

MEMORANDUM

May 18, 1995

TO: Jeremy Gunn

CC: Mary McAuliffe, David Marwell, Tom Samoluk

FROM: Christopher Barger

RE: Interview with Brad Ayers

FILE No. 4.0.2 (JMWAVE)

I interviewed former US Army captain and CIA employee Bradley Ayers on May 12, 1995, at Ayers' home in Woodbury, Minnesota. The interview lasted from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.. The following is a summary and report of the interview.

Ayers is a likeable, charismatic, and friendly man. I feel that a good rapport was established between he and myself, so if the Board should wish to contact him again in the future, I believe it would be very easy for me to work with him.

In a five hour discussion, we were only able to get through about five of the twelve written pages of material I had prepared for the meeting. The senior staff and the Board should determine whether further contact with Ayers is desired for the purpose of discussing the issues left untouched during this interview.

1. The five sealed envelopes

Ayers says he returned to Florida in February 1965 after the break-up of his marriage and began working again with the Cuban exiles, again being paid through the CIA front company Paragon Air.

One of those he says he worked with for a short while was Orlando Bosch. Ayers says that he ended this association in 1967 after Bosch threatened to kill him unless Ayers took his private Cessna, flew over Havana, and dropped a bomb. Ayers said, however, that this contact was known about and sanctioned by the CIA. When I later asked Ayers what he believed was in the five sealed envelopes that were discovered during the HSCA investigation, he responded that he thought it would probably be material on Bosch. I asked why he thought the envelopes would still be sealed, and he

responded by asking me “Would you want people to know you’d been deeply involved with a bloody terrorist?”

2. William Harvey

Ayers did not know of any operations or missions that had been undertaken during the Missile Crisis.

I qualified the question by saying that I believed I had read of some ill-advised mission that had been approved by William Harvey, that Kennedy had been so upset that he tried to fire Harvey, and that only intervention by Agency higher-ups saved Harvey; even so he ended up exiled to the Rome station. Ayers responded, “that’s what the record says.” I asked him to elaborate, and he said that well into the fall of 1963, William Harvey was not only still around JMWAIVE, but very active in it. He said that Harvey and Morales were drinking buddies, along (sometimes) with Roselli and that he saw them many times together at places like the State Bar and the New England Oyster House. Ayers said that Harvey made no effort to conceal himself while in Miami or at the station.

3. David Morales

Ayers claims to have found, in the course of his private investigative work, a credible witness who can put David Morales inside the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles on the night of June 5, 1968 (RFK’s assassination). Ayers offered to put me (and the Board) in touch with this unnamed person, who he feels would be willing to work with the Board.

4. Doug Gupton

While we were discussing pseudonyms used by JMWAIVE personnel, I asked if there was anyone who might be able to corroborate his assertions regarding the identity of Bishop and others. Ayers thought about it a moment, then said “Doug Gupton.” I remarked that Gupton had been a pseudonym, and Ayers said “no, it wasn’t. Doug Gupton was his real name.” cf. HSCA 10:48.

INTERVIEW

Q. What dates were you assigned to JMWAIVE?

A. The FOIA requests are correct. (Ed. note: Ayers refers to material he sent to Jeremy relating to FOIA requests he has been involved in. This material shows the date of his assignment to

be May 8, 1963. The date of his resignation from the Army is October 26, 1964.) He returned to Miami in February 1965, and worked with the CIA and Cuban exiles through July of 1967. He was paid through Paragon Air service.

Q. In your book you refer to the following operations: AMARK, AMTHUMB, AMTRACK, AMCHECK. What were these, and what was your role in any of them?

A. AMTHUMB was the infiltration of a team of four rifle sharpshooters into Cuba. AMARK, AMCHECK were three man black teams infiltrated for intelligence purposes. No answer for AMTRACK. His involvement was limited to the paramilitary training of the soldiers who carried out these missions; he was never personally involved. (Ed. note: At this point, Ayers interjected that he would read the “after-action” reports from the teams that were carrying out these and other missions. As the paramilitary trainer, he had access to these reports, as well as CIA memos going to and from Langley regarding anti-Castro operations. He noted with frustration that while all the CIA memos included a mass popular uprising against Castro, all the reports from the field were indicating that Castro had great popular support and that those exiles who did make it into Cuba were receiving no help from the general population, as the CIA had planned. “They knew their plan was based on a pretense that was failing, and they never altered it.”)

Q. Which, if any, CIA personnel were personally involved in these operations?

Only low and mid-level operatives, such as Ayers and team leaders Rip Robertson and Gray Lynch, were involved directly with the Cubans. Shackley was adamant about never being seen by the Cubans. (Ed. note: Here Ayers digressed into a discussion of Ted Shackley. Ayers said he liked Shackley, thought well of him, but didn’t know what to make of him. “He was always impossible to read.” Ayers told a story (also recounted on p. 104 of Corn’s *Blond Ghost*) of finally talking Shackley into observing a training exercise Ayers was conducting. Shackley insisted upon remaining hidden during the exercise; Ayers’ men pulled it off flawlessly. Shackley said not a word, gave no expression, and left the scene. “That was vintage (expletive) Shackley.” [This trait of detachedness becomes significant later in the interview.]) Getting back to the other station personnel, Ayers said that in general, CIA personnel only had that contact which was necessary with the Cubans involved in the missions.

Q. Were/are you aware of any operations that took place DURING the Missile Crisis?

A. Ayers said that he had read “twenty to thirty” after action reports on missions out of JMWAVE during his time there, but had never seen anything that indicated to him that

missions had been run during the Missile Crisis. [Ed. note: At this point, the William Harvey conversation described in another section of this report ensued.]

Q. How “compartmentalized” was the atmosphere at the station? Was the mission talked of openly?

A. Ayers said that station administration kept things relatively compartmentalized, controlling the number of people attending briefings, and limiting information to even crucial personnel; one could only attend the portions of briefings that were relevant for you. “It was unique to sit through an entire briefing.” Nonetheless, Ayers said that the majority of station personnel knew when someone from their station went on raids. Importantly, he said that it was well-known that one of the mission objectives was to kill Fidel Castro.

Q. Was there ever a feeling that the commando teams were being “yanked”; that is to say, that the Administration or the Agency were not serious about wanting to oust Castro?

A. Ayers said that such a feeling became “more and more prevalent as time went by.” This feeling, he said, however, was only expressed by the Cuban instructors and team leaders; the commandos themselves either never felt that way or never expressed themselves. Ayers described the feeling among the instructors as one of “seething unrest”. He specified the names of two men he said were instructors at the time: Joe Clark (true name) and Mike Ortega (unsure if true name).

Q. In what regard were John and Bobby Kennedy held by station personnel?

A. Ayers was unable to break this question down into time periods, as he didn’t serve at JMWAVE until well after the Missile Crisis. However, he said that while he was there, he never heard Shackley speak badly of the President or the Attorney General. Conversely, he said Morales and some of the case officers (whom he did not name) were openly critical of the policies and functions of the Special Group. Morales was supposed to viscerally resent the fact that the SG dictated OPS from Washington, and often used vulgar language to make his point, saying things like, “Those ___damned (epithet) in Washington don’t have a (expletive) idea how to run an operation. Who the hell do they think they are telling me how to do my job?” Ayers said that Robert Kennedy was often in the “hotseat” in Morales’ eyes.

Q. Which station personnel specifically liked or disliked the Kennedys?

A. Ayers said that all principle staffers at the station seemed to like the Kennedys. Asked who

disliked them, he immediately mentioned David Morales and Bob Wall.

Q. Who was the contact with JFK/RFK?

A. Ayers said that there was no direct contact with the president. Shackley would often leave the station, and rumors would fly that he was meeting with the Special Group or the President, but Ayers cannot directly confirm that.

Q. What was it that Margaret (Shackley's secretary, with whom Ayers alleges to have had an affair) specifically said that led you to believe that Gordon Campbell was Maurice Bishop?

A. Nothing formal; only slips like accidentally referring to him as Bishop instead of Campbell.

Q. To your recollection, did anybody else ever refer to Campbell as Bishop?

A. "I don't think so." [Ed. note: Here, Ayers went into the conversation about Fonzi, Bishop, and David Atlee Phillips. Ayers asserted that Phillips was a minor character at JMWAWE. He said that when the HSCA put out the sketch of Bishop, "lots of people wanted it to be Phillips." However, "Phillips was *not* Bishop." Ayers felt that Antonio Veciana was telling the HSCA the truth when he could not identify Phillips as Bishop, because he had been dealing with Campbell. Ayers said the sketch looked to him to be a very accurate drawing of Campbell. Ayers suggests that for an accurate description of Campbell, check *Deadly Secrets*. When I asked why he didn't refer to Campbell as Bishop in his 1976 book, Ayers said that the HSCA had not begun its work yet, and the name "Bishop" had no significance at the time his book was published.]

Q. Do you know of any document or list of the pseudonyms used by JMWAWE personnel during their operations? Where would such a list be kept?

A. "There's gotta be one, but no, I don't know of one specifically." Ayers said that such a list would be kept in the Cover Branch. The reality was that the pseudonyms and identities were kept very private; the only one who knew all of them was Shackley's secretary. [Ed. note: Could the ARRB find out who that was and interview her?] [Ed. note: Ayers said that he, like most personnel, was assigned more than one pseudonym (taken from the London phone book); his were Anthony P. Darguzis and Daniel B. Williams. I suggest a file search for those two names.]

Q. Would a list of front companies be kept there (in the Cover Branch) as well?

A. Without a doubt, there was a list of companies kept somewhere. It would be vital not to use a name that was being used elsewhere or had been “burned” (exposed) at some time in the past. Avoiding duplication would have been crucial, so Ayers is certain that the station, and the CIA, would keep such a list.

Q. How often was David Atlee Phillips in Miami?

A. Ayers said that Phillips would be “periodically in and out” regarding operations, but was not in often enough to be recognized. He had no contact with Ayers, and Ayers only recognized him from his photographs. There was an unwritten rule never to acknowledge other Agency personnel in public, so even if Ayers had seen Phillips in Miami, they would never have said anything to each other anyway.

Q. Did Phillips have any contact with JMWA VE that did not go through Win Scott?

A. David Morales would often go to Mexico. Morales was “out of the office more than in” during 1963. On many of these occasions, if the secretary was asked Morales’ whereabouts, she would reply “Oh, David’s in Mexico.” It is possible that Win Scott may not have known about these meetings, if they occurred.

Q. Did Morales ever try and pass himself off as Cuban?

A. Not to Ayers’ knowledge, but “he could easily pass for Cuban.” Morales was allegedly a very good actor, and “could pull off lots of roles.” [Ed. note: Here the conversation drifted into a discussion of David Morales and his emotional makeup. Ayers charged that Morales was a “mean” man who “paraded around the station like a tyrant.” Everyone was apparently afraid of him. Morales hung with what Ayers called “the circle”-- Morales, Roselli, Tony Sforza, Manuel Artime and Rip Robertson. The four were drinking buddies and of like mind on politics. Ayers said they were vicious, too. “If anyone put together a sniper team to hit the President, Morales, Rip, Roselli and Sforza would have done it.” Ayers noted that Artime, Robertson, Roselli and Sforza all died just as the HSCA began investigating. He suggests checking for Morales’ whereabouts during the late seventies, especially on the times these men were killed.]

Q. Beyond John Roselli, did you ever see any “Mafia types” at or around JMWA VE?

A. Not to Ayers’ knowledge.

Q. Was it well known who John Roselli really was?

A. There were rumors that Roselli was with the Mob, brought in specifically to kill Castro, but nothing was ever substantiated. In fact, Roselli was presented/introduced to everybody as "Colonel John Roselli of the Army." Ayers never knew him as anything but Colonel Roselli. However, those aforementioned rumors were widespread among the trainees at the camps. Roselli was around the station until the late summer of 1963. Ayers emphasized that he *NEVER* saw Roselli after the Kennedy assassination.

Q. What was the reaction around JMWA VE when Kennedy was killed?

A. For the actual conducting of the program, Ayers said there was a period of about six to eight weeks of "paralysis", after which training resumed in a "subdued manner." Operations were wound down over the course of 1964 because LBJ's priority was in Vietnam, not Cuba. After the assassination, word came down to keep everyone's eyes open for any sign that Castro was involved in any way with the murder; none of the exiles believed that Castro could have done it, Ayers said. He never had a feeling that the Cubans were relieved that Kennedy had died; in fact, JFK's death boded ill for the anti-Castro operations since Johnson was less concerned about Cuba than Kennedy had been. As for the CIA personnel at JMWA VE, their reaction was curious. The atmosphere prior to the assassination was generally in favor of Goldwater in 1964, but not overtly so. After the shooting, there descended on the station what Ayers called "an eerie silence." Everywhere else in America, indeed the world, people were talking about the shooting; about John Kennedy, and about whether Oswald was guilty. At JMWA VE, Ayers said, no one discussed it. There was what he called a "matter of fact acceptance" of Kennedy's death. Upon having his first meeting with Shackley since the shooting a few weeks earlier, Ayers said he tried to bring up the subject with Shackley. According to Ayers, Shackley "sat stone faced. No emotion whatsoever. Classic Shackley reaction." Ayers was unable to determine whether the atmosphere of acceptance at the station was due to some inside knowledge or forewarning, or was merely a reflection of the personality of its leader. Ayers said, however, that he personally believes that Shackley was very upset with Kennedy's death.

Q. How much control over JMWA VE/MONGOOSE did the Kennedys have?

A. Ayers said that the Kennedys micro-managed every aspect of the program. He was certain they knew of, if not initiated, each phase of the plan. "There is no question that everything we undertook had anything but the full and complete support of the Administration."

Q. Can you recommend any books or other source material that would help the Review Board learn more about this area?

A. Wilderness of Mirrors; Deadly Secrets

SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR FUTURE CONTACT

We were unable to cover all of the material prepared for the interview. The following is a list of questions I feel it would still be beneficial to ask Ayers should we desire to contact him further.

- 1) What kind of CI was being done at JMWAVE? How much penetration was there by the DGI?
- 2) What other government agencies were involved in the planning or execution of MONGOOSE? Was there ever an indication that some anti-Castro activities or groups were being "run" by DIA or G-2 (or any other government entity)?
- 3) Assuming they were kept and are still in existence today, where would the reports that you were filing with Colonel Bond be now? Where would they have been filed at that time?

The interview concluded around 3:00 p.m. on Friday afternoon. Sunday morning, Ayers got in contact with me to inform me that after further consideration, he had some other information he felt would be beneficial for the Board. He sent some additional material to me.

RELATED SUBJECT AREAS (POSSIBLE SEARCHES)

After having done the background research for the Brad Ayers interview, the following subjects have struck me as worthwhile areas for future records searches:

1. The University of Miami (administrative and financial records from 1960-1964)

One cannot help but think that school administration knew, or at least had an idea of, who their tenants were. It is possible that somewhere in school records, more information about JMWAVE, how it was set up, and by whose authority it was established rests in school records.

2. CIA files on the *Commandos Mambises*

This group was apparently set up to appear to both the exile community and to Castro as independent of the CIA. It made a few raids, including one on the Matahambre copper mines in October 1963, then was flushed out by Castro and ceased activity. More of the JMWAVE story might be found here.

3. CIA, Defense and State Dept. files on the J. Louis incident

On the night of October 21, 1963, a raid was conducted on Cuba by CIA trained exiles. Castro was waiting for them, however, and the raid had to be scuttled. As the exiles attempted escape, a freighter offshore caught the Cuban Air Force's attention. They began strafing the freighter, thinking it was the mother ship for the operation. It was an American-owned ship flying the Liberian flag, the *J. Louis*, and it had nothing to do with the raid. Upon hearing that a civilian ship was under attack by five of Castro's MiGs, the Navy allegedly scrambled a number of F-4 Phantoms from Key West, and the CIA had to hurriedly call off the Navy in order to avoid a dogfight and an international incident. The *J. Louis* was strafed for a while longer before the Cuban pilots realized their error. The US responded by publicizing and criticizing Castro's "aggressiveness", and shortly thereafter, the State Department used the incident to justify continuing the economic embargo of Cuba. Any files regarding this incident from any of the three entities involved would prove useful, I believe.

4. Any CIA files on the "Quail Roost"

This was the name of one of the camp facilities in southern Florida the CIA used to train the exile commandos. The existence of files on this facility should be checked.

5. Any CIA files regarding the ships "Rex" or "Leda"

These were the command ships used by the CIA Navy during sea-based raids on Cuba. It was the *Rex* that the Cuban MiGs thought they were attacking during the *J. Louis* incident. Files on these ships might give us an idea as to ship's personnel, the source of its funding, the

authorization for their conversion and use, or details about the missions they undertook.