

EXILES DESCRIBE 2 NEW CUBA RAIDS

U.S. Says It Is Opposed to
'Ineffective Forays'

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WASHINGTON, March 19—

The leaders of Alpha 66, a Cuban exile organization reappeared here today with reports that they had raided a Soviet "fortress" and ship in Cuba Monday, causing a dozen casualties and serious damage.

The United States Government said it had no independent information yet about the incident, but a statement denouncing such raids implicitly confirmed at least that something had occurred.

"Nothing we have heard of the latest incident changes our judgment in this matter," the State Department declared. "Rather, it reinforces our belief that the irresponsible and ineffective forays served to increase the difficulty of dealing with the unsatisfactory situation which now exists in the Caribbean."

The Government said it was investigating fully to determine whether United States laws had been violated. But the chief American coordinator of Alpha 66 and a representative of a companion group, who held a public news conference here this afternoon, said no officials had been in contact with them so far.

'Commandos' Described

The men who appeared before reporters and television cameras at the Roger Smith Hotel were Antonio Veciana, who said he raised funds and supplies for Alpha 66 in the United States, Cecilio J. Vazquez, of an exile group called the Second National Front of Escambray, and a number of associates.

They said "commando units" of their organizations had attacked a fortress-like Russian encampment at Isabela de Sagua, a north-coast port about 130 miles east of Havana, at dawn on Monday. Two high-speed boats with an undisclosed number of men carrying machine guns and cannon made the raid, they said.

According to the exiles' account, one group landed for an exchange of fire with Coast Guard Customs and Soviet infantry forces. The attackers were said then to have moved to another part of the port, where a Soviet merchant ship anchored in the bay opened fire. The second attacking vessel was said then to have fired at the ship's stack and bridge, seriously damaging it.

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The exiles said that their estimate, based on a direct report from the attackers and on the reports of underground organizations in Cuba, was that about a dozen Russians were wounded. A number of them, they said, were taken to hospitals in the port city and later in Havana.

The attack, as described, appeared to be similar to one that Alpha 66 said it staged Oct. 8 against the same port. The same group attacked a British ship and two Cuban cargo vessels anchored off the north coast of the island Sept. 10.

As before, the representatives of the raiders insisted that, although they solicited funds and support here, their military operations were not conducted from American soil. They further said today that they did not operate from British territory in the Caribbean.

Their purpose, they said, was to wage psychological warfare against the Government of Premier Fidel Castro and the Soviet troops supporting him. They expressed the hope that the raids, which they thought would continue, would cheer the Cuban population and encourage others to resist the Castro Government.

The announcement caused great concern in the Government and an agitated search for more information. President Kennedy's party in San Jose, Costa Rica, was said to have telephoned several times during the day for reports on the situation.

There appears to be no reason to challenge official reports here that no Government agency was in any way involved in the planning and execution of the raids. Most officials here were embarrassed by the incident and were disapproving of such action in private as well as public comments.

The State Department said: "The United States Government is strongly opposed to hit-and-run attacks on Cuba by splinter refugee groups. It has stated repeatedly that such raids do not weaken the grip of the Communist regime on Cuba -- indeed, they may strengthen it."

The latter statement apparently referred to the belief here that such raids only enhance Cuban police and military activities and further complicate the task of Cubans on the island trying to work against the regime.