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PRESIDENT'S COMMISSION
ON CIA ACTIVITIES

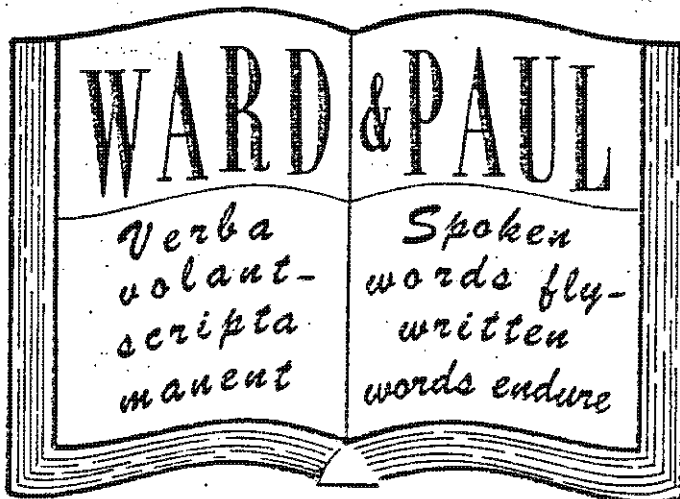
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Deposition of: RICHARD MCGARRAH HELMS

Wednesday, April 23, 1975

Langley, Virginia



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Q Ambassador Helms, were you ever aware during your work

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1 with the Agency of the development or discussions of any plans
2 concerning the possible assassination of Patrice Lumumba?

3 A I don't recall anything about any plans to assassinate
4 Patrice Lumumba. I know that Lumumba was a controversial figure
5 at the time. I know whatever year this was -- was in the
6 Eisenhower or the Kennedy era that Lumumba was riding high.

7 Q I believe that the era would have been in the era of
8 1959, '60. I believe he was killed in early '61.

9 A I remember later hearing all kinds of allegations
10 about Lumumba and how he had been killed and why he had been
11 killed. I remember also the fact that the -- it was abundantly
12 clear that the Agency had had nothing to do with his demise
13 but whether there was a plot on the Agency at sometime or
14 another to try to bring about his demise I was not familiar with
15 it. I want to say here I will obviously do the very best I
16 can with my recollection but when you consider how much has been
17 in the newspapers about a number of things in the last period of
18 years it is pretty hard to stick in time when you first heard
19 about something.

20 All I am trying to convey here is I was not as far as I
21 know privy to any ongoing plan to get rid of Patrice Lumumba
22 by assassination.

23 Q Now, the dictator of the Dominican Republic, Mr.
24 Trujillo, was killed on or about May 30, '61. Prior to that
25 time were you aware of the fact that there had been a request

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1 made of the Agency to deliver guns to dissidents in the
2 Dominican Republic?

3 A I don't believe I was familiar with it at the time
4 although I can't say. I certainly heard about the gun business
5 later because I had occasion to go back when President Johnson
6 asked me about this episode at one time to look into the records
7 to find out about Trujillo. I could find no evidence that the
8 Agency had been responsible for his demise but I did find
9 evidence at the time that there was an opposition group in the
10 United States Government was anxious to have the Agency support
11 and assist and I think I may very well have known about the
12 opposition group at the time.

13 I have no recollection any longer that I was privy to the
14 sending of any guns fo to the Dominican Republic and if I was,
15 I don't recall they were ever identified as being designed to
16 kill Mr. Trujillo. I know there was a desire on the part of
17 whatever Administration was in power then, they didn't like Mr.
18 Trujillo. They like Mr. Duvalier and certain others but I was
19 aware of no attempts to bring about his death through Agency
20 assets.

21 I think since you have raised this question of an assassi-
22 nation I would like to say something as a generality here.

23 Dearly in the game when Colonel Galloway was my boss in
24 what was then known as the Office of Special Operations, I don't
25 even recall any more in what connection this came up but he said

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1 to me one day that the Agency should certainly have the
2 capability to get rid of foreigners when required and that this
3 had to be done secretly and you should never ask your boss for
4 permission to do these things, and so forth. I remember at the
5 time arguing with him about this and saying that I thought that
6 there was no possibility whatever that the United States Govern
7 ment could develop a capacity to kill people because you could
8 never keep it a secret. Sooner or later, maybe after five year
9 ten years, Lord knows what, someone would come in or write some
10 Congressman and say the Agency was responsible for killing so
11 and so and aside from the morality of it I felt it was impracti-
12 cal for the US Government to do something like that at this time.
13 I felt that way all the time I was Director. I never in my life
14 towards killing, murder, assassination of anybody of whom I am
15 aware, and so I can only tell you that as the years have gone
16 by, as I say, quite aside from moral aspects of this thing,
17 the improbability of ever being able to do anything like that as
18 an American Government agency has become less and less viable.

19 In fact, I have often said to associates that there are
20 three things that the American people would never stand for.
21 One is assassination, two is rape, and three is dealing in
22 drugs. So that I didn't want anybody in the Agency thinking
23 that any of those things were going to be satisfactory to me.

24 Q Mr. Manfredi asked you about some notes in which there
25 was the mention of three handwritten names by you. One was

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1 Castro, one was Trujillo, and do you remember what the third
2 was?

3 A. Diem.

4 Q. And I think you have already testified about that.

5 A. I just did, because President Johnson had raised these
6 cases with me and I thought that since he had done it he might
7 have raised them with President Nixon and early in his Admini-
8 stration I wanted to get him straightened out on this.

9 You know, to this day I am not persuaded that President
10 Nixon doesn't still believe that the Agency didn't have something
11 to do with the demise of President Diem of Vietnam and there is
12 absolutely no evidence of this in the Agency records and the
13 whole thing has been, I mean, rather -- what is the word I want
14 -- heated by the fact that President Johnson used to go around
15 saying that the reason President Kennedy was assassinated was
16 that he had assassinated President Diem and this was just
17 justice. He certainly used to say that in the early days of his
18 Presidency and where he got this idea from I don't know. I
19 don't know how many of you had the privilege of trying to argue
20 with Presidents about things like that but you tend to be a
21 loser.

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Q Do you --

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A Whose idea was this? Do you have the information?

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Q Well --

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A I recall somebody discussing with me one day an even crazier idea which had to do with some kind of a thing that might be planted on the beach where Castro walked in the morning and it would blow up when he put his foot on it, or something. There were more nutty ideas. It reminded me of the time of OSS when somebody wanted to get propaganda into Germany and they discovered there was a herd of cows that grazed in Germany and were milked in France, so they devised some suppositories into which there were put a lot of propaganda leaflets and those were put in the cows on the theory they were being left on the German side of the border when the cows were grazing and nobody would be the wiser. So to say there are nutty ideas cooked up in organizations like this is to tell the truth.

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Is there any evidence, may I ask, Mr. Belin, is there any evidence in the record that any Director authorized what I can only refer to by the dictionary definition of an assassination of a foreign leader?

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Q Well, there is evidence in the record, Ambassador Helms, that there were plans made to try and assassinate Premier Castro of Cuba, that there were several series of plans, and that the plans at at least one or two of the

1 stages included the delivery of poison pills developed in
2 the Agency to be placed in food or drink --

3 A They were delivered in Cuba?

4 Q -- of Castro, and that the pills were delivered to
5 Mr. Roselli, who in turn delivered them to other people,
6 and that the pills eventually found their way to Cuba.

7 A How do we know that?

8 Q There are Agency reports that they were. We do not
9 have any first-hand information that they were, but there
10 are -- there are memoranda which indicates that they were
11 through, among others, disaffected Cubans.

12 A Who returned to the United States and testified
13 to the fact that they had received the pills or something?

14 Q Who have not testified to anything.

15 A I see.

16 Q That is one --

17 A Who authorized this particular operation?

18 Q This is one of the areas that we are trying to
19 ascertain and I suppose my first question along this line
20 was whether or not you had any knowledge of the existence of
21 such a plan.

22 A Not that I recall.

23 Q And you indicate that you never knew of such a
24 plan?

25 A I don't recall any plan.

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1 Q Do you ever recall after you succeeded Richard Bissell
2 that you were approached concerning whether or not you should
3 advise John McCone of the existence of such plans or
4 operations?

5 A I was approached to do what?

6 Q As to whether or not Mr. McCone should be briefed
7 about the existence of such a plan or plans?

8 A This is after the fact? Or before the fact? Or in
9 the process?

10 Q During the fact.

11 A You mean I had replaced Bissell and somebody in the
12 Agency came to me and said should we tell Mr. McCone about a
13 previously authorized plan?

14 Q Yes. Do you recall that at all?

15 A I don't recall it. I am sorry.

16 Q Do you recall ever discussing this with William
17 Harvey?

18 A I don't know. I discussed hundreds of things with
19 Harvey when he was working on the Cuban problem. I don't
20 recall this. I recall a great deal to do with Harvey about
21 Roselli but I don't recall any conversation with Harvey
22 about talking to Mr. McCone about Roselli because Harvey-
23 when he became in charge of the Cuban business, and so forth,
24 that whole Cuban operation, picked up various things around
25 and about and among them was the ongoing contact with Roselli

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1. Q And who told you this?

2 A I don't recall. It may have been Houston, may have
3 been Edwards at the time. I don't remember. But I remember I
4 reviewed it when there was a story in the Chicago -- one
5 of the Chicago newspapers some years ago about this whole
6 Roselli business, that I asked for the records and looked at
7 them at that time.

8 MR. BELIN: I am going to mark an exhibit, if I
9 can. You can call this, if you would Helms' Exhibit 1.

10 (The document referred to was marked
11 for identification, Helms' Exhibit
12 No. 1.)

13 BY MR. BELIN:

14 Q I hand you what the reporter has marked Helms No.
15 1, which appears to be a photostatic copy of a front-page
16 story from the Chicago Sun Times under date of August 16,
17 1963, headlines "CIA Sought Giancana Help for Cuba Spying."

18 I want you to examine this and see if perhaps that is
19 what you had reference to in reference to the Chicago
20 stories.

21 A It could very easily be. It looks just like what
22 I recall came out at the time and I think somehow or other
23 this name Sandy Smith sticks in my mind as being the writer
24 of the article in question. So I have no reason to doubt that
25 this is the article we are talking about.

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Q Do you remember Stanley J. Grogan?

A Yes.

Q He was one of your assistants?

A Stanley J. Grogan was in charge of the office here that dealt with the press. In other words, he was -- and Gus Thermers, one of his predecessors. His title was Assistant to the Director but he simply handled press inquiries.

MR. BELIN: Mark Helms' No. 2.

(The document referred to was marked for identification, Helms' Exhibit No. 2.)

BY MR. BELIN:

Q I hand you what has been marked Helms' No. 2, which is a memorandum for the record with a typewritten signature of Stanley J. Grogan dated August 16, 1963, referring to a telephone call the previous evening from Sandy Smith of the Chicago Sun Times and ask if you ever saw that before?

A I don't know. There is no reason why I shouldn't have seen it, if it was directed to me. Is there no copy around with my initials on it as having seen it?

Q I have not searched all of the records concerning that.

A Usually I initialed memoranda, or at least the cover sheets, or something, if they came to me.

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1 MR. BELIN: Mark Numbers 3 and 4.

2 (The documents referred to were mark
3 for identification, Helms' Exhibit
4 Nos. 3 and 4.)

5 BY MR. BELIN:

6 Q Handing you what has been marked Helms. Exhibit
7 No. 3, which is a memorandum which appears to be prepared by
8 you, also under date of August 16, 1963, I think that might
9 have your initials on it. And there is a -- that is attached
10 to what is marked as Helms' Exhibit No. 4, which is a memo-
11 randum for the records dated 14 May 1962, pertaining to
12 et al.

13 A All right. I have read these.

14 Q Do you have any refreshed recollection as to the
15 background of those, Ambassador Helms?

16 A Well, I don't understand what you mean by a
17 refreshed recollection. I mean, at the time I was told that
18 Roselli was trying to get into Cuba. Whether I was told that
19 this was an assassination plot, for which \$150,000 was being
20 projected, and so forth, I don't recall any more but I wasn't
21 involved in the activity at the time and when I had to go
22 back into the files to get this thing, you will see there that
23 I had to call Colonel Edwards to find out if there was any
24 records of this, and so forth, so it was something in which I
25 hadn't been involved and I obviously in recent years have

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1 heard a great deal about the so-called Roselli assassination
2 but I have never heard anybody come and tell me that anybody
3 had ever verified that it was any more than conversation and
4 I must say to this very day nobody has showed me one scintilla
5 of evidence that anything ever happened about it except
6 conversation.

7 Q The --

8 A I am not saying it didn't. I am just saying I
9 have never seen any evidence.

10 Q The document Exhibit 4 was a memorandum for the
11 record which pertained to an oral briefing in which Mr. Houston
12 and Mr. Edwards of the Agency briefed Attorney General Robert
13 Kennedy.

14 A (Nods in affirmative.)

15 Q Had you ever seen this memorandum for the record
16 before today?

17 A Well, I am relatively certain I must have seen it
18 the day I sent it to the Director.

19 Q Had you seen it before then?

20 A I don't recall.

21 Q This memorandum for the record dated 14 May 1962,
22 refers to a plan which was started in the fall of 1960 and
23 which continued through April of 1961. Were you ever aware
24 that subsequent to that time there was a second plan which
25 began in late 1961 or early 1962 in which William Harvey

1 and reported these contacts to the FBI. We just had that
2 albatross around our necks for a very long time indeed. I
3 don't know when it finally ended but it seems to me it
4 was some years.

5 Q Do you remember any discussions with William Harvey
6 in which one of the things agreed upon was that the DCI,
7 Mr. McCone, would not be briefed about this?

8 A No, I don't recall any conversations with Harvey
9 or anybody else that Mr. McCone shouldn't be briefed. I don't
10 say they didn't take place. I just don't have any recollection
11 of it. I can't think today why I would have not wanted him
12 briefed about something. I mean, after all, one of the bases
13 on which this Agency has always operated was that the Director
14 was privy to know anything that went on. That was established
15 early in the game.

16 Q Well, the Director --

17 A Is there some evidence that I said no, don't tell
18 the Director, or he shouldn't be briefed?

19 Q Well, there has been testimony and there is documen-
20 tation that it was agreed between you and Mr. Harvey not
21 to brief the DCI and I wonder whether or not you have any
22 recollection, No. 1, of whether or not that discussion was
23 had and if you do have any such recollection, as to why that
24 discussion might have been had.

25 A No. I don't have any recollection of the discussion.

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1 Q Do you remember any briefing of the DCI at any time
2 prior to Helms' Exhibit No. 3, the August 16, 1963?

3 A Let's see. Who would have been DCI then? John
4 McCone?

5 Q Yes.

6 A I don't know. I don't recall any other discussion
7 with him on this subject.

8 Q --And on --

9 A I don't say it didn't take place. I just don't
10 recall any.

11 Q Now, on August 16, 1963, you delivered this memorandum
12 Helms' Exhibit No. 3, to Mr. McCone referring to Sam Giancana
13 and you said this is an outgrowth of this Chicago Sun-
14 Times story of also August 16, 1963, Helms' No. 1, is that
15 correct?

16 A Yes.

17 Q Do you remember whether or not you briefed him at
18 that time on the fact that Mr. Harvey had taken over the
19 operation and the operation might have continued beyond the
20 first stage with Mr. Giancana?

21 A I have no recollection of this -- I have seen the
22 memorandum. I have no doubt it is mine. I have no doubt it
23 went forward. I remember the episode but I don't remember the
24 conversation with Mr. McCone at the time if there was one.

25 Q If Mr. Edwards or Mr. Harvey were to say they had

1 discussions with you that I previously questioned you about,
2 is it your testimony that you have no recollection that would
3 enable you to confirm it or deny it?

4 A Yes. I just don't remember it. I mean, if they were
5 to sit here and go back through the conversation, and so forth,
6 maybe it would come to mind but I don't recall it now and I
7 see no point in trying to testify to something that I don't
8 remember.

9 Q Did you have any knowledge of any other plans
10 involved in an attempt to assassinate Fidel Castro?

11 A As I was saying a moment ago, there were various
12 ideas floated by various people in the Government that it would
13 be nice to get rid of him, and so forth, but I don't recall
14 any viable plans that were ever brought to light to do this
15 and most of the -- I say most -- almost the entire energies
16 of the DDP in those days were attempting to get these operations
17 in Miami organized to see if there was some way to undo the
18 government of Fidel Castro and it was a major effort going
19 on and I am certain that there were discussions of the
20 possibilities of killing various people in connection with, you
21 know, the options that one has to carry through a certain
22 injunction that you have been given, but I don't recall any
23 plans that were approved or that were viable specifically
24 directed at eliminating Castro, but that there were conver-
25 sations about it, I haven't the slightest doubt.

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1 Q -- Do you know who in the White House would have had
2 those conversations with his people in the Agency?

3 A -- It seems to me that back in those days there was
4 something called -- there was some committee that sat at the
5 White House that had to do with counter-insurgency as I
6 recall it.

7 Q Would that be the Special Operations group?

8 A -- I don't know what the name is any more, different
9 changes, but this group used to meet constantly on the
10 problems of Cuba and Latin America, and so forth, and also
11 problems all around the world -- how are we going to organize
12 ourselves to fight this problem, that problem and the other
13 problem? I am sure there must be records of this thing. It
14 used to meet all the time down at the Executive Office
15 Building. It had met a lot on Asia, as I recall it, and the
16 problem in Vietnam, and so forth, and I have no doubt there
17 was some organization that we used to report to regularly about
18 our progress in the Cuban thing. I forget which committee
19 it was but certainly, the Attorney General was right there
20 all the time. Joe Califano was involved from the Army
21 Department in these matters. I don't know. There were other
22 people. I have forgotten now all the -- that is a long time
23 ago.

24 Q Yes, sir. Does the name Mongoose ring any bell?

25 A Sure. Mongoose was sort of a general cover rubric

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1 for the whole effort to unseat the Castro government.

2 Q --Is this the group that you are referring to?

3 A-- No. Mongoose would have been an internal agency
4 thing, I think. Now, maybe it was known downtown as -- or
5 some of these people who were privy to these things in
6 other agencies that this was the rubric. I am not sure. It
7 may well be.

8 Q --When they name a special group, Special Group Augmented
9 or Special Operations Group --

10 A That sounds familiar, yes. That sounds familiar.
11 I am ashamed that you know more about these things these
12 days than I do but honestly, I haven't even thought about them
13 in all these years.

14 Q Sir, do you have any recollection as to who might
15 have been the driving forces from the White House in efforts
16 to do something about Castro?

17 A Well, the principal driving force was the Attorney
18 General, Robert Kennedy. There isn't any question about this.
19 Involved in this was a group of individuals who were sort of
20 hired and pulled together by Kennedy and Rusk and McNamara
21 and McGeorge Bundy and all those people to get on with this
22 job and as I sit here and start to think about this,
23 Califano was one of them. It seems to me Lansdale, who had
24 been successful in this kind of operation out in the Far
25 East was brought in for a while. There was a small office

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1 over in the Pentagon where people -- as a matter of fact, now
2 that I think about it, that Mongoose thing, wasn't that a
3 Lansdale invention that was produced in the Pentagon and that
4 special operations, Gene Erskine headed -- isn't that -- some
5 of this is coming back to me now.

6 Q - Well, as it comes back to you, do you remember any
7 discussions involved connected or indirectly connected or any
8 way connected with that operation involving any attempts to
9 assassinate Fidel Castro?

10 A I don't recall specifically. I would be surprised
11 that it wasn't discussed at times but I don't recall any
12 of these discussions particularly.

13 Q Do you remember any discussions with Mr. Harvey
14 concerning the furnishing of either arms or poison pills
15 to Cuban exiles to have them try and carry out any assassina-
16 tion plan?

17 A I don't have any question that we tried to land
18 them in Cuba, to bring down this government or to kill
19 anybody that they could lay their hands on. This was a --
20 the instructions and all this were pretty rough and
21 pretty fulsome but when you come down to this question of a
22 specific project was approved which was designed for a man
23 to go to Point B and actually shoot or poison or do something
24 to Castro, I don't recall anything of that kind and I to
25 this very day would like to see some evidence that this

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1 actually was ever carried out. I think that there was a lot
2 of lying on the part of those Cubans and a lot of backing and
3 forth- with allegations of things that happened that never
4 did happen and as I look back on the whole period, with
5 all the effort that was made in money and manpower, and
6 so forth, devoted to try and unseat the Castro government,
7 when one looks back at it it was a pretty pitiful effort
8 and I think a great deal of it was just, what shall I say,
9 talking a good game.

10 Q Now, do you have any recollection of any briefing
11 of McCone about any Agency plans in which Harvey or Roselli
12 or Sheffield Edwards may have been involved other than
13 Exhibit 4?

14 A I don't have any recollection of that, Mr. Belin.
15 I want to tell you that all I recall was that McCone was
16 constantly asking about how we were getting along with the
17 Cuban operations and McCone was constantly being briefed about
18 what we were trying to do about these operations but what
19 was in all those briefings I have no recollection any more
20 at all and no matter how I would work on this I would never
21 be able to sort it all out. It was -- a lot of effort was
22 being made, all kinds of things to get boats and to train
23 Cubans to man those boats and land on secret shores and all
24 kinds of things.

25 Q If --

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1 A -- May I ask a question at this juncture? Since Castro
2 is alive and well in Cuba, what is the problem about these
3 -- trying to verify all this business about whether these
4 attempts were made or not made? I mean, does it make any
5 difference any more?

6 Q -- Well, there are two major areas of concern apart
7 from whether or not assassination should play any part in
8 American policy. One area concerns how the plans were
9 authorized, whether they were directed externally or whether
10 they grew up internally.

11 The second area concerns what I would call internal moni-
12 toring and control. If Mr. McCone didn't know about it, other
13 than that briefing, that poses a problem so far as an Agency
14 operating under control. If you did not know about it until
15 the spring of 1962, and the information that I have gathered
16 indicates that you were not privy to any information about
17 this until the spring of 1962, you were in a fairly important
18 position in the Agency and yet were not aware of what could
19 have been a potentially disastrous operation, certainly an
20 operation that had all kinds of ramifications for this
21 country when one considers the trigger of World War I involved
22 an assassination attempt.

23 And so, therefore, the scope of my inquiry is not
24 necessarily to say it is this person's responsibility but in
25 large part it is to determine how these plans got organized

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1 and how they were kept under control, and I should tell you
2 that it is my information that, although you did not have any
3 information about this prior to the spring of 1962, that
4 in the spring of 1962 you were made privy to what I am going to
5 call Phase I which was the Giancana phase and also what I am
6 going to call Phase II when William Harvey took over the
7 operation, and that Mr. McCone, according to the records that
8 I have seen, was not briefed until the August 16, 1963
9 memorandum, in part because of the fact Mr. McCone had not
10 been DCI at the time the plans were undertaken, so the
11 documents say that I have seen, and that at the time of his
12 briefing in August of 1963, it was not an oral briefing but
13 rather limited to a discussion of the Giancana matter in
14 the memorandum for the record addressed to Senator Kennedy,
15 Exhibit 4.

16 Now, is there anything that I have said which disagrees
17 with anything that is to the best of your recollection?

18 A I have no reason to cavil with what you say. I
19 don't have any contrary recollections but I don't remember a
20 lot of this either. So --

21 Q Now, do you remember Senator Kennedy coming over
22 to the Agency on or about March 8, 1967, to review this
23 memorandum for the records that was Helms' Exhibit 4 that
24 pertained to his 1962 briefing?

25 A Senator Kennedy visited the Agency to do that?

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1 Q Yes. He either visited the Agency or was hand-
2 delivered a copy of that. Does that ring a bell with you
3 at all?

4 A No, it doesn't, but I don't say it didn't happen.
5 I don't --

6 Q You don't remember any conversations with Senator
7 Kennedy about this?

8 A No, I don't.

9 Q Do you remember any conversations with Lawrence
10 Houston about --

11 A Oh, yes, it was Houston who told me about the
12 briefing in the first place.

13 Q That is right, and when Houston told you about the
14 briefing and Houston was present at the briefing, do you
15 remember what he said and what you said at all or don't you?

16 A No.

17 Q Do you remember having any conversations with either
18 Houston about Robert Kennedy wanting to see the memorandum
19 again on -- sometime in 1967?

20 A I don't remember the thing at all but, you know,
21 if it -- if the record says that this happened I have no
22 reason to argue with it. It would not have loomed large in
23 my life at that late date and if he wanted to look at it
24 I wouldn't have the slightest doubt I authorized somebody
25 to show it to him. I don't recall his coming out here to

1 look at it. In other words, I don't recall him ever being
2 in my office here.

3 Q Do you have any recollection of a project known
4 as Project Amlash?

5 A Amlash? By that name, not any more.

6 Q Did you ever?

7 A Don't forget, Mr. Belin, that there were hundreds
8 of these things.

9 Q Do you have any recollection of any man by the
10 name of Rolando Cubela who was a Cuban who at one time had
11 been associated with Castro and then became disaffected
12 with him?

13 A Let's see. Was he the fellow who eventually ended
14 up in Paris or Madrid or something of this kind?

15 Q Yes. At one time he did and then eventually
16 he ended up in Cuba but he was met by Agency people

17 A What was his particular cryptonym?

18 Q Well, among other things, some Black Leaf 40 had
19 been developed to be delivered to him in a pen which had been
20 constructed to have a hypodermic needle with the object to
21 inject the Black Leaf 40 into Castro. And that was delivered
22 to him in Paris on November 22, 1963. Do you remember?

23 A I certainly remember Cubela. I certainly remember
24 the fact that he was, I think -- was he a defector from the
25 Cuban regime.

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Q Yes.

A Or was he an agent whom we recruited who had not yet defected or what? I certainly remember his name and I certainly remember the use that was made of a fellow named Cubela but I don't recall exactly for what.

Q There was an effort to recruit him in place. There were eventually some weapons delivered to him.

A Were there? I don't have any reason to doubt it. The Black Leaf 40 and the hypodermic pen, and so forth, I don't recall.

Q Do you recall any Agency scheme which involved trying to put a spectacular seashell in an area --

A That is what I was talking about earlier. womebody was talking once about trying to put a bomb on his beach where he walked, or something.

Q Or where he skin-dived.

A Yes, that is the idea. I do remember somebody discussing whether that would be aviable operation or not.

Q Do you ever remember anyone discussing giving Castro a skin-diving suit which would include some tuberculosis bacteria in the breathing apparatus and also possibly some fungus which would produce madura foot?

A Madura foot? I remember, it seems to me, Fitzgerald had a bright idea about the skin-diving suit. I don't remember his -- I don't think I recall at all that there was

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1 any plan to put anything in it. I have even forgotten what
2 the skin-diving suit was but I want to tell you these came
3 up every day, some hairbrained idea like this to do some-
4 thing about Cuba, but that these actually were carried out,
5 I don't recall any instances of it. I don't recall any approval
6 given to actually set the seashell down or to send the thing
7 or that any assets were developed to do these things. These
8 were a lot of things that were discussed and I am sure they
9 got down on paper since you have them but I don't recall they
10 were ever approved or ever carried out or any attempt to
11 carry them out.

12 Q Do you remember that eventually arms were delivered
13 to Mr. Cubela in Cuba?

14 A I don't have any doubt about it. I think we
15 delivered arms all over the place in connection with Cuba.
16 I mean, let us not for a moment think that the Kennedy
17 Administration wasn't dead serious about getting rid of the
18 Castro government. I mean, let's not -- this was a
19 Government operation and if Dean Rusk or anybody, McGeorge
20 Bundy or anybody else is sitting around, no, no, no, we
21 didn't have this in mind at all; let's get that all straight
22 out. They wanted to get rid of Castro. Well, let me say
23 that I don't know that Dean Rusk wanted to get rid of him
24 but certainly President Kennedy wanted to get rid of him.

25 Q What do you mean by getting rid of him?

1 A They wanted to unseat his government. They wanted to
2 bring his government down by whatever device could be found.

3 Q Which could include assassination?

4 A I don't know that the word assassination was ever
5 used but certainly if you land armed men on a beach and the
6 effort is to recruit other armed men and to try to start a
7 whole arrangement whereby you, you know, you bring down a
8 government, somebody is bound to get shot. But the thing
9 that I am doing my level best with you about and which even
10 as I sit here thinking about it, is the focus on this
11 assassination business as though this was a, you know, some-
12 thing that was totally part and parcel of killing or invasions
13 or anything of that kind. Put in that context, I just don't
14 remember that any of these operations were ever mounted
15 let alone had any prospects of success. That a lot of them were
16 discussed, I haven't the slightest doubt and I don't know
17 what other people in the Government have testified to but
18 even that must have come up at various meetings as to whether
19 this was a viable way to get rid of the man.

20 A There is a very great difference, it seems to me,
21 when you actually approved it, were prepared to take the
22 responsibility.

23 Q For the record, there appear to have been no plans
24 undertaken to carry out either the seashell or the skin-diving
25 suit but there do appear to be plans to deliver the poison

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pills and plans to deliver weapons.

A -- All right.

Q -- You don't have any recollection to the contrary,
do you?

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BY MR. BELIN:

Q The last item I want to talk to you about at this
time goes back to 1962. I am sorry to skip back and forth.

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A All right.

Q You mentioned that the Attorney General, Robert Kennedy, was intimately involved with Operation Mongoose. And there appears to be a corroborating memorandum prepared by you dated October 16, 1962, pertaining to this, and I wonder if you would read this memorandum and see if it refreshes your recollection.

A 6 October 1962. When was the Cuban missile crisis?

Q The Cuban missile crisis, I believe, was in October of 1962.

A Colonel Patchell. I had forgotten all about him.

Q This letter has been marked Helms' Exhibit 5.

A That sort of lays it out, doesn't it?

Q Ambassador Helms, having read the Helms' Exhibit No. 5, this is a memorandum which you prepared which appears to have been prepared on October 16, 1962, the date that you met with the Attorney General, is that correct?

A Yes.

Q And to the best of your recollection, did the Attorney General express the general dissatisfaction of the President with the Operation Mongoose?

A I have every reason to believe that what I wrote in that memorandum was the best of my recollection of what was said and what went on in the meeting described.

Q Would it be fair to say that the Attorney General

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1 was personally involved and continued to become more personally
2 involved with the overall Mongoose Operation?

3 A Yes.

4 Q Do you know whether or not at any time the Attorney
5 General was ever advised of the fact that William Harvey
6 had overtaken or had taken over a certain portion of the
7 Roselli operation?

8 A -- I don't have any recollection of that. Have
9 you ever talked to Harvey, incidentally?

10 Q Yes, sir.

11 A What did he have to say on the subject?

12 Q Well, Mr. Harvey never met with the Attorney General
13 but Mr. Harvey did say that he --

14 A He never saw the Attorney General?

15 Q -- He never discussed -- no, he didn't say that.

16 A Oh.

17 Q He never discussed the particular plans in which he
18 was personally involved with the Attorney General.

19 A I see. I see.

20 Q He did say that sometime in the spring of 1962
21 you became aware of those plans and that would be corroborated
22 by other documentation that I have seen, and that he also
23 said that you and he determined not to brief the DCI on it
24 at the time and that is also corroborated by other documenta-
25 tion that I have seen.

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A What sort of documentation?

Q Memorandum.

A Memorandum for the record?

Q Well, memorandum involving among other things, review of the entire area of this. I have notes on it. I don't have the memorandum here at this time.

I don't know if I would call it a memorandum for the record but at least there is some written documentation, but I don't know whether made contemporaneously, that there was a decision not to brief DCI, McCone, the memorandum having been talked about earlier.

A Let me ask a very important question here at this point.

Q Surely.

A This plan that Harvey was alleged to have, how far did it ever get? I mean, what I am trying to get at here is that we are dealing with a lot of conjecture, a lot of thoughts, a lot of ideas. Now, did any plan get down to the point where somebody was about to get in a boat or airplane and go to Cuba and do X or Y and it shows I approved this happening or was this something he was going to try to develop and see if it could fly and if there was any possibility that it might work, and so forth?

Q There are reports that the people with whom there was contact did get to Cuba with pills and with --

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A This was the first --

Q -- other occasions.

A First phase?

Q And also the second phase and in addition, there were subsequent reports that there were arms provided also and what you are saying is if this plan continued over a period of several years it continued without your express overview, as I understand your testimony, is that correct?

A Yes. My recollection of Harvey's dealings with Roselli or during most of the period that was that nothing ever happened about anything.

Q Well, certainly Mr. Castro is still living.

A Yes, but I mean, I think this -- I don't know whose word to trust in this but I think that, you know, this is a pretty thin reed, this Roselli business. He was a pain in the neck and an awful albatross but I think we got zero use out of him.

MR. MANFREDI: Mr. Helms, this is Harold Baker, another member of the staff.

THE WITNESS: How do you do?

MR. BELIN: Mr. Baker is going to be here tomorrow. I think at this time we will let you take a breather and at least adjourn the deposition to resume tomorrow morning.

THE WITNESS: What time would you like me here, Mr. Baker?

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1 MR. BAKER: Mr. Gray was going to start first.

2 MR. BELIN: Mr. Gray is not -- well, I have asked
3 the questions that Mr. Gray wanted to ask.

4 MR. BAKER: I see. What would be convenient for
5 you?

6 THE WITNESS: I want to meet your convenience.
7 I mean my desire is to be as available and get everything
8 done that we can so I can get back to my job.

9 MR. BAKER: Half past nine?

10 THE WITNESS: Fine.

11 MR. BELIN: All right. Well, thank you, sir, for
12 your cooperation.

13 THE WITNESS: Thank you. I want to cooperate. I
14 want to help. I will try and be a little bit, lot more alert
15 tomorrow.

16 (Whereupon, at 4:30 p.m., the taking of the
17 deposition was recessed, to reconvene at 9:30 a.m., Thursday,
18 April 24, 1975.)

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