

Castro Accuses CIA of Repeated Plots

Maheu Details Role

By George Lardner Jr.
Washington Post Staff Writer

A former aide to billionaire Howard Hughes publicly acknowledged yesterday that he served as middleman in a CIA-Mafia plot to poison Cuban Premier Fidel Castro.

Robert Maheu, the former Hughes aide, said the scheme was concocted as part of the 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion plan, but was never carried out because it was "always subject to a 'Go' signal, which, to my knowledge, never came."

Speaking with reporters after completing testimony for the Senate intelligence committee, Maheu said he enlisted Johnny Roselli, an old friend and reputed Mafia figure, in 1960 for the assassination scheme at the specific request of the Central Intelligence Agency.

Maheu said he spent months after that in Miami Beach with Roselli and Mafia boss Sam Giancan, in an effort to make sure nothing went awry.

"Someone had to be there to hold their hands," Maheu said. "We wanted to be sure that they did not move away from there."

Although Maheu said the poisoning was never attempted, he told reporters that he later learned from one CIA official, the late Col. Sheffield Edwards, that it could have been carried out before the mid-April invasion at the Bay of Pigs.

A former FBI agent who had done various assignments for the CIA since

See MAHEU, A12, Col. 1



By James K. W. Atherton—The Washington Post
Maheu: The 'Go' signal never came.

McGovern Gets Data

By George Lardner Jr.
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Cuban Premier Fidel Castro has charged, in a report submitted yesterday to Senate investigators, that the Central Intelligence Agency was involved in repeated plots to kill him and other Cuban leaders from 1960 to 1971.

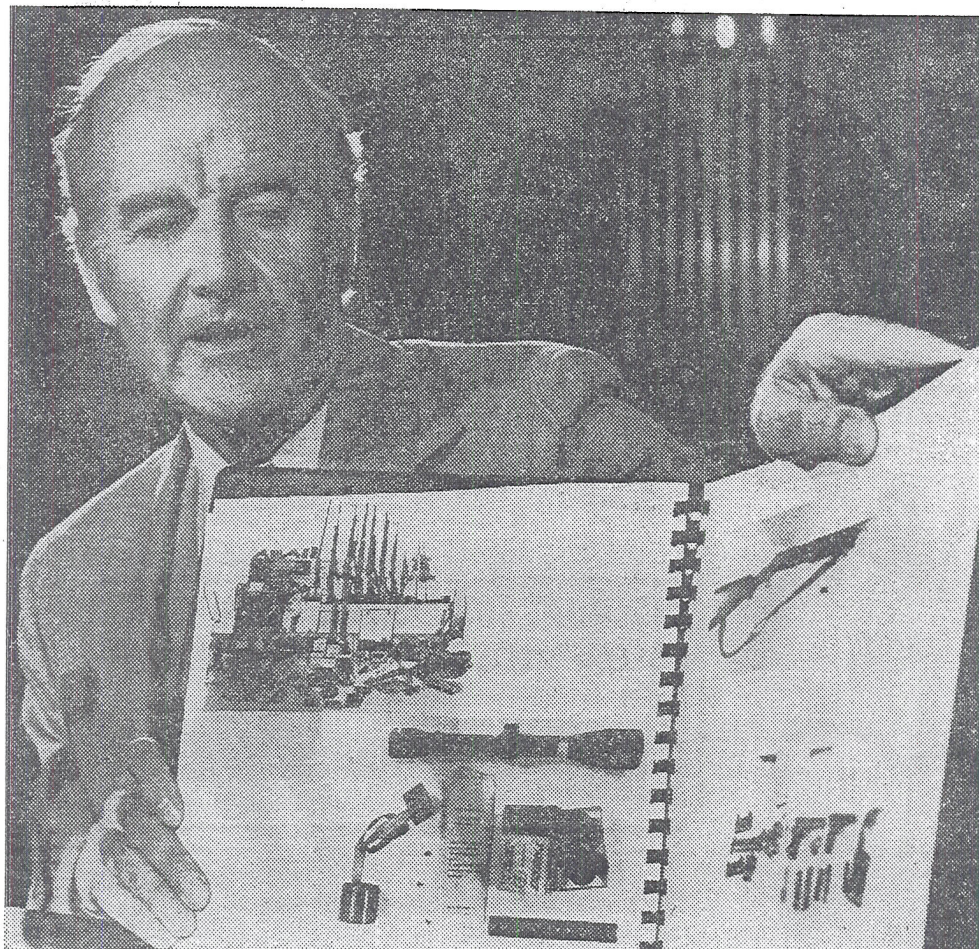
The allegations were set down in varying degrees of detail in an 86-page document delivered by the Cuban government to Sen. George McGovern (D-S.D.), who had visited Cuba in May. McGovern made public a summary of the charges and submitted the full report to the Senate intelligence committee headed by Sen. Frank Church (D-Idaho).

McGovern told reporters he has no way of assessing the claims, but said he felt they warranted further investigation. He said the charges of CIA involvement were "apparently based on confessions and on circumstantial evidence" such as accompanying photographs of weapons that were seized and mug shots of individuals who had been arrested.

The Castro report listed 24 episodes, some attributed without elaboration to groups "with CIA connections and contacts," and others explicitly naming "CIA agents" allegedly involved in assassination efforts.

On several occasions, the Cubans charged that the U.S. Guantanamo

See MCGOVERN, A12, Col. 1



By James K. W. Atherton—The Washington Post

Senator McGovern displays pictures of weapons allegedly used in plots against Castro.

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.

Castro Alleges Plots by CIA

McGOVERN, From A1

Naval Base served as a haven for anti-Castro groups and as a supply point for weapons that were to be used.

One of the most elaborate of the alleged plots was called "Plan Z," which the Castro government described as a scheme concocted in early 1962 "to kill Foreign Minister Raul Roa and then attack other Cuban leaders who would attend the burial."

The report charged that the plot began with the organization of a group called "Union de Unidades Revolucionarias" by Jorge Luis Cuervo Calvo who was working under "CIA instructions through Guantanamo."

According to McGovern's summary, which an aide said closely followed the text of the report, "a meeting was held to plan an uprising and discuss arrangements which had been made to receive equipment through Guantanamo. CIA was pressing both attempts against Castro and staged acts of aggression against Guantanamo."

Cuervo, the document continued, "outlined 'Plan Z,' apparently at the meeting. 'The authors' of the scheme were said to include one Julio Hernandez Rojo whom the report listed as 'a CIA agent infiltrated into Cuba.' The weapons reportedly ranged from a double-barreled shotgun, explosives and grenades to 'demolition timing devices, one labeled 'Block Demolition, M5 A1.'"

As with most of its other allegations, the report did not indicate how far the plot got, how it was discovered, or whether any shots were actually fired.

The Cuban government re-

port, however, charged that the CIA participated in a plot to kill Castro as late as 1971 during a visit to Chile.

There, the document charged, an alleged assassin named Jesus Dominguez Benitez, known as "the Islander," was supposed to kill Castro using a gun concealed in a television camera. He was said to have obtained Venezuelan press credentials from Cuban exiles in Venezuela before the plan was abandoned. "Those involved in the plot," the report stated, "feared for their lives because the plan did not insure their escape."

Dominguez, the Cubans charged, had been arrested by the FBI in 1968 for promoting terrorist activities in the United States and was arrested again in 1970 by U.S. authorities at Guantanamo where he had sought refuge following an unsuccessful attempt to infiltrate Cuba.

"Nonetheless," the report asserted, "he was free in 1971 to participate with the CIA, Chilean fascists and Cuban counterrevolutionaries in a scheme to assassinate Castro . . ."

Several of the other alleged plots were set down with somewhat less precision, ranging from a plan "to dynamite sewage pipes under the presidential palace" in the fall of 1963 to simply "a plot against Castro and other terrorism and sabotage" concocted in mid-1960 with the help of weapons and ammunition supplied by the CIA.

The Cubans said they were not attempting to set down all of the plots that were devised, but wanted to expose a sampling, "the majority of which have not been publicly known." The report said some of the schemes were to have been carried out in public places where success would

have resulted in a heavy toll of innocent victims.

One of these, the document charged, involved a plan to kill Castro in early 1965 at the Latin American Stadium while another group in a nearby building would be standing by to "fire machine guns into the crowd to create panic and facilitate the escape."

McGovern said the report was delivered to him by courier earlier this week as a follow-up to a chat he had with Castro in May when the Cuban premier told him during a jeep ride that the CIA had been involved in a number of assassination efforts.

"I asked Mr. Castro if he would prepare a report for me on these incidents which he agreed to do," McGovern said, holding up the resulting volume with both English and Spanish texts. He said he was making the charges public because he felt that was the best way to make sure they would be investigated.

The South Dakota senator said he was struck not only by the "shocking nature" of the allegations, but also "by the extreme incompetence of the people employed to do it." He said he did not know whether any of the presumed confessions underlying some of the charges were extracted under torture or duress.

Sen. Church told reporters later that his committee would examine the report very carefully. He said he thought its greatest value might lie in its disclosure of what the Cubans learned of various assassination efforts.

"It's the one aspect he (Castro) can supply," Church said. "This report does sum up what he knows or alleges to know."