

Ford Won't Issue
CIA Report Now

Plotting On Castro Confirmed

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Former Central Intelligence Agency Director John A. McCone confirmed yesterday that the CIA planned and undertook some steps to assassinate Cuban Premier Fidel Castro in the early 1960s.

McCone said all of the schemes "were aborted" and that the principal effort was stopped soon after the Bay of Pigs invasion in April, 1961.

He said he was not told of the attempts on Castro's life even after he became head of the CIA seven months later.

Speaking with reporters after three hours of closed-door testimony before the Senate intelligence operations committee, McCone said he became aware of the efforts only in the last few months upon reviewing secret CIA files.

The committee chairman, Sen. Frank Church (D-Idaho), added that Castro was not the only target of CIA assassination schemes.

The committee is investigating reports and allegations of indirect CIA involvement in the assassinations of dictator Rafael Trujillo of the Dominican Republic in 1961 and of South Vietnamese President Ngo Dinh Diem in 1963.

The CIA has also voiced concern over charges that it may have been connected with the death of Congolese leader Patrice Lumumba who was killed in January of 1961.

In an interview on the CBS Morning News, Church said that "no actual assassination took place with which the CIA was directly involved," but he said the agency did make some actual attempts at assassination and indicated that it may have been indirectly tied to others that were successful.

McCone said he was questioned yesterday not only about Castro, but also about "the South Vietnam situation" in 1963 when Diem was murdered.

He indicated that he had not been able to supply many details about Diem because "I did not expect it to come up" and had not reviewed his notes on that.

Now a Los Angeles business executive, McCone said it is still unclear to him, and apparently to the Senate committee, who gave the orders for the plans to kill Castro.

But he said they were apparently handed down "both at the close of the Eisenhower administration and the early part of the Kennedy administration" in late 1960 and early 1961.

"The authority under which these activities were carried on was authority granted long before my time," said McCone, who was sworn in as CIA director on Nov. 29, 1961. "I was totally unaware of any attempts on Castro."

However, he said that in reviewing various files within the last few months, "I have been aware of certain actions which were either planned or some actually undertaken, all of which are of a minor nature."

McCone said the chain of command for the assassination schemes against Castro was still murky "because the people involved are dead," including Presidents Eisenhower

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and Kennedy, former Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy, former CIA director Allen W. Dulles, and former Secretaries of State John Foster Dulles and Christian Herter.

Castro's assassination, or "liquidation or disposal, I've forgotten the exact words," McCone said, was raised again at a high-level meeting on Aug. 10, 1962, in light of reports that Soviet-made nuclear missiles were about to be installed in Cuba.

But, McCone said, "it was disposed of immediately at my insistence . . . (It was) quite outside the moral standards of the United States, the CIA and my own standards."

McCone did not say who broached the idea. Others at the meeting with him were Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara, Secretary of State Dean Rusk, and McGeorge Bundy, President Kennedy's adviser on national security affairs. A fifth member of the special high-level group, Attorney General Kennedy, was absent.

Two days after the meeting, Maj. Gen. Edward G. Lansdale has said, he drafted contingency plans for dealing with Castro that "may" have in-

cluded Castro's assassination despite the decision at the meeting. Lansdale has indicated that the orders to draw up the plans came from Robert Kennedy, although Lansdale has denied being told explicitly to set down the Cuban premier's murder as an option.

McCone described the memo as "erroneous" and said it was quickly withdrawn.

The first proposals and plans to kill Castro were apparently drawn up in the closing days of the Eisenhower administration and, according to a former Defense Department intelligence officer, occasioned the dispatch of a two-man assassination team to Havana in late 1959 or early 1960. Watergate burglar E. Howard Hunt Jr., a former CIA officer, said he also proposed Castro's assassination in the spring of 1960 and suggested it be carried out "before or coincident with" the proposed Bay of Pigs invasion.

Hunt has said his recommendations were read by Richard Bissell, CIA deputy director in charge of clandestine operations, and his top assistant, Tracy Barnes, who reportedly told Hunt that the assassination proposal was "in the hands of a special group."