

Maheu Tells of Poison Plot

MAYHELL, From A1

1954, Maheu said Edwards told him that the CIA's poison capsules could have been administered both to Castro and to either his brother, Raul, or fellow revolutionary, Che Guevara, in one sitting. However, Maheu said, "the 'Go' signal had not been received."

Maheu met with reporters while the committee itself decided in closed session to "invite" former President Nixon to testify on covert CIA operations in Chile and perhaps other matters which are currently under investigation.

Committee Chairman Frank Church (D-Idaho) and Vice Chairman John G. Tower (R-Tex.) said Nixon's lawyers would be contacted shortly in an effort to work out satisfactory arrangements.

As Vice President in the Eisenhower administration, Nixon was the so-called "action officer" at the White House for early Bay of Pigs invasion planning, but Maheu said he had no knowledge that Nixon might have been aware of any companion assassination scheme.

Maheu said his role as middleman began sometime before the 1960 presidential elections when his CIA "project officer," James O'Connell, asked him to enlist Roselli "to help in a project for removing Mr. Castro from the scene."

Asked to be more precise, Maheu said, "My understanding was that when the 'Go' signal was received, if it was received, Mr. Castro would be, yes, killed."

He added that he had met Roselli in Las Vegas in the 1950s and that O'Connell, in turn, had met the underworld figure once at a party at Maheu's Washington home. Maheu ran a private management consultant and private detective firm here at the time and had been on a \$500 a month retainer with the CIA for various odd jobs during the '50s. He said one of the assignments involved investigating a foreign student "who

they suspected of being a spy."

Maheu said Roselli was at first "very reluctant" but finally agreed to take part in the assassination effort when told that the government considered Castro's death "a necessary ingredient to effecting a successful invasion."

The former FBI agent said he never questioned either O'Connell or Edwards about their authority to initiate such a scheme and described himself as having felt "very much like the pilot who delivered the bomb in Hiroshima."

Maheu said he, Roselli and O'Connell went to Miami Beach first with Giancana, who was reputedly Roselli's Mafia boss, joining them later. Giancana, who once had gambling and other interests in Cuba, was supposed to have contacts who were "capable of flying in and out of Cuba" at the time, Maheu recalled.

At one point in the fall of 1960, however, Maheu said, Giancana started getting anxious to leave for Las Vegas because of reports that his longtime escort, singer Phyllis McGuire, was becoming involved with comedian Dan Rowan.

Just as anxious to keep Giancana in Miami, Maheu said he hired private detectives to keep Rowan under surveillance and the CIA paid for the arrangement.

"Mr. O'Connell and I were concerned that Giancana would leave the area at what we considered a very strategic time," Maheu said.

Sometime early in 1961, Maheu recalled, the CIA's O'Connell showed him the poison capsules that were to be used against Castro. He said they were stuffed in a white envelope that O'Connell had while they were staying at the Fontainebleu Hotel.

Roselli has told the Senate committee that the poison was turned over to him in Maheu's presence, but Maheu said he didn't recall that. He also said he "phased out" of the operation shortly after the Bay of

Pigs fiasco and had no knowledge of the other assassination plans Roselli reportedly helped devise after that.