

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~
SUBJECT: Sabotage against Castro

Three small-scale sabotage operations have been approved by the Special Group, but this recommendation is based on a routine continuation of broad policy guidance which I think you may wish to review. The three operations involved are:

- (1) a commando sabotage operation against a coastal warehouse and pier;
- (2) a sabotage attack against naval or patrol vessels in a harbor; and
- (3) a sabotage operation against a fuel barge proceeding in coastal waters.

All of these operations would have been approved three months ago, and indeed one of them is a rescheduling of an operation aborted because of high seas. While it is always hard to predict the noise level in these matters, these operations seem comparable to the small attack on a Cuban naval patrol which occurred in late December which Castro promptly blamed on you (in fact it was an operation approved before November 22 and not cancelled thereafter because it seemed to fall within the guidance you expressed in your first review of the Cuban problem).

The policy question now is this: If we continue these even small sabotage operations, Castro will certainly know it. Equally, if we call them off, he will know it, and so will the Russians. We thus have an opportunity to choose.

I doubt if this choice should be made on momentum alone.

I therefore recommend a Cabinet-level review of the whole principle of covert sabotage against Cuba. I know that Rusk has never liked it and that McNamara thinks it does very little good. McCone and the CIA are for it, and so are most of the middle-level officers dealing with the Castro problem. I myself consider the matter extremely evenly balanced.

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but before hearing full argument, my guess is that in your position I would stop sabotage attacks on the ground that they are illegal, ineffective, and damaging to our broader policy. I might then wish to make a little capital from this decision with the Soviet Union.

McG. B.

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