
Wrone, David

From: ZaidMS@aol.com
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To: ZaidMS@aol.com
Subject: Kennedy Wanted More Cuba Sabotage

Kennedy Wanted More Cuba Sabotage

By DAVID HO

.c The Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) - President Kennedy sought to expand sabotage against Cuba in the days leading up to the Cuban missile crisis, more than 400 pages of newly declassified documents reveal.

A secretive advisory group held a meeting on Oct. 4, 1962, to discuss the ongoing work of Operation Mongoose, a once secret plan to cause disruptions in Cuba, including blowing up power stations and planting U.S. intelligence infiltrators. Attorney General Robert Kennedy, who was tapped by his brother to oversee Mongoose, attended.

"The attorney general informed the group that higher authority was concerned about the progress on the Mongoose program and felt that more priority should be given to trying to mount sabotage operations," minutes from the meeting said.

From other reports, it is understood that "higher authority" refers to President Kennedy, said Anna Nelson, a historian at American University and a member of the JFK Assassination Records Review Board, which requested release of the documents.

The records say that there was some discussion of mining Cuban waters with devices "appearing to be homemade and laid by small aircraft operated by Cubans."

Nelson said that plan didn't become reality.

"Either they never did it or we never knew about it," she said.

The documents now available at the National Archives in College Park, Md., provide a glimpse inside the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board, a group of civilian experts gathered as an independent source of advice on intelligence matters. First formed in 1956, the group's impact has varied among administrations.

After the failed U.S.-backed Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba in April 1961, Kennedy sought improved intelligence gathering and formed his version of the advisory group. His executive order directed the board to review intelligence work, including "highly sensitive covert operations relating to political action, propaganda, economic warfare, sabotage, escape and evasion, subversion against hostile states."

The document adds that "these covert operations are to be conducted in such manner that, if uncovered, the U.S. government can plausibly disclaim responsibility for them."

Among those on the board were Clark Clifford, who was chairman of the board for most of the Kennedy years and later became Lyndon Johnson's defense

secretary during the Vietnam War; retired Gen. James "Jimmy" Doolittle, who led the first bombing raid on Tokyo during World War II; and William Baker, head of research at Bell Laboratories.

Following the missile crisis, the board conducted a review of intelligence gathering before the crisis and found many flaws in what was popularly seen as a success for the United States.

During a meeting on Dec. 6, 1962, Clifford said the CIA and top presidential advisers didn't propose or conduct enough surveillance flights over Cuba.

"The feeling in responsible parts of government seems to be that things turned out all right, so why bother the president," the records cite Clifford as saying. "If the president thinks a good intelligence operation took place, this could have dangerous implications."

Nelson said that requests by the assassination records board, which disbanded in 1998, to have the material declassified were initially rejected, but on January 19, President Clinton approved the release.

Steven Tilley, who runs the National Archives collection of Kennedy assassination records, said the documents don't specifically concern the assassination, but fall under a broad definition of related issues, such as conspiracy allegations and assertions that Cuba was involved.

The records only mention the Kennedy assassination itself on Nov. 22, 1963, the day the president was killed. The advisers expressed their sorrow and decided to hold off on their latest recommendations until after Lyndon Johnson took over as president.

In a summary of the advisory board's work presented to Johnson, the group said Kennedy approved of 125 of its 170 recommendations, most of which concerned overhauling the CIA and the Defense Department's intelligence programs. The recommendations ranged from launching more satellites to spy on Soviet missiles to finding a new name for the CIA.

President Bush will have his own version of the advisory board, but hasn't yet appointed any members, White House spokesman Mary Ellen Countryman said Wednesday.

On the Net:

National Archives JFK Collection: <http://www.nara.gov/research/jfk/index.html>

President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board:
<http://www.whitehouse.gov/pfiab/index.html>

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