

Text of Assassination Re

Here is a partial text of the summary chapter of the Senate intelligence committee's report on CIA involvement in plots to kill foreign leaders:

A. Findings Concerning the Plots Themselves.

1. Officials of the United States government initiated plots to assassinate Fidel Castro and Patrice Lumumba.

The committee finds that officials of the United States government initiated and participated in plots to assassinate Patrice Lumumba and Fidel Castro.

The plot to kill Lumumba was conceived in the latter half of 1960 by officials of the United States government, and quickly advanced to the point of sending poisons to the Congo to be used for the assassination.

The effort to assassinate Castro began in 1960 and continued until 1965. The plans to assassinate Castro using poison cigars, exploding seashells, and a contaminated diving suit did not advance beyond the laboratory phase. The plot involving underworld figures reached the stage of producing poison pills, establishing the contacts necessary to send them into Cuba, procuring potential assassins within Cuba, and apparently delivering the pills to the island itself. One 1960 episode involved a Cuban who initially had no intention of engaging in assassination, but who finally agreed, at the suggestion of the CIA, to attempt to assassinate Raul Castro if the opportunity arose. In the AM-LASH operation, which extended from 1963 through 1965, the CIA gave active support and encouragement to a Cuban whose intent was to assassinate Castro was known, and provided him with the means of carrying out an assassination.

2. No foreign leaders were killed as a result of assassination plots initiated by officials of the United States.

The poisons intended for use against Patrice Lumumba were never administered to him, and there is no evidence that the United States was, in any way, involved in Lumumba's death at the hands of his Congolese enemies. The efforts to assassinate Castro failed.

3. American officials encouraged or were privy to coup plots which resulted in the death of Trujillo, Diem, and Schneider. American officials clerically desired the overthrow of Trujillo, offered both encouragement and guns to local dissidents who sought his overthrow and whose plans

included assassination. American officials also supplied those dissidents with pistols and rifles.

American officials offered encouragement to the Vietnamese generals who plotted Diem's overthrow, and a CIA official in Vietnam gave the generals money after the coup was begun. However, Diem's assassination was neither desired nor suggested by officials of the United States.

The record reveals that United States officials offered encouragement to the Chilean dissidents who plotted the kidnapping of Gen. Rene Schneider, but American officials did not desire or encourage Schneider's death. Certain high officials did know, however, that the dissidents planned to kidnap Gen. Schneider.

As Director Colby testified before the committee, the death of a foreign leader is a risk foreseeable in any coup attempt. In the cases we have considered, the risk of death was in fact known in varying degrees. It was widely known that the dissidents in the Dominican Republic intended to assassinate Trujillo. The contemplation of coup leaders at one time to assassinate Nhu, President Diem's brother, was communicated to the upper levels of the United States government. While the CIA and perhaps the White House knew that the coup leaders in Chile planned to kidnap Gen. Schneider, it was not anticipated that he would be killed, although the possibility of his death should have been recognized as a foreseeable risk of his kidnapping.

4. The plots occurred in a cold war atmosphere perceived to be of crisis proportions.

The committee fully appreciates the importance of evaluating the assassination plots in the historical context within which they occurred. In the preface to this report, we described the perception, generally shared within the United States during the depths of the Cold War, that our country faced a monolithic enemy in communism. That attitude helps explain the assassination plots which we have reviewed, although it does not justify them. Those involved nevertheless appeared to believe they were advancing the best interests of their country.

5. American officials had exaggerated notions about their ability to control the actions of coup leaders.

Running throughout the cases considered in this report was the expectation of American officials that they could control the actions of dissident groups which they

were supporting in foreign countries.

Events demonstrated that the United States had no such power. This point is graphically demonstrated by cables exchanged shortly before the coup in Vietnam. Ambassador Lodge cabled Washington Oct. 30, 1963, that he was unable to halt a coup; a cable from William Bundy in response stated that we cannot accept conclusion that we have no power to delay or discourage a coup. The coup took place three days later.

Shortly after the experience of the Bay of Pigs, CIA Headquarters requested operatives in the Dominican Republic to tell the dissidents to turn off the assassination attempt, because the United States was not prepared to cope with the aftermath. The dissidents replied that the assassination was their affair and that it could not be turned off to suit the convenience of the United States Government.

6. CIA officials made use of known underworld figures in assassination efforts.

Officials of the CIA made use of persons associated with the criminal underworld in attempting to achieve the assassination of Fidel Castro. These underworld figures were relied upon because it was believed that they had expertise and contacts that were not available to law-abiding citizens.

Foreign citizens with criminal backgrounds were also used by the CIA in two other cases that we have reviewed. In the development of the Executive Action capability, one foreign national with a criminal background was used to spot other members of the European underworld who might be used by the CIA for a variety of purposes, including assassination, if the need should arise. In the Lumumba case, two men with criminal backgrounds were used as field operatives by CIA officers in a volatile political situation in the Congo.

B. Conclusions concerning the plots themselves.

1. The United States should not engage in assassination.

We condemn the use of assassination as a tool of foreign policy. Aside from pragmatic arguments against the use of assassination supplied to the committee by witnesses with extensive experience in covert operations, we find that assassination violates moral precepts fundamental to our way of life.

In addition to moral considerations, there were several practical reasons advanced for not assassinating foreign leaders.

These reasons are discussed in the section of this report recommending a statute making assassination a crime.

(a) Distinction between targeted assassinations instigated by the United States and support for dissidents seeking to overthrow local governments:

Two of the five principal cases investigated by the committee involved plots to kill foreign leaders (Lumumba and Castro) that were instigated by American officials. Three of the case (Trujillo, Diem, and Schneider) involved killings in the course of coup attempts by local dissidents. These latter cases differed in the degree to which assassination was contemplated by leaders of the coups and in the degree the coups were motivated by United States officials.

The committee concluded that targeted assassinations instigated by the United States must be prohibited.

Coups involve varying degrees to risk of assassination. The possibility of assassination in coup attempts is one of the issues to be considered in determining the propriety of United States involvement in coups, particularly in those where the assassination of a foreign leader is a likely prospect.

This country was created by violent revolt against a regime believed to be tyrannous, and our founding fathers (the local dissidents of that era) received aid from foreign countries. Given that history, we should not today rule out support for dissident groups seeking to overthrow tyrants. But passing beyond that principle, there remain serious questions: for example, whether the national interest of the United States is genuinely involved; whether any such support should be overt rather than covert; what tactics should be used; and how such actions should be authorized and controlled by the coordinate branches of government. The committee believes that its recommendations on the question of covert actions in support of coups must await the committee's final report which will be issued after a full review of covert action in general.

(b) The setting in which the assassination plots occurred explains, but does not justify them.

The Cold War setting in which the assassination plots took place does not change our view that assassination is unacceptable in our society. In addition to the moral and practical problems discussed elsewhere, we find three principal defects in my contention that the tenor of the period justified the

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assassination plots:

First, the assassination plots were not necessitated by imminent danger to the United States. Among the cases studied, Castro alone posed a physical threat to the United States, but then only during the period of the Cuban missile crisis. Attempts to assassinate Castro had begun long before that crisis, and assassination was not advanced by policymakers as a possible course of action during the crisis.

Second, we reject absolutely any notion that the United States should justify its actions by the standards of totalitarians. Our standards must be higher, and this difference is what the struggle is all about. Of course, we must defend our democracy. But in defending it, we must resist undermining the very virtues we are defending.

Third, such activities almost inevitably become known. The damage to American foreign policy, to the good name and reputation of the United States abroad, to the American people's faith and support of our government and its foreign policy is incalculable. This last point — the undermining of the American public's confidence in its government — is the most damaging consequence of all.

2. The United States should not make use of underworld figures for their criminal talents.

We conclude that agencies of the United States must not use underworld figures for their criminal talents (footnote 2) in carrying out agency operations. In addition to the corrosive effect upon our government (footnote 3) the use of underworld figures involves the following dangers:

(a) The use of underworld figures for dirty business" gives them the power to blackmail the government and to avoid prosecution, for past or future crimes. For example, the figures involved in the Castro assassination operation used their involvement with the CIA to avoid prosecution. The CIA also contemplated attempting to quash criminal charges brought in a foreign tribunal against QJ-WIN.

(b) The use of persons experienced in criminal techniques and prone to criminal behavior increases the likelihood that criminal acts will occur. Sometimes agents in the field are necessarily given broad discretion. But the risk of improper activities is increased when persons of criminal background are used, particularly when they are selected precisely to take advantage of their criminal skills or contacts.

(c) There is the danger that the United States Government will become an unwitting accomplice to criminal acts and that criminal figures will take advantage of their association with the government to advance their own projects and interests.

(d) There is a fundamental impropriety in selecting persons because they are skilled at performing deeds which the laws of our society forbid.

The use of underworld figures by the United States Government for their criminal skills raises moral problems comparable to those recognized by Justice Brandeis in a different context five decades ago:

Our government is the potent, the omnipresent teacher. For good or for ill, it teaches the whole people by its example. Crime is contagious. If the government becomes a law-breaker, it breeds contempt for law; it invites every man to become a law unto himself. To declare that in the administration of the criminal law the end justifies the means — to declare that the government may commit crimes in order to secure the conviction of the private criminal — would bring

terrible retribution. Against that pernicious doctrine this court should resolutely set its face. (*Omstead v. U.S.*, 277 U.S. 439, 485 (1927))

(e) The spectacle of the government consorting with criminal elements destroys respect for government and law and undermines the viability of democratic institutions.

C. Findings and Conclusions Relating to Authorization and Control.

In the introduction to this report, we set forth in summary form our major conclusions concerning whether the assassination plots were authorized. The ensuing discussion elaborates and explains those conclusions.

The committee analyzed the question of authorization for the assassination activities from two perspectives. First the committee examined whether officials in policymaking positions authorized or were aware of the assassination activities. Second, the committee inquired whether the officials responsible for the operational details of the plots perceived that assassination had the approval of their superiors, or at least was the type of ac-

tivity that their superiors would not disapprove.

No doubt, the CIA's general efforts against the regimes discussed in this report were authorized at the highest levels of the government. However, the record is unclear and serious doubt remains concerning whether assassination was authorized by the respective presidents. Even if the plots were not expressly authorized, it does not follow that the agency personnel believed they were acting improperly.

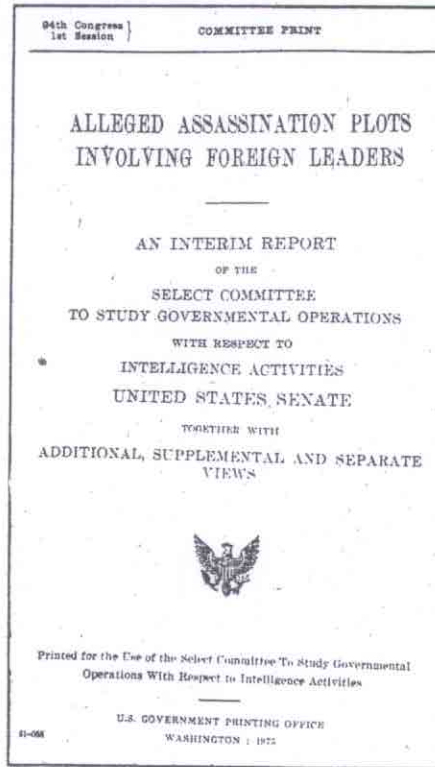
1. The apparent lack of accountability in the command and control system was such that the assassination plot could have been undertaken without express authorization.

As emphasized throughout this report, we are unable to draw firm conclusions concerning who authorized the assassination plots. Even after our long investigation it is unclear whether the conflicting and inconclusive state of the evidence is due to the system of plausible denial or whether there were, in fact, serious shortcomings in the system of authorization which made it possible for assassination efforts to have been undertaken by agencies of the United States Government without express authority from officials above those agencies (footnote 4).

Based on the record of our investigation, the committee finds that the system of executive command and control was so inherently ambiguous that it is difficult to be certain at what level assassination activity was known and authorized. This creates the disturbing prospect that assassination activity might have been undertaken by officials of the United States Government without its having been incontrovertibly clear that there was explicit authorization from the President of the United States. At the same time, this ambiguity and imprecision leaves open the possibility that there was a successful plausible denial" and that a presidential authorization was issued but is now obscured.

Whether or not assassination was authorized by a president of the United States, the president as the chief executive officer of the United States Government must take ultimate responsibility for major activities during his administration. Just as these presidents must be held accountable, however, their subordinates throughout the government had a concomitant duty to fully disclose their plans and activities.

Associated Press



Cover page of the Senate intelligence unit's report.