

4201 Peachtree Place, Alexandria, VA 22304

Apr 19, 1990
Apr 20, 1990

Dear Harry,

Livingstone

You touched on some key points in your letter.

A) Bundy-Cabell- "Bay of Pigs"

JFK was slow to approve the B/P operation. When the brigade had been put to sea, he was told, "What are you going to tell all of these Cuban exiles if you don't let them go now?" He capitulated and approved the landing for sunrise, Monday Apr 18th. That was 3:30 P.M. at the White House. He left for his VA home at Glen Ora in the countryside.

The Operational Plan required air strikes, prior to the landing of the Brigade, to wipe out all...ALL...of Castro's combat capable aircraft, only 10. When the men landed there would be not one single enemy plane in the sky. This was essential.

The first air strike was against the aircraft in the Havana area on Saturday Apr 16th. It was very successful; but 3 small jet trainers (T-33's "T-Birds") had been flown to another base for the week-end by three jet pilots. They carry two 50 cal machine guns which are lethal, and because the jet's speed is so much greater than the B-26's they were a great threat. We found them by U-2 coverage that day and set up the second strike for sunrise Monday, just as the Brigade was to hit the beach.

This second strike was a key part of the plan and had been approved by JFK. It was argued on Sunday, and approved again. A good friend of mine was the CIA's operational commander at Puerto Cabezas in Nic. where the four B-26's that would make this strike were based. They would take-off to arrive at sunrise Monday...a four-hour flight. All was "GO".

All of what I am saying comes from the "Letter to the President" written and signed by Gen Maxwell Taylor and approved by Allen Dulles, Adm Arleigh Burke and Bobby Kennedy. I have an early copy from the original and the book ZAPATA with the same.

At about 9:30 P.M. Sunday, McGeorge Bundy called Cabell and told him that the second strike would not be flown and that if he had any questions about the decision he should call Rusk. Allen Dulles was out of the country and Cabell was on his own.

Cabell was an Intell. officer and not a combat-trained officer. He had a problem. He ordered the attack heldup while trying to reach Rusk. He did get to him at about 4 A.M. Approval then was meaningless. The bombers would be much too late to get the jets. The jets had done their work by then.

*There is
not if he
knows
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is not true
I have
questions
about
some
what
follows*

Word of the cancellation hit Nic. like a ton of bricks. My home phone rang at about 1:00 A.M. Apr 18. It was my CIA friend from Puerto Cabezas. He told me of the cancellation and begged me to see if I couldn't prevail on someone to let the B-26's go. He held the phone out of the tent and I could hear the engines of the 4 aircraft running. Jokingly, I said, "Let them go."

I called the operational headquarters in DC and found all kinds of confusion. Dulles was out of the country and Cabell was out of the office. No one was in charge. Bundy's order stood. Gen. Taylor wrote, Bundy's order killed the whole operation.

Years ago I believed that Cabell's ineptitude in a combat situation when you have to take things into your own hands sometimes, had been the problem. It was a factor. After JFK's death and the pressure that was put on the idea of what the Cabell-Cabell team could have done, I thought that there might have been more to the Cabell role with the B/P. In either context his ineptitude was costly.

At about that time I got a copy of the original Taylor letter that became very important for other reasons, i.e. NSAM 55, 56, 57. Then I learned of the role of Bundy. This was done on his own. JFK did not tell him to do it. He had been talking with Adlai Stevenson who did not know all the details. Bundy was no combat man and did not know how important that second air strike was. His call was the result of inexperience and the inability to handle the big picture. He thought it was not important.

The very fact that those four men put all this in their Report shows that they felt it was Bundy's problem and his alone. With Bobby in the room during all of these hearings it would have been unnecessary to put that in if JFK had been the one to call Bundy. Bobby would have known if JFK had called the bombers off. Bobby agreed with Taylor and the others in reporting that the Bundy call was key to the failure. All they would have had to have said in the letter was "Your (JFK) call to Bundy caused this." They did not. In bureaucratic terms this was important. This was a "Letter" to the President; and not a "Report". Letters remain closely held. Reports get circulated. Bundy is the cause of the failure...perhaps unwittingly.

Had those 4 B-26's knocked out those three jets while they were on the ground the whole thing would have changed and the Brigade would have won easily. They had enough armament for a Marine Corps detachment of 25,000 men; and they had the biggest air force in the Hemisphere other than the US. They were ready to give Castro a good whipping, and would have done it easily.

Those 3 jets shot down many B-26's that first day, sank the two supply ships and raised hell over the beach. They saved Castro.

When I think back to that time, JFK was inexperienced in that type of activity. He did not provide for a strong command line directly between him and the Brigade. He learned a heck of a lot from this. Bobby learned more. That set of four: Taylor (whom JFK had never met), Burke, Dulles and Bobby assured a review that would be classic. With Bobby there, and Taylor on his team after that, JFK was ready to take on the CIA.

Historians have failed to understand the significance of the sequence: B/P, the Review Board, the Letter, and JFK's subsequent action to take over the CIA with Bobby, Taylor and Krulak as his strong men would have worked, had he lived.

Historians ought to study this Taylor letter. It not only spelled out the B/P problem; but it laid out his plans for the way Counterinsurgency ought to be fought. This was a major step. The Taylor plan was much different from the Lansdale/Wilson Special Forces "Vietnam" plan. This caused a serious rupture at the highest levels and the arguments raged over NSAM 55 and NSAM 57. With Lemnitzer as Chairman of the JCS this was one thing. When Taylor became Chairman things began to move in that direction, and this led to the Taylor/Mc Namara "Trip Report" of Oct 1963 and NSAM #263...the most important paper of them all, and the reason JFK was killed. The split was that bad.

I'll keep an eye out for articles on Mental Illness. Most of what I did with them was on the subject of "Mind Control." You are probably aware of Walter Bowart's book on that subject. If you ever want what FREEDOM has or has access to you ought to write directly to Tom Whittle their long-time editor. Be sure to use my name in any such contact.

You are so right about the "core issues" of the "Diem philosophy" and the rest in Vietnam. I went to a big "Historians" meeting the other night. They were reviewing Neil Sheehan's book. Historians are absolutely blank on what happened in Vietnam before 1965. It was in 1945 when the die was cast. It was 1954-1955 when the battle issues were set up. Then it was 1965 before U.S. troops arrived under U.S. military commanders. They just neglect all that; yet that was some of the deepest and most complex work of the Cold War. This is why I put the Lansdale/Stillwell paper in the Appendix of my book. It is still most important. It could be a whole book by itself. The Cold War began with a specific event in Sept 1944 planned and carried out by Frank Wisner of the OSS.

I am getting better slowly. I feel great; but do not have my stamina. My strength gives out too soon. I'm pleased to learn that you are up to dirt moving and all the rest.

Now about my "packet" and future plans. I believe you have a great idea and I would like to work with you. We are natural

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foils and motivators for each other.

I would like to have you set down precisely what I ought to do to get myself into the computer assisted writing business in such a way that it would make the creation of a book efficient and simple. Also I would love to be working with a big hard-core memory and the ability to contact, and be contacted by other sources on computer. Also I need a good universal printer. I do not know if I can swing such a deal financially; but I could study it and then see what I could do.

Next we need to agree on the basic outline and parameters of the book. I am afraid that we have got to envision more than one volume also. Here I need to learn from your business experience. Just how do we swing it. I don't expect to make money with such a book but I do hope to put something on the shelves that would be worthwhile and durable.

My idea would be to start the general theme of the book with the Cairo/Teheran Conference period, go next to Sep 1944 and then to Sep 2, 1945 and on up through to the death of JFK with a quick wind-up through the Cold War to 1990. The climax would be the death of JFK and what that has meant to us all since then.

You will see that much of this is folded into the Saigon Solution material that you have in hand. What would you think of publishing that (somewhat re-written) as it is to have something in hand that would be earning a little and paving the way for the bigger work? It's a good series, as is.

Thanks for the invitation to visit. Right now I am doing very little, if any, travel. The position of being seated in a car is not the best thing for me now. If you are ever down this way, we are not far from the AMTRAK station in Alexandria, be sure to call me.

Ciao,

L. Fletcher Prouty

THIS CORRESPONDENT JOEL PARKES REFERS
TO p 124 "H.I." AND A NOTE "ANATOMY
OF ASSASSINATION" UNDER MY NAME. I
DIDN'T WRITE THAT - ??
I WROTE A GALEEN ARTICLE "AN INTRODUCTION
TO THE ASSASSINATION BUSINESS" SEPT 1975 -
WHAT IS YOUR p 124 REFERENCE? -

JP