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25 April 1963

MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

SUBJECT: Minutes of Meeting of the Special Group, 25 April 1963

PRESENT: Mr. Bundy, Mr. Johnson, Mr. Gilpatric, and Mr. McCone.

Dr. Scoville and Colonel Steakley were present for Items 1-4.

Mr. FitzGerald was present for Items 1-5.

Mr. Jorgensen was present for Item 3.

Mr. Tweedy was present for Item 6.

1. <sup>96</sup> Forecast of NRO Activities for May

[This forecast was noted.]

2. Reconnaissance of Laos and Vietnam <sup>98</sup>

Mr. McCone referred to a paper prepared by the JCS at the request of the Secretary of Defense, outlining a possible schedule of reconnaissance missions over Laos and Vietnam, which seemed to Mr. McCone to be unduly heavy. Mr. Gilpatric explained that the paper had been drawn up as an annex to a draft contingency plan, and was responsive to a direct request from the Secretary of Defense to indicate a sizeable capability for high-level reconnaissance for intelligence purposes. Mr. Gilpatric added that it is clearly understood that such activity would not represent a "show of force," and that the latter would require low-level activity. Mr. McCone agreed with this point and emphasized the unusual sensitivity of any high-level reconnaissance of denied areas.

Mr. Gilpatric assured the Group that these plans are all of a contingency nature and that at this point they are by no means approved.]

3. Proposed "Feint" Operations, GROSBEAK <sup>98</sup>

Mr. Jorgensen summarized the paper of the 22nd of April. He said that these proposals are frankly regarded as experimental.]

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[ Colonel Steakley said that from the JCS point of view, such feints might represent a tactical advantage, in that they could divert enemy defenses from actual operations. On the other hand, the JCS procedures are designed so as not to be provocative in connection with peripheral and BOW TIE missions. He felt that this proposal, which is frankly designed to be provocative, could have the effect of inducing quicker and more intensive reaction to the JCS flights.

On the understanding that the feint activities would be closely coordinated with military missions in the area, it was agreed that the proposed program should be tried for the month of May. At the end of this period, a report on the results will be made to the Special Group.]

4. Low-Level Reconnaissance, Cuba 98

The DCI said the USIB unanimously reaffirmed yesterday the priority intelligence requirements for low-level coverage of Cuba. Mr. Bundy added that there is high-level interest in reviewing this situation.

Mr. Johnson said that in the view of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research of the State Department, the Soviets would interpret a resumption of low-level flights as an indication of the adoption by the U.S. of a harder line toward Cuba. More significantly, Ambassador Thompson is very much opposed to such resumption at this time; he feels that this could result in a reduction in the rate of withdrawal of Soviet troops or a Soviet decision to withdraw none at all in the future, and it might affect Soviet policy in Laos in a manner adverse to U.S. interests. The importance of the Harriman mission with respect to this last proposition was noted. Mr. Johnson said we should know the results of the Harriman mission in a day or two.

It was agreed that the matter would be discussed with higher authority this afternoon.]

5. Proposed New Policy and Program toward Cuba

Mr. McCone opened the discussion of this topic by pointing out that the overt and multilateral pressures now being applied to Cuba are useful; on the other hand, while they will slow Castro down they will not hurt him critically, and the interest of our allies in maintaining such pressures will almost certainly erode as time passes. Similarly, any sabotage program can hurt the Castro government, but not lethally; and in order to be effective at all, it must be done on

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a continuing basis and cannot be subjected to a stop-and-go treatment. The DCI went on to say that any such activity is bound to be attributed to the United States and if we are to carry through with it, we must be prepared to accept the accompanying noise level. He said that a sabotage program will not be entirely beneficial to U.S. interests; on the minus side, there is the fact that this will complicate the running of intelligence operations and it could result in Cuban retaliation. Additionally, Mr. McCone said he is not in favor of extreme types of sabotage such as complete destruction of crops, contamination of water supplies, etc. He would prefer open intervention to this kind of thing.

The DCI said that the combination of economic and other pressures with sabotage activities, might provide a feasible climate for a successful attempt to fragment the Castro organization. He foresaw the possibility of such fragmentation leading to assumption of power by a military dictatorship, which would probably be friendly to the U.S. In this connection, Mr. FitzGerald said that we have a line on certain high-ranking officers who are not entirely sympathetic to the regime. He pointed out, however, that a major operational obstacle to capitalizing on this situation is the difficulty of persuading individual Cubans of this type to place their trust in each other. In addition, we will have to be able to assure them that the U.S. will be sympathetic to possible successors to the present government, even though such people may have been former Castro supporters.

Mr. FitzGerald touched on the proposed support to selected Cuban exile groups, for autonomous operations, as being one of the key points of the possible new program. He made the point that there is no use in the U.S. trying to deny that it backs such operations, since it will be accused of this in any case, and the accusations will be generally believed; further, such a posture is not detrimental to U.S. interests. Mr. Bundy agreed with this point. He added, however, that a "scenario" will have to be worked out, clearly indicating who in the government should respond to accusations in this field and what in general they should say.

Mr. Bundy questioned a statement in the paper to the effect that covert action which might be used as a pretext for overt military intervention is ruled out. Mr. McCone and Mr. FitzGerald said that the purpose of this statement was to indicate that the covert program is not specifically directed toward the end of providing such a pretext, but that it is not intended to preclude such a situation if it should turn out to be desirable at some time in the future.

Mr. FitzGerald then described a number of possible sabotage operations. In this connection, he pointed out that the paper contains a proposal for the placing of limpets, carrying suitable delay mechanisms, on the outside of Cuban ships so as to explode at sea.

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He noted that Secretary Vance does not particularly like this proposition because of the possibility that the explosions would be attributed to torpedoes. While recognizing the validity of Mr. Vance's argument, Mr. Gilpatric felt that this risk was acceptable.

The Chairman summed up the preliminary reactions of the Group to the proposals as follows:

a. The proposition for dealing with selected exile groups is a good one, but the method of dealing with them will have to be more carefully defined.

b. There is no objection to limpets, subject to further technical studies.

c. Surface attacks on Cuban ships do not appear particularly attractive, nor do shore-based attacks of a similar nature.

d. Externally mounted hit-and-run attacks against land targets appear worthwhile. The operations in this category which can be run in May, will be discussed with higher authority. Refineries and power plants seem to be particularly good targets. Operations of this kind will be especially valuable if done in conjunction with other resistance activities.

e. Internal resistance should be stimulated, again in conjunction with related operations.

#### 6. Covert Action, Congo

The CIA paper of 19 April was approved with little discussion. The Chairman said that his only concern was whether we are committed to spending money at this rate forever. Mr. Tweedy said first that if the Adoula government should fall, it would probably be in the U.S. interest to support a successor government in a somewhat similar way and, secondly, he pointed out that there are no firm commitments made, although of course the recipients do come to expect a subsidy.

Mr. Bundy said he would mention this project to higher authority.

#### 7. Final Status Report, Italian Election Project

Mr. McCone ran over the highlights of the prognostication for the Italian elections, as summarized in the CIA paper of the 22nd of April. He noted that virtually all the allocated money will have been passed by this time. Mr. Bundy said that the CIA forecast is generally consistent with reports he has had from Italian sources.

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8. British Guiana

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Mr. McCone said that representatives of CIA and of MI-6 are scheduled to meet on the 30th of April and the first of May. They will consider: an up-to-date assessment of the situation; a proposed British operational plan; alternative proposals if this plan proves not feasible; identification of Indians who might provide alternative leadership to Jagan; the division of operational responsibility; and an inventory of operational assets.

The DCI said it is estimated that a continuation of the current strike would require expenditures on the order of \$10,000 a day. The Group felt that if this could result in the defeat of Jagan, it would be well worth it. Accordingly, Mr. McCone undertook to look into the situation immediately and to assure that support for the strike is not cut off, pending a broader decision. He said he might see James Fulton of MI-6, during his forthcoming trip to Europe, to coordinate views.

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Mr. Johnson  
Mr. Gilpatric  
Mr. McCone

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