

News day
4/30/96

Kennedy Rejected

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Miami — Stung by the failed Bay of Pigs invasion, President John F. Kennedy refused an offer from revolutionary leader Che Guevara to broker a peace agreement between the United States and Cuba, newly released documents show.

The offer was detailed in a memorandum written by a top White House adviser who described a remarkable encounter with Ernesto (Che) Guevara, the Argentine-born insurgent who had become the second most powerful man in Cuba after President Fidel Castro.

The Miami Herald reported yesterday that Richard Goodwin, Kennedy's assistant special counsel, was approached by Guevara at a cocktail party in Uru-

guay on Aug. 17, 1961, four months after the failed U.S.-backed invasion of Cuba.

Guevara told Goodwin that the Castro government was prepared to forgo an alliance with the Soviet bloc, pay for confiscated American properties in trade and curb Cuban support for leftist insurgents in other countries. In return, the United States would cease hostile actions.

"He thought we should put forth [a practical formula] because we had public opinion to worry about, whereas he could accept anything without worrying about public opinion," Goodwin wrote.

The memo is among Eisenhower and Kennedy administration documents declassified last week.

Cuban Peace Bid

Kennedy took Goodwin's advice to turn up the heat on Cuba. In November, 1961, Kennedy authorized Operation Mongoose, a secret plan to cause disruptions on the island, including blowing up power stations and planting U.S. intelligence infiltrators.

"My idea is to stir things up on the island with espionage, sabotage, general disorder, run and operated by the Cubans themselves . . ." wrote Attorney General Robert Kennedy, who was tapped by his brother to oversee Mongoose.

Other notes tell of efforts to assassinate Castro. A State Department note says the CIA "twice . . . supplied lethal pills . . . in a plot to assassinate Fidel Castro" in 1961 and 1962.