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January 13, 1961

Participants: Ambassador Whiting Willauer, Assistant Secretary of Defense John Irwin, General Gray, JCS, Captain Spore, OSO, Mr. Tracy Barnes, Mr. Jim Noel, Mr. Frank Holcomb, Mr. Joseph W. Scott, Mr. Glion Curtis, Mr. Wym Coerr, and Mr. Frank Devine

The meeting opened at 10:05 a.m. with Ambassador Willauer in the chair. There were some introductory remarks emphasizing the special security restrictions on any matters discussed--Secretary Irwin noted that in the Defense Department only Secretary Erskine, Secretary Douglas, Secretary Gates and Secretary-designate McNamara will be informed. There was some preliminary discussion as to the nature of the job to be done which is brought out more fully in the remarks noted later on. Ambassador Willauer indicated that the reason for the existence of the working group was to provide a third prong to the two-pronged approach. The two pronged approach is the overt program for Cuba on the one hand, and the accompanying covert program contained in the document dated December 6 and December 20.

Ambassador Willauer then proceeded to read through the document, stopping at various points to comment or to respond to questions. This record will not attempt to reproduce the content of the document, but merely to identify the place where the reading ceased and discussion took place.

Ambassador Willauer read Part I. Basic Assumptions through the sentence on economic dislocations (line 5, first paragraph). At this point he noted that he felt, and he quoted Jose Figueres as concurring in this viewpoint, that there was a high probability that the Soviet Union would pump in enough economic assistance to make a show case of Cuba. He noted that dissatisfaction arising from economic factors is not overlooked. He indicated that for all practical purposes, he felt, that the notion had been abandoned that there was any hope of overthrowing the Castro regime with economic warfare measures alone, even if they include an effective blockade.

He then read through the rest of the Basic Assumptions section.

He then read Part II. Suggested Solution through the first paragraph. Comment: Ambassador Willauer indicated that events had overtaken the provisions of this paragraph. He said that at this time no one foresees any Foreign Ministers Meeting by February 1, nor do they foresee any effective collective sanctions decision. Ambassador Willauer then went on to note that an obscure item which appears in the New York Times of January 12 indicated an inclination on the part of President Betancourt of Venezuela to call an OAS Foreign Ministers meeting for the purpose of acting against dictators both of the right and of the left. Mr. Coerr noted that the type of reaction which had occurred yesterday in Uruguay against the Communist and Castro activities could build up to an OAS meeting. Ambassador Willauer commented that we had not given up all hope, but we cannot count on such a meeting taking place. Ambassador Willauer then read the second paragraph. He then noted that again events have overtaken the provisions of the paper in that the United States has already broken relations with Cuba. He noted

that Peru

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that Peru had broken relations unilaterally and perhaps Uruguay is about to do so. The other Latin American countries, however, are reviewing their political situation and appear to be receding from their somewhat stronger attitude toward breaking relations which existed prior to the United States action. He specifically cited the Chilean elections and the Argentine evidence of softening of its position.

Ambassador Willauer then read the third paragraph of this section. He noted that this type of action is all overt, nevertheless, assistance to a government in exile, particularly in terms of personnel training and military materiel support, brings in the Defense Department immediately. Secretary Irwin directed attention to the provision of assistance "after" recognition and raised the question particularly with reference to training, as to whether it shouldn't be done ahead of time and be ready for use at the time of recognition. Ambassador Willauer quoted General Gray as having said that the force of 750 men could perhaps hold a perimeter of only 1,000 yards across. He noted that the actual amount of real estate controlled by the government is not important and even expressed the possibility that one could be recognized without any real estate at all. In response to General Gray's question, Mr. Scott noted that although the phrase used in the paper is government-in-exile, what is really meant is a provisional government. Ambassador Willauer then noted the fact that the Agency is smuggling into Cuba two Cuban leaders. These persons might constitute a rallying point for the formation of a government within Cuba.

Mr. Barnes asked whether it is realistic to speak of recognizing a government in exile while the Castro Government is still in existence and asked whether this was really possible. Mr. Coerr replied, "yes" with the proviso that it would, of course, not be done if the situation were so flimsy as to be ludicrous. In response to Mr. Barnes' question whether real estate is essential or not, Mr. Scott replied that the present legal opinion is that real estate is essential. Secretary Irwin indicated he had the same concern as Mr. Barnes. As he described it, his problem is that it is not sufficient to establish control over a piece of territory but in addition there must be an ability to maintain that control. His question is whether 750 men really will be able to do that. Ambassador Willauer made the point that perhaps there is already sufficient real estate of one sort or another available in the Escambray in dissident hands to warrant recognition of a government which controlled that territory.

Secretary Irwin commented that the real question was not one of recognition but rather whether or not we are prepared to do enough with sufficient speed to enable the provisional government to establish its control over all of Cuba. He noted that he is currently very concerned with such a problem in Laos, where volunteers were encouraged but no decision had been taken yet as to how far we would go.

Mr. Scott observed that this was one of the reasons for this current meeting. How do we make recognition effective? How much do you need to provide for the purpose? In this picture the abilities and limitations of the Defense Department constitute the third prong in the program.

Ambassador Willauer

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Ambassador Willauer raised the question of training volunteers such as Argentines or Cubans. Tracy Barnes estimated that there are now 70,000 Cubans in and around the Miami area, of whom perhaps 10,000 could be of military age. Ambassador Willauer then continued with "Suppose we figured on the basis of 10,000 Cubans and perhaps 5,000 other Latin American volunteers for training, then questions might be: Where could they be trained? What would be required for the purpose? and, How long would it take? Tracy Barnes noted that there may be a question of what types of people would be acceptable. For example, he said that a military background of some sort may be necessary. Ambassador Willauer suggested that this was a Department of Defense judgment. Mr. Coerr observed that the size of the force may be dependent upon the kind of victory which is considered to be necessary. In amplification he said one sized force might be sufficient to knock Castro off, but to eliminate his government quickly and thoroughly might require more people. Captain Spore asked whether the first step isn't really to surface a new leader before recognition of the government. Ambassador Willauer commented that it would never be possible to pull all the Cubans together. Captain Spore inquired about the need for some massive program within Cuba.

At this point Secretary Irwin left the meeting.

General Gray, responding to Captain Spore's last question, indicated that the document will answer that question. Ambassador Willauer then noted that it will be necessary to make several assumptions. One is that whatever government is recognized must be assumed to be satisfactory for our purposes. A second is that Castro is in power in Cuba and has certain military equipment and capabilities. One of our questions is, in the light of these assumptions, what is required from the outside to assure success of the provisional government?

At this point Mr. Devine made three comments. He noted that with reference to our recruitment of volunteers, Castro is also busy recruiting Latin American volunteers for his own purposes. Secondly, he noted that the principle point implicit in the element of establishing a safe haven perimeter within Cuba was the expectation that this would encourage and in fact produce large-scale adherence from defectors within Cuba. Thirdly, he wished to be sure that the fact that two Cuban anti-Castro leaders are being infiltrated into Cuba at this time does not represent a decision already taken that these are the chosen instruments. Mr. Devine was reassured on this latter point.

There was then an exchange between Ambassador Willauer and General Gray. General Gray indicated that his directive from General Bonesteel was that this working group was to write an overall plan with all three elements; that subordinate to this general plan was to be a family of plans for detailed operations in support. Ambassador Willauer indicated this is correct.

The reading

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The reading of the document continued from the third section "Measures to implement Proposed Solutions." There was no further comment or discussion down through paragraph d of the section "Recognition of a Cuban Government-in-exile," however, Ambassador Willauer did note in passing that unilateral action by the United States has already been taken and that the collective action section has been overtaken by events. He also noted that the language calling for recognition of government-in-exile immediately upon breaking relations has been overtaken by events.

Secretary Irwin returned to the meeting at this point.

Mr. Barnes then noted that there is a group of 400 to 1,000 Cubans who expect to make some calls on President Eisenhower and elsewhere during the course of today and tomorrow. Ambassador Willauer then continued the reading through the end of Part I.

Ambassador Willauer read Part II - Covert Action, Section 1 - Objectives. He commented that the Agency is doing a tremendous amount of work--Tracy Barnes indicated that there are 180 different groups of Cubans. Mr. Barnes also said that two representatives of opposition groups are about to go inside Cuba. One is a member of the FRD, the second is not. He continued by saying that perhaps Arellano Sanchez Arango might also go in. Sanchez Arango claims to have a lot of support, but so far has not identified any of it. Ambassador Willauer then read Section 2 - Present Status, and noted that the support spring boards are located in Guatemala, Nicaragua and the Canal Zone.

The Ambassador then continued reading section 3 and 4 and then invited comment by Mr. Barnes on the geographic score, the main thrust and the broadcast activity in the political action and propaganda fields. Mr. Barnes reported in considerable detail ^{that} activities of Swan Island, the three newspapers, and the magazine, as well as trips through Latin America by the jurists, labor groups, representatives of Cuban women, and students organizations. He noted the political stand taken last May by Tony Varona in Mexico City and Caracas, the development and announcement of a political platform, which he characterized as being somewhat negative. He indicated in some detail the reasons why it was felt that a more positive approach to the platform provisions was not desirable at the stage reached when the platform was released. He then indicated that Radio Swan is commencing to discuss various approaches to such important questions as land reform, elections and other elements of a platform. General Gray asked who was the leading candidate. Mr. Barnes indicated that he has lists from many sources with detailed information about the individuals. He said that he is ready to sit down and consider the candidates and reach a decision as to who are most appropriate. He noted that at this stage we should not go so far as to select one individual who might be shot, and that the selection of a single candidate should follow some demonstration that he can survive in Cuba and does in fact have a substantial political following.

Ambassador

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Ambassador Willauer noted that there is one military contingency plan which will have to be ready for use if Castro should start slaughtering Americans. This would be a purely military plan and would include military occupation. General Gray noted that such a plan already exists and is being revived. Ambassador Willauer noted that the hardest political problem was that the Cubans would not work together. Mr. Barnes then noted that the tabs to the paper give full details about the individuals, names, background, etc.

Secretary Irwin at this point left the meeting.

Ambassador Willauer then read the paramilitary section, number 5. Mr. Barnes commented on the communication teams in Cuba. He first noted, however, that so far the activities have not developed any cracks and crevices in the Castro structure. There is still hope that these might become visible during the next sixty days with increased propaganda, support, and other activities. He indicated that at one time there were ten communications teams active. For various reasons these have now been reduced to six. There is no indication yet of Cuban DF capability. In contrast the Agency with Navy help feels that it knows every movement of any Cuban ship and has good information about the ground forces and secret police, and does not have much information about air activity.

Ambassador Willauer then continued reading in the paramilitary section through the sentence ending "and carry out sabotage." At this point Mr. Noel was asked to comment, since he just recently came from Havana. Mr. Noel indicated that the various elements of the opposition are cooperating with each other in sabotage activities. Recently, there has been a decrease of such activity because of the Fidel-inspired invasion scare, the militia activity, and the introduction of death penalties. Some of the sabotage teams have been picked up but some are still in existence, willing and able to act; however, more material is necessary. Ambassador Willauer noted the need for labor to cut the cane. Mr. Noel continued by noting that the sabotage units can be coordinated with any landing. Some details of the supply drops were reported. Mr. Barnes indicated that of the six missions flown within the past ten days, (out of a total of ten supply drops) five were supply missions. Of these, two were fully successful, one was partially successful, one was mechanically successful but the material was lost subsequent to its receipt by the people to whom it was destined, and the fifth was not good. Mr. Barnes indicated that better results will be possible in the future, now that there are on-site communications units in action. Ambassador Willauer noted in passing that with a collapse of the Castro regime after successful efforts, it may be necessary to provide certain facilities, such as electric power or communications, particularly in a place such as Havana, if the sabotage efforts are as successful as is hoped. Thus it might be wise to earmark early some Naval ship with this thought in mind.

The final paragraph of the paramilitary section was read. Ambassador Willauer noted the Paul Kennedy article in the New York Times, which he indicated as giving pretty accurate information about the training and asked whether anyone required additional information. Ambassador Willauer indicated that it still may be possible to have U.S. strike bases; that this matter has not yet been finally decided. He also mentioned the question of contract

pilots.

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pilots. He said that the idea of air strikes beginning three days before D-day has been killed, and that a strike beginning the day before D-day has now been accepted. He noted that it is possible that Cuba may have a jet air force based on the pilots being trained in Czechoslovakia. As yet there is no evidence that there are any jet airplanes in Cuba. However, Ambassador Willauer raised the problem of, if Castro has a jet air force, how would it be possible to explain the use by the FRD of a jet capability. He suggested the possibility of a volunteer group, to acquire and provide the jet pilots and planes. Ambassador Willauer indicated that he hoped the Defense Department would include in its estimates some indication of what might be required to counteract a Cuban jet air force, and some estimate as to how soon Cuba could have effective jet capability after delivery of such planes in Cuba. Following Mr. Barnes comment that there is no magic to any specific number of days before D-day for a pre strike, and that sufficient facts are not now on hand to reach a decision, Ambassador Willauer commented that with the present Cuban air force one day before D-day is sufficient. Mr. Devine noted that one of the problems of activity prior to D-day is what will be happening during that period in the U.N. and the O.A.S.

Ambassador Willauer then finished the reading of the paper with the miscellaneous section.

Captain Spore then commented at length on the sea lift problem. He gave a run^d down of what vessels the Agency now has indicating that it would not be sufficient for the numbers^{of troops} involved. He said that the Navy is quite concerned about the problem of selecting a beach. He also said that heretofore calculations had been based on an unopposed landing. If an opposed landing is a possibility, there will be a requirement for naval support and the vessels in hand have no armament. He also expressed Navy concern over the actual landing and transportation without Castro's prior knowledge from port of embarkation. Ambassador Willauer noted the possibility of a pre-dawn strike.

Ambassador Willauer then explained about the timing problem, indicating that the next meeting of the Group is early ^{Then} Tuesday morning, and that this working group has been instructed to obtain the third prong document from Defense before that meeting. He suggested that the next working group meeting be Monday when some type of progress report might be helpful. General Gray raised some general questions, specifically asking if the plan just read is valid. He noted that there are so many contingencies raised, the plan does not seem to have yet been determined. Ambassador Willauer indicated that the Special Group could not go beyond the point which the Ambassador has described in stating what the United States policy will be. This will be something that has to be determined and set by the new administration. In the meantime the Group does require from Defense a statement regarding the questions he, the Ambassador, has raised.

General Gray and Ambassador Willauer then discussed the nature of the job to be done by Defense and what is required.

General Gray

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General Gray then attempted to sum up what he understood was needed. He said (1) the Group seems to want an estimate of the time to organize and train a Cuban indigenous army, including an estimate of its chances; (2) What U.S. support would be required for the 750 men in terms of air and naval power; (3) What U.S. ground forces will be required to support the action. A separate paper, he said, would deal with U.S. unilateral intervention to protect U.S. lives and property, involving ground, air and naval forces. He would contemplate this situation arising so quickly that there would be no possibility to inter mix it with the plan. And (4) the use of U.S. and indigenous forces on a planned basis.

There was considerable discussion by Captain Spore, Ambassador Willauer, General Gray, and Mr. Barnes on the need to work on the assumption that the 750 men may not be able to do the job unassisted. At one point, Mr. Noel estimated, on the basis of observation of visa applicants, that in the group of 70,000, there would be less than 1,000 available for training for military duties. Ambassador Willauer suggested that General Gray note, as a problem in connection with training Cubans, the question of who pays the trainees, who pays their dependents, and who would pay indemnity in case of their death.

Mr. Barnes noted that the study would not be complete without consideration of the timing factor. Nor without consideration of two further points, namely, coordination with action vs. Trujillo, and an estimate of why an embargo, including activity which amounts to acts of war, will not work. Ambassador Willauer noted that there is perhaps insufficient time to do all this in the final report, however, he suggested that the desirability of also dealing with Trujillo should be noted, and that the Agency might include an evaluation of the effects of a complete economic embargo. It was also considered that at some point the Agency will have to prepare and put up for the reaction of the Special Group, its assessment of the possibility of success by the 750 unaided. There would also be required an assessment of the political feeling in the country which it is hoped might be developed between now and the end of February.

The next meeting is on the calendar for Monday at 1600 hrs.

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