

Cuban Exile Chief Has U. S. Support?

By Larry Levy

The new military leader for exiled Cubans may be able to draw U. S. support.

In the past he has served in some unnamed capacity in the Pentagon and as head of Cubans serving as officers in the U. S. armed force, while he was only a second lieutenant at Fort Sill.

But, Erneido Oliva, who was named to head military operations for the newly-formed exile "war board" may have hurt his cause during the past month.

Oliva, 31, was one of four Cubans who provided background for a book that



Erneido Oliva

charges that Central Intelligence Agency agents training men for the Bay of Pigs invasion of April, 1961, ordered them to go ahead with the invasion despite last minute orders from the late

President Kennedy.

CIA agents, the book said, told the Cubans to take the agents prisoners and go ahead even if cancellation orders came through.

Oliva went to the Pentagon in late February or early March after submitting his resignation from the army as a commissioned officer.

At the time, he was serving at Fort Sill as a second lieutenant. In announcing his "war board" post Friday, United Press International said his rank was captain.

While a U. S. Army second lieutenant, Oliva also served as commander of 210 exile Cubans holding commissions in all branches of the U. S. armed forces. In this capacity he had direct communications with Washington officials outside of normal military channels.

The Cuban exile officers ranks in the U. S. thinned down from a high of 210 to about 172 in February when most submitted their resig-

nations because, the Cubans said, the administration had reneged on a promise to support a fight to free Cuba.

Since the resignations, tempo of anti-Castro military activities seems to have gone up. The choice of Oliva to head the board's military operations may be an indication of U. S. support.

When the Cubans offered their verbal resignations, the Pentagon attempted to soothe their feelings by near-secret meetings between the Cubans and Joseph A. Califano jr., general consul for

the army serving as a defense department representative to the Cubans.

Seven Cuban officers at Fort Sill were taken to Shepard Air Force Base, Wichita Falls, Texas, to meet with Califano, who tried to talk them into staying in the service. If they still wanted to resign they were promised the government would help them find jobs.

While the resignations were being negotiated the Cuban officers were held incommunicado from newsmen.

Immediately afterwards the army said Oliva was given a job in the Pentagon. He had submitted his resignation.

The Cubans came to Fort Sill after receiving training at other U. S. military installations. Presumably the Cubans were transferred from one military school to another so they would receive training in all combat specialties in preparation to lead a Cuban exile army against Castro.

In a talk last January to high-ranking Fort Sill officers, Oliva said he hoped to return to a liberated Cuba and receive the Bay of Pigs brigade flag, entrusted to President Kennedy, from Mrs. Kennedy.

After the invaders were ransomed from Castro — Oliva's ransom was \$500,000 — Kennedy told the survivors in Miami, "I can assure you this flag will be returned to this brigade in a free Havana."

This is the promise the Cuban officers feel the present administration has refused to honor.

Before fleeing Cuba, Oliva had been an army officer before and after Castro took over. Under Castro he was designated general inspector for agrarian reform.

Ten days after arriving in Miami, he was in Guatemala training for the Bay of Pigs invasion, Oliva told newsmen last January at Fort Sill.