

WXPost (A) (D)

Plan to Slay Castro

MAY 31 1975

Tied to JFK Orders

By David C. Martin
Associated Press

Retired Maj. Gen. Edward G. Lansdale said yesterday that, acting on orders from President Kennedy delivered through an intermediary, he developed plans for removing Cuban Premier Fidel Castro by any means, including assassination.

"I just wanted to see if the United States had any such capabilities," said the onetime Air Force officer and expert on counterinsurgency tactics. In a telephone interview, Lansdale stressed that his planning effort included other means, such as a coup, for removing Castro from power.

Asked if any attempts against Castro's life were made as a result of his project, Lansdale said, "Certainly nothing I ever heard about. Nothing was ever initiated on it as far as I know." However, a source familiar with the tentative findings of the Rockefeller commission on the Central Intelligence Agency said he had been told some subsequent assassination efforts were undertaken.

Although Lansdale did not use the word "assassination," he twice replied in the affirmative to



EDWARD G. LANSDALE
... cites "highest authority"

the specific question of whether assassination was one of the means he considered.

"I was working for the highest authority in the land," Lansdale said of his project. Asked to be more

See CASTRO, A4, Col. 6

CASTRO, From A1

specific, Lansdale replied, "It was the President."

Lansdale said he did not deal directly with President Kennedy on the project but worked through an intermediary. Asked if the intermediary was McGeorge Bundy, then President Kennedy's assistant for national security affairs, Lansdale replied, "No, it was someone much more intimate."

However, he refused to provide the intermediary's name for the record.

According to Lansdale, he was assigned to the project in 1962 when the United States first received intelligence that Castro was prepared to install Soviet-made nuclear missiles in Cuba. "It was something that was very closely held then and still is," Lansdale said.

Last week, the Associated Press identified Lansdale as the author of an August, 1962, memo, now in the possession of the Rockefeller commission, which authoritative sources said provided the CIA with authority to develop contingency plans for the assassination of Castro. Lansdale maintained, as he had last week, that he did not remember the memo, but he acknowledged that it would not have been "incompatible" with his assigned task.

"I didn't know what all the potentials were," Lansdale said, "the feasibilities, the practicalities of doing something like that." In response to a question, Lansdale confirmed that the phrase "something like that" included the possibility of assassination.

In previous interviews, Lansdale had declined to discuss his role in the anti-Cuban operations, which informed sources have said were directed by a special cabinet-level group headed

by then Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy, the President's brother, and titled Operation Mongoose.

Other members of the group included Bundy, CIA Director John A. McCone, Defense Secretary Robert S. McNamara and Secretary of State Dean Rusk. The Rockefeller commission reportedly has obtained the minutes of an Aug. 10, 1962, meeting of this group, whose official title was Special Group Augmented. The minutes indicate that the subject of assassination was discussed but show that Robert Kennedy was not present, sources have told the AP.

The Lansdale memo reportedly was written two days after that meeting.

Although Lansdale is officially listed as an assistant to the Secretary of Defense in August, 1962, McNamara objected to the description of Lansdale as McNamara assistant. "I had no personal knowledge of what he was doing," McNamara said.

Asked to clarify whom he was working for in August, 1962, Lansdale responded, "On that project I was work-

ing for the highest authority in the land."

The source familiar with the tentative findings of the Rockefeller commission, which is investigating allegations of CIA involvement in assassination, said that "the CIA end of the Mongoose operation" was handled by William K. Harvey.

"I'm told he did two or three things that were designed to assassinate Castro," the informed source said. Harvey's alleged assassination attempts ended sometime in 1963, this source said, when he was transferred to the CIA station in Rome.

Harvey, who now lives in Indianapolis, Ind., has repeatedly declined comment on his alleged involvement in assassinations.

For nearly 20 years, Lansdale served as a top government adviser on how to combat Communist insurgency movements in the Philippines and South Vietnam. Working with the late President Ramon Magsaysay of the Philippines, Lansdale received credit for playing a key role in defeat of a Communists-led rebellion.