

Memo to "Tiger" file

1/27/89

This memo is based on a Washington Post report from Moscow on an international conference there beginning today and on <sup>the</sup> a bobtailed version of the documents distributed there by Scott Armstrong, former Post reporter and founder and head of the Washington National Security Archive.

It confirms my analysis of the Cuba Missile Crisis, <sup>made</sup> in the middle of it - and on this I note that as of today some of our officials claim they still do not know what was in Khrushchev's mind - and the research completed for the planned book, "Tiger To Hide: the Untold Story of the Cuba Missile Crisis." "Cuba" is not a typo. I never referred to it as the Cuban crisis because Castro was in effect an innocent bystander. I began researching Tiger when I completed Whitewash, which <sup>was</sup> 2/15/65.

Background: The instant analysis to which I refer was laid out to M. Robert Rogers, then manager of the National Symphony, in his office in the Roosevelt Hotel on northwest 16 St. the second Wednesday of that crisis, toward the end of the afternoon. When Rogers edited Click I was their Washington correspondent. When Walter Reed Hospital sent me to the Military District of Washington personnel office at Fort Myer toward the end of about <sup>four</sup> months I spent there that office decided immediately, after examining my Form 20 and questioning me on my experience and background, to suggest to OSS that I be assigned to it. When I was told this (without naming OSS but leaving the intent without question) I told Rogers, then in the Presentation Branch and that branch requested that I be assigned to it. When I later was given a medical discharge and was offered a job by US News and World Report I opted instead to accept employment by the OSS Latin American Branch to which Rogers had been reassigned. (This was largely because of my investigative and investigative reporting experience and particularly because of a series of Nazi cartel exposes I'd done for Click.) When OSS was ended by Truman I was one of those transferred to State intelligence as an analyst. *Latin American Division.*

The Crisis: What I knew of the crisis, aside from my background and previous experience as an intelligence analyst, came entirely from the Washington Post and radio and TV contemporaneous accounts prior to the solution to that crisis. Thereafter I read all I could get, including in particular the books by former Kennedy administration officials and their magazine articles, including ancillary uses and articles written before the books by those authors, like Roger Hilsman (State intelligence) appeared. I annotated them and made lengthy notes some of which were pretty angry and conclusory. At one point I gave these materials to Howard Hoffman for his use in an undergraduate thesis. He returned some of these materials. Earlier I'd been researching a book on United States policy, tentatively titled "Aesop In the State Department." I gave that material to Dave Wrone, Univ. Wisconsin, Stevens Point. For Tiger I originally planned a more inclusive book on my several analyses I considered related. One was a contemporaneous analysis of the Tonkin Gulf incident. I believe Hoffman returned most of this. From what was publicly

available I made a completely accurate analysis that was confirmed many years later from official records and other sources. Another was on a crisis created by our capture of some Cuban fishing boats (This is what prompted Senator Barry Goldwater to in effect urge an invasion of Cuba.) I do not now recall whether other such analyses were included. Instead of proceeding with Tiger I made the decision, based on the doctrines of the Edward Epstein and Mark Lane assassination books to continue my work on that assassination.

When I saw Rogers that afternoon he asked me to give him my analysis of the ongoing crisis. I told him what is not included in the Michael Dobbs story in today's Post, that it was well enough known that the United States planned other acts like the Bay of Pigs; that Cuba and the USSR had "mutual assistance" pact such as the United States had with postage-stamp countries that could not assist the United States at all; that Cuba had invoked that pact and afterward had sent a delegation to Moscow (June and or July, 1962) headed by Raul Castro and including Che Guevara; that there was no way the USSR could protect Cuba against an American invasion; that if Khrushchev did not make an effort to live up to his agreement he would be ruined and the USSR's treaties would be regarded as worthless and it would lose face; that any USSR effort to protect Cuba in any way could lead to World War III; that Khrushchev put his missiles in Cuba to force the decision on JFK (or give him his own Tiger To Ride); and that the missiles were placed there only for this purpose, not to be used but in the end to be removed. I do not now recall whether it was then or later that I realized that I'd seen no evidence that any warhead was even in Cuba but as of today I recall no such evidence.

When I saw Rogers I had just come from the Washington Post, where I'd tried to interest its foreign editor whose name I recall as something like Thornbury, in my analysis. I was then quite surprised when he told me that they had come to more or less the same analysis and had abandoned it.

The Solution: Consistent with all earlier accounts I've seen in the papers, the Dobbs story misrepresents in stating that the crisis ended when Kennedy promised not to invade Cuba. Any consultation with newspapers morgues will make it clear that this was Khrushchev's first demand as a quid pro quo for withdrawing his missiles. It has delivered through then ABC correspondent John Scali who did not understand what he was involved in. Kennedy turned this down. Khrushchev then asked that our missiles be removed from Turkey. JFK was aghast to learn we still had them there because he had ordered their removal, as I now recall more than once. He/his advisors considered that doing this would be to appear to be knuckling under. When they did not respond promptly began disclosing what he telegraphed JFK while it was still being telegraphed. In the end it was Bobby Kennedy who reformulated the <sup>earlier</sup> Khrushchev demand. Instead of promising that we would not invade Cuba his formulation, agreed to by JFK, was that we would protect Cuba from invasion. This means by anybody.

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The Dobbs story has many deficiencies. Some may be attributed to editing, some to space limitations (I think the story was worth more space and better attention) and some omissions may be attributed, I think not unfairly, to the Post's continued support of the official line on that crisis.

There is no mention of the CIA, which was at the least involved in Mongoose, if it did not cook that scheme up. Lansdale's role at the time he wrote the memo cited is not even suggested. Was he at the National Security Council? CIA?

There is no reference to the Cuba/USSR pact, no one of the Cuban delegation and what must have preceded it, earlier discussion based on this pact.

Quote relevant but less likely to be included if there are space limitations are Kennedy's changed policies after this crisis and I think from the greater understanding it gave him. The limited test-ban agreement; cancelling a number of military projects, including the Blue Streak missile for England; his American University speech (6/63); his changed policy regarding adventures against Cuba and the raids on some adventurers.

The lead misleads by saying that the new documents include information not "previously established." The information was previously known. This, of course, covers the journalistic asses.

All the quotes refer to preventing a US invasion. There is no indication why that would be of sufficient concern to the USSR to risk US retaliation for the missiles in Cuba. It is true that preventing a US invasion was an aim but the required consequences of any US invasion are not even hinted at. (The pact.)

Our officialdom has always pretended, and still does from this story, that the real USSR purpose was to obtain a nuclear balance. This could be a subordinate purpose, if, for example, the US did not react. Nobody in his right mind in the USSR would have figured it would not. Balancing nuclear capabilities as an objective required that the missiles remain there. And warheads, of which I recall no indication any were in Cuba. If the missiles were to be removed then nuclear balance was not the USSR's objective.

The Continuing Danger: all quoted US officials claim not to have had the slightest idea what Khrushchev was up to. The story makes no reference to the possibility of launching World War III, but all accounts of our end of the crisis leave it without doubt that if Kennedy had listened to most of his closest advisers he would have taken military action and that meant World War III of a greatly reduced USSR influence in the world, something I believe it would not ~~accept~~ accept and what Khrushchev's statements and actions make clear he knew he was facing when he refused to back down. <sup>(There is, the continuing non-</sup>  
<sup>substantiated)</sup>  
sense, Dean Rusk's, that when eyeball to eyeball, they backed down. The world won but it is the US that did the backing down. It has not invaded Cuba, nobody else has, and we also removed those missiles from Turkey and elsewhere.)

I do not have a clear enough recollection now to be certain but by best recollection

of all the participants' accounts is that there never was any consideration of what the pact required of Khrushchev, why he went outside normal diplomatic channels via Scali or why he would take such steps he knew were certain to be detected before he could complete the project when he knew what the consequences could be.

(On detection, the US had always lied about when they were detected, as distinguished from claims to have seen them by Cubans. They were actually detected much earlier and the CIA and the military knew. In fact, the Colonel Wright who did detect them in U2 photos (lied about and represented as unclear) later got a decoration for it. Bearing on the dependability of the published ~~news~~ accounts, this is a mere footnote in Elie Abel's book on that crisis.)

McNamara states that if he were a Cuban he'd have believed that the US was planning to invade it. (Again, omitting reference to the USSR's treaty obligations is significant.) At the least he thus admits that what the US was planning could have lead to a major war and in context to World War III. Yet none of these people seem to have learned anything. Certainly our administrations have not because their covert actions ~~will~~ have this capability and they take precedence over almost anything else.

I can't recall any one that succeeded in any real accomplishment and we and the world were better off when they failed. Any dispassionate evaluation of our many overseas adventures inevitably shows this to be true, with no significant exception I can recall. While they have bled other countries, their cost to us is beyond calculation and we are far from where that can be estimated.

Even a misreading of US intentions could have had the same consequences, according to McNamara again: *war*.

Now if I could make an instant and accurate analysis based only on what I saw of what was public, what does this say about the kind of leadership in government, of the kind of advice the President got - of incompetence where competence was greatest, in the Kennedy brain trust - and of the potential consequences of our continuing covert adventures all seeming to be in pursuit of theories rather than clear and present dangers.

This confirmation tell us how close the world was to nuclear annihilation and how close it can again be as a result of US covert adventures.

The edition of the Post we get is the earliest. That of the N.Y. Times that I got later has more from the documents but adds nothing significant and has the same omissions of background, history.

# Document Details '62 Plans on Cuba

## U.S. Weighed Military Move to Oust Castro

1127189  
By Michael Dobbs  
Washington Post Foreign Service

MOSCOW, Jan. 26—New evidence has emerged on the eve of an unprecedented international conference on the Cuban missile crisis suggesting that the Kennedy administration was more deeply involved in planning the overthrow of Fidel Castro's rule in 1962 than previously established.

One U.S. document released under the Freedom of Information Act set October 1962 as the target date for Castro's overthrow following a U.S.-supported insurrection on the island. The document, which was circulated to only 12 persons, including president Kennedy, was dated Feb. 20, 1962.

The plans outlined in the document included military and sabotage support for anti-Castro guerrillas. Not all were implemented. The subversion plan, code-named Operation Mongoose, was abandoned after the two superpowers stepped back from a nuclear confrontation in October 1962.

The Soviet leader at the time, Nikita Khrushchev, insisted in his memoirs that his primary aim in deploying missiles in Cuba was to forestall a successful U.S. invasion of the island following the Bay of Pigs fiasco the year before. U.S. specialists have played down this aspect of the crisis, placing more emphasis on other motivations, such as redressing an unfavorable nuclear balance.

The new documents, which were obtained by the Washington-based National Security Archive, will be discussed by Soviet, Cuban and American ex-officials and academics during a conference that opens here Friday. It is the first opportunity for high-ranking participants from all three sides to discuss their roles retrospectively.

Participants include Soviet ex-foreign minister Andrei Gromyko and ambassador to the United States Anatoly Dobrynin and former U.S. defense secretary Robert S. McNamara and national security adviser McGeorge Bundy. The Cuban side will be led by Jorge Risque, a member of the ruling Politburo and close aide to Castro.

The documents released on the eve of the conference raise a number of questions about the background to the missile crisis, including whether Soviet and Cuban agents were able to penetrate Operation Mongoose. In reminiscences published here recently, Soviet ex-ambassador to Cuba Alexander Alexeev said Khrushchev had "precise data" on American plans

for armed intervention against Castro and regarded the installation of missiles as an effective deterrent.

"It is a highly interesting coincidence," said Scott Armstrong, director of the National Security Archive and one of the American participants. "If the Soviets knew that the target date for Castro's overthrow was October, that might explain why they were racing to do something by then."

Some details about Operation Mongoose emerged in 1974 following a Senate investigation into alleged assassination plots against foreign leaders. But the documents circulating here include a discussion of the possibility of direct U.S. military intervention and a timetable for overthrowing Castro.

The Feb. 20 document signed by Brig. Gen. Edward Lanadale, who drafted the plans, called for "an early decision" on "the use of open U.S. force to aid the Cuban people in winning their liberty." It said that such a commitment was necessary "prior to deep involvement of the Cubans in this program."

A document dated March 14 said the United States "will make maximum use of indigenous resources, internal and external, but recognizes that final success will require decisive U.S. military intervention." It is unclear whether this document was submitted to president Kennedy for approval.

McNamara, who was listed as one of 12 recipients of the Feb. 20 document, repeated today earlier assertions that the Kennedy administration had "absolutely no intention" of launching a military operation to overthrow Castro prior to the missile crisis. He added, however, that it was quite possible that the Cubans and Soviets misinterpreted the signals coming out of Washington.

"If I was a Cuban and read the evidence of covert American action against their government, I would be quite ready to believe that the U.S. intended to mount an invasion," he said.

Senior Cuban officials reportedly have told American participants in the conference that they knew about Operation Mongoose from an early stage, thanks to a well-placed informant. It is unclear, however, whether they were aware that October 1962 had been mentioned as a target date for Castro's overthrow.

According to Soviet accounts of the crisis, Khrushchev first discussed the possibility of installing missiles in Cuba at the end of April 1962. In an article published in the

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CUBA, From A14

Soviet magazine Echo of the Planet last year, Alexeev said that the final decision was taken at a meeting of the ruling Politburo in early May.

Alexeev insisted that the decision to deploy the missiles was taken "with a single aim—to prevent an armed invasion which was being prepared by aggressive circles in the United States." Other Soviets, including Khrushchev's speechwriter, Fyodor Burlatsky, have said that redressing the strategic balance was also an important factor in the Soviet leader's mind.

In a conference devoted to the Cuban missile crisis in Florida in March 1987, several aides to Kennedy said they had no idea why Khrushchev installed the missiles.

Asked to speculate about Soviet motives, former White House special counsel Theodore Sorensen said: "The only answer I have is, 'I don't know now, and I didn't know then.' None of us knew. We could only speculate about what Khrushchev was up to."

McNamara agreed. "I don't know why the Soviets did what they did. Ted's right," he said, according to a transcript of the conference published in the book "On the Brink" earlier this month.

In a conference on the Cuban missile crisis at Harvard University in October 1987, which included some lower-level Soviet participants, Bundy argued that covert action against Castro was really a "psychological" substitute for "in-action." This exchange then followed:

"McNamara: Let me say that we

had no plan to invade Cuba, and I would have opposed the idea strongly if it ever came up.

Sorensen: Well, that's the wrong word.

McNamara: Okay, we had no intent.

Georgy Shakhnazarov [foreign policy adviser to Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev]: But there were subversive actions.

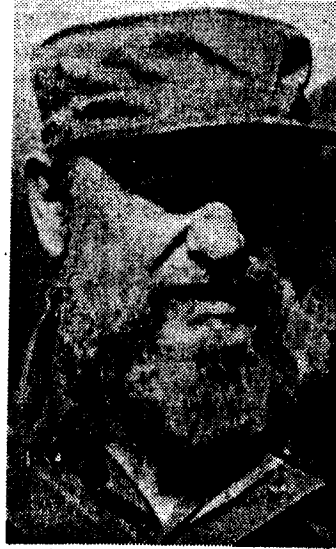
McNamara: That's my point. We thought those covert actions were terribly ineffective, and you thought they were ominous. We saw them very differently."

The Feb. 20 document outlined a six-phase plan of action against Castro to begin in March 1962 and culminate in "open revolt and overthrow of the Communist regime" in October. It said the operational plan for "clandestine U.S. support of a Cuban movement inside Cuba to overthrow the Communist regime is within policy limits set by the president" in a November 1961 memorandum.

"Some of the plan was implemented," said Ray Garthoff, a former State Department specialist on the Soviet Union who is taking part in the conference. "There was a covert operations policy. We did send sabotage units into the country. Most of the effort in the spring and summer of '62 involved getting insurgency units into place."

According to a chronology prepared by the National Security Archive, Operation Mongoose activities against Cuba continued until Nov. 8. The crisis was defused after Kennedy gave Khrushchev an undertaking not to invade Cuba in return for removal of the Soviet missiles.

The debate over Khrushchev's



FIDEL CASTRO

... target of Operation Mongoose

motivation in installing the missiles has implications for the way historians assess the outcome of the crisis.

U.S. officials have long presented Khrushchev's retreat on the missiles as proof that Kennedy won an eyeball-to-eyeball confrontation with the mercurial Kremlin chief. The Soviets argue that the crisis marked the definitive failure of U.S. attempts to overthrow Castro.

"We wanted to keep the Americans from invading Cuba and, to that end, we wanted to make them think twice by confronting them with our missiles. This goal we achieved—but not without undergoing a period of perilous tension," Khrushchev wrote in what has now become the standard Kremlin version.

# Papers Show 1962 U.S. Plan Against Castro

1/27/86  
By BILL KELLER

Special to The New York Times

MOSCOW, Jan. 26 — More than a year after an American-backed invasion of Cuba failed at the Bay of Pigs in April 1961, the United States actively pursued another clandestine plan to overthrow Fidel Castro, according to newly declassified American documents made available here today.

But some Americans who took part in the events said President Kennedy never took the plan to overthrow Mr. Castro as seriously as the documents suggest.

The documents include an assessment by Gen. Maxwell D. Taylor, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, that the plan, which envisioned an American-spawned Cuban revolt in October 1962, "will require decisive military intervention" by the United States.

The documents were made public in Moscow on the eve of a conference that will bring together for the first time top-level Soviet, American and Cuban officials from that period to review memories of the Cuban missile crisis.

Some Soviet officials — including Nikita S. Khrushchev, the Soviet leader at the time — have maintained that the reason Moscow deployed nuclear missiles in Cuba, thus provoking the Soviet-American crisis in October 1962, was a strong fear that the Americans intended to invade the island.

## Plans for 'Operation Mongoose'

The documents, made public as a result of a lawsuit by the National Security Archive, a Washington-based research center, include plans and guidelines for "Operation Mongoose," an anti-Castro campaign first disclosed in a 1975-76 Senate investigation.

But while the Senate investigation described the operation as primarily a campaign of harassment and sabotage, the new documents show that at least in the minds of some senior officials, the purpose was more ambitious.

One document, a Feb. 20, 1962, memorandum by Brig. Gen. Edward Lansdale, the director of operations for Mongoose, said the goal was to "help the people of Cuba overthrow the Communist regime from within Cuba and institute a new government with which the United States can live in peace."

The memorandum said this goal was "within policy limits already approved by the President," and it set October of that year as the time for "open revolt."

"A vital decision, still to be made, is on the open use of U.S. force to aid the Cuban people in winning their liberty," General Lansdale wrote.

The other newly issued document, written by General Taylor three weeks later, was titled "Guidelines for Operation Mongoose." It said: "In undertaking to cause the overthrow of the target Government, the U.S. will make maximum use of indigenous resources, internal and external, but recognizes that final success will require decisive U.S. military intervention."

Raymond L. Garthoff, who was a State Department official handling Soviet military and political affairs in the Kennedy Administration, said tonight that he considered the documents "remarkable" but doubted that President Kennedy intended to carry the operation to the point of an overthrow.

"There was a good deal more doubt than these documents convey about the chance of Mongoose stimulating a revolt of a kind that would then pose a question of direct military intervention," Mr. Garthoff said.

Top officials of the Kennedy Administration, like Defense Secretary Robert S. McNamara and McGeorge Bundy, the national security adviser, have said the President viewed Mongoose as a contingency plan, and had no serious intent of overthrowing Mr. Castro. But they have also acknowledged that the Soviets, who would have known at least the outlines of Mongoose through their intelligence operations, might have taken the threat more seriously.

President Kennedy's directive creating the program in November 1961 has never been made public. Mongoose was abolished in January 1963.

Mr. Scott Armstrong  
National Security Archives  
1755 Mass. Ave., NW, 5th floor  
Washington, D.C. 20036

7627 Old Receiver Road  
Frederick, Md. 21701  
1/27/89

Dear Mr. Armstrong,

You have done a significant public service and filled in parts of what might easily have been one of the most disasterous tragedies in man's history in getting and disclosing the Mongoose documents. Please add my thanks and appreciation to the many others you should have received.

As you can see from the enclosed hasty memo to files I wrote after reading the Michael Dobbs story in today's Wx Post, I once planned and researched a book on what I refer to as the Cuba Missile Crisis. I therefore have a greater interest in those documents and would very much appreciate a set that I would later deposit with all my records in local Hood College, where they will be a permanent public archive. I am almost 76, in impaired health and of limited mobility so I cannot get to your office to read them. I've not been able to drive to Washington for more than a decade.

If you know anyone planning to write on this subject what I have is available. It may not all be easy to locate because I've had several students, not all dependable, working on my files since my first thrombosis in 1975. Some may grit their teeth at my unscholarly anger but I believe my notes, typed but never read, are accurate.

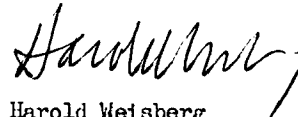
As you may know, most of my work has been on the political <sup>real</sup> assassinations. No whodunits. These records, particularly the third of a million pages I got under FOIA, are in good order and condition.

After reading the Post's and then the Times' stories I wondered if anyone has done a book that would suit a title like Sowing the Wind: and how it was reaped by U.S. covert and overt schemes. Something like Kwitny's Endless Enemies in approach and with an estimate of their costs and consequences.

If you get anything relating to the crisis in English from the USSR I'd certainly like to be able to read it, too. If only they would release the Khrushchev-JFK letters!

Again thanks and

best wishes,



Harold Weisberg