

Tactics on Cuba in '62

JFK's brass had plans to goad Castro to war

By Michael Dorman

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President John F. Kennedy's military leaders drew up plans in 1962 to try to lure Cuban President Fidel Castro into an "overt hostile reaction" that would provoke a war, long-secret documents revealed yesterday. Conspiracy theorists have contended for years that Castro ordered Kennedy's 1963 assassination because of the U.S. government's hostility to the Cuban regime.

Documents released by the Assassination Records Review Board, the federal agency that screens and releases secret material on the Kennedy assassination, disclosed that the Joint Chiefs of Staff approved numerous proposals for getting rid of Castro, none of which were implemented.

One proposal said: "Gain the necessary favorable prepositioned U.S. military posture to counter a possible Cuban reaction. Then lure or provoke Castro, or an uncontrollable subordinate, into an overt hostile reaction against the United States; a reaction which would in turn create the justification for the U.S. to not only retaliate but destroy Castro with speed, force and determination."

An alternative plan called for provoking a war between Cuba and a Latin-American nation and then "using the obligation to support an ally to overthrow Castro." That plan called for employing such means as a "contrived Cuban" attack on a Latin country, apparently not carried out by Cubans at all.

Another of the schemes — none of which came to fruition — involved a "proposal for the creation of an imaginary Cuban leader."

The plan, intended as a piece of psychological warfare, suggested using propaganda and other means to delude Castro into believing he had a rival for power. "An imaginary name of a resistance leader could be developed — 'The Little Bull,' 'The Little Worm,' 'The Friendly Worm,' 'The Fighting Friend,' 'The Tough Peasant,'" that proposal said. "After a time, all unex-



Cuban leader Fidel Castro in 1960 and President John F. Kennedy

plained incidents and actions for which credit has not been seized by some exile group would automatically be ascribed to our imaginary friend." And, presumably, all of that would somehow debilitate Castro.

Still another scheme called for aggressive moves designed to scare Castro into calling up his national guard at the height of the sugar harvest — leaving few workers to tend the fields and bringing economic upheaval to Cuba.

A memo sent by Army Brig. Gen. William H. Craig to the office of Defense Secretary Robert McNamara said U.S. provocations could lure Castro into taking action against the United States. "The U.S. must be prepared to go full tilt against Cuba," he wrote. The proposed provocations included subversion and sabotage by intelligence agents in Cuba, U.S. shows of military strength during maneuvers in the Caribbean, landing a battalion of Marines at the U.S. Naval Base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, and "heckler flights with high performance aircraft moving toward Cuba at high altitudes, then diving to low altitudes about 30 miles off the Cuban coast and returning to base."

A Defense Department spokesman said yesterday it is common for military officials to prepare complex plans that are never put into operation.

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