Cubans are now initiating operations with an objective of establishing revolutionary movements in the Caribbean area that are not limited to those countries that are under dictatorships. With Ambassadors acting as chiefs of operations, the Cuban Government apparently hopes to overthrow the existing national governments and establish in their place governments that are far left and that are friendly to, and if possible, controlled by Cuba. Naturally, he added, this is generally in line with the objectives of International Communism which are, and for some time have been, to divide the traditional solidarity of the Latin American countries to the detriment of U.S. national security and foreign policy objectives.

8. In terms of operational problems, Col. King stated that he knew of no Latin American country whose people were less secure operationally than Cubans. On the CI side, he said that it is known that CASTRO has more than 122 agents in the Miami area alone.

9. In summarizing the more immediate requirements and possibilities, Mr. Esterline said that the support of all offices represented at the meeting will be required on a continuing basis. He added that support from the Office of Security, Logistics, and OTR and others would be needed comparatively soon in:

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- a. Assessment of potential recruits to the instructor cadre.
- b. Establishment of an operational base which will probably be located in the Miami area.
- c. The establishment of a secure base in a foreign country for the training of Cuban action groups.

10. He said that while we are awaiting national policy authorizations, Branch is proceeding with its planning operations and is preparing two ^{P/KO} ~~sub~~jects at this time, one to cover extensive radio operations which probably will include the establishment of a "gray" radio transmitter and another ^{P/KO} ~~sub~~ject for the development of air and maritime capabilities for the in-exfiltration of men and materiel.

11. He suggested that the group of specialists meet here at the Branch weekly. The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, 15 March.* Although the overall Cuban project per se does not, as yet, have a cryptonym, Mr. Esterline explained the reasons for the formation of Branch 4 in WE Division and suggested that use of "Branch 4" in communications would be sufficient to ^{IDENT} ~~identify~~ the subject.

12. He mentioned that the following Branch 4 personnel would be in contact with the participants at the meeting from time to time for planning the operational purposes:

Mr. Robert Reynolds; DC/WH/4
Mr. David Phillips, Radio Operations
Mr. Phillip Toomey; PP
Mr. Economic Action
Mr. Adolf Liem
Mr. E. A. Stanulis; Plans and PM Ops

13. Mr. Esterline indicated that an additional step in obtaining policy for operational support from other elements of the U. S. Government would be taken tomorrow, Thursday, 10 March 1960, when certain WE and PP Staff personnel would confer with Captain Spore, USN, a member of the Staff of the Office of Naval Operations, Department of Defense.

* 0900 hours

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