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Moves Against Castro JUL 9 1975

Quiz for Nixon on Plots

Washington

Senator Frank Church (Dem-Ida.), chairman of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, said yesterday that former President Nixon will be asked if he had any evidence regarding Central Intelligence Agency plots to assassinate Premier Fidel Castro of Cuba.

Such plots allegedly began in the last year of the Eisenhower administration when Mr. Nixon was vice president.

Church told reporters that Mr. Nixon had been "action officer for the Eisenhower administration in connection with the preparations for the Bay of Pigs" and that as a result the former President might have knowledge of plans to kill Castro.

He said that committee staff members will contact Mr. Nixon's lawyers in an effort to find out if Mr. Nixon is a repository for important detail and new evidence.

"The committee has discussed this matter and we are now in the process of approaching Mr. Nixon and his attorney," Church said.

"... I simply don't want to blow this up out of context, because at this time we have no reason to believe that this testimony will be very important in connection with the assassination issue.

"However, we're trying to touch every possibility. We don't want to overlook any possibility, and for that reason we'll take the necessary precautions where Mr. Nixon is concerned."

Church's reference to "precautions" appeared to mean that the committee did not want to issue its final report on CIA assassination plots without having made an effort to get all possible evidence.

Authoritative intelligence sources and numerous press reports have said that plots to kill Castro and General Rafael Trujillo, then the Dominican Republic's strongman, were originally conceived during the last year of the administration of President Eisenhower.

This week the committee has scheduled several witnesses to try to pin down what actually was done in 1959 and 1960.

For instance, the committee today called Gordon Gray, who was President Eisenhower's special assistant for foreign affairs and represented Mr. Eisenhower on the National Security Council's "special group" which controlled covert activities. The committee has also called Thomas Parrott, a former CIA officer who was secretary for the special group during the period.

The scope of Mr. Nixon's full knowledge on the plans against Cuba is not publicly known.

E. Howard Hunt Jr., a convicted Watergate burglar and former CIA officer, said in one book on the Bay of Pigs that Mr. Nixon was the action officer.

Mr. Nixon discussed his role in his book "Six Crises," although he did not use the term "action officer."

He said in the book he was hamstrung in his pre-election debates with President Kennedy because he knew of covert operations being planned against Cuba which he said he chose not to compromise. Mr. Kennedy was the Eisenhower administration had not taken a hard enough line against the Cuban leader.

In the book, Mr. Nixon said that after a three-hour meeting with Castro in April, 1959, he became convinced that Castro was either a Communist or "naive." He said that he then wrote a secret memorandum which was sent to the CIA, the State Department and the White House urging that United States foreign policy be toughened against Castro.

At first, Mr. Nixon said in the book, this was opposed by many in government but by early 1960 a secret order was issued to arm and train Cuban refugees in the United States and Latin countries.

Mr. Nixon said that to protect the secrecy of this operation he did not use his knowledge of it in the debates against Mr. Kennedy. The plans evolved into the Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba in April, 1961.

New York Times

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Final paragraphs, NYT:

Herbert J. Miller, Mr. Nixon's lawyer, issued a statement saying that he had had preliminary contact with the committee staff, but that no formal request had been received. He declined to speculate whether [Nixon] would cooperate with the committee.

Mr. Church said that there was a 'very real possibility' the committee would also call Mr. Nixon as a witness on other matters in its investigation of the United States intelligence community.