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AMERICAN GAMBLING ACTIVITIES IN CUBA

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TO : Director, FBI
FROM : Legat, Havana (64-153)
SUBJECT: AMERICAN GAMBLING ACTIVITIES IN CUBA
ANTI-RACKETEERING

CONFIDENTIAL

DATE: June 25, 1958

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Reference Havana letters May 9 and May 29, and New York letter to the Bureau June 4, 1958.

Set forth below is additional information which has been developed concerning the activities of American gamblers in Havana since the submission of Havana letter of May 9, 1958:

CASINOS IN OPERATION

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED
EXCEPT WHERE SHOWN
OTHERWISE

WILBUR CLARK'S CASINO - HOTEL NACIONAL, Havana, Cuba

This casino continues to be operated by individuals previously identified to the Bureau. JACK LANSKY, Miami top hoodlum, is the overseer in this casino.

On May 9, 1958, GEORGE FENTRESS, craps dealer at the gambling casino at the Hotel Havana-Hilton, advised that ROY BURNEY BELL, who was formerly employed at the casino in the Hotel Nacional, was going to the Dominican Republic to operate a gambling casino there for DUTCH SHIELDS.

On May 14, 1958, HAV-31 advised that SAM TUCKER, one of the interest holders in the gambling casino at the Hotel Nacional had returned from a conference in New York with his other associates concerning the steps to be taken regarding the recent regulation adopted by the Nevada State Tax Commission and Gaming Control Board requiring that individuals with interests in gambling casinos in Nevada could not participate in gambling operations in Cuba. HAV-31 said that an individual named LEE WEIDER had been working for the past several months in a semi-supervisory capacity in the casino at the Hotel Nacional. PCI ARTHUR NEWMAN (conceal) advised that WEIDER was brought from the Thunderbird in Las Vegas by order of JACK LANSKY.

On May 19, 1958, JACK LANSKY, who operates the casino in the Hotel Nacional, confidentially advised it appeared that the syndicate composed of SAM TUCKER, MORRIS KLEINMAN, TOM MCGINTY and MOE DALITZ, who "own" the gambling concession in the Hotel Nacional,

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had decided to sell their rights to this concession. He stated it appeared this decision was brought about by the edict of the Nevada State Gambling Board requiring a separation of interests by individuals owning gambling operations in Cuba and Nevada. LANSKY advised that while the combination would have to sell their concession rights in a poor market, nonetheless they had made a substantial profit on their initial investment in the casino during the first two years of operation and they would not suffer any loss.

LANSKY stated he was certain the selling agreement would have to be acceptable to the Hotel Nacional, in that the caliber and reputation of the individuals buying the concession will have to meet with the hotel's approval. JACK LANSKY stated the question of whether or not he would remain in Cuba and operate the casino would depend upon the identity of the individuals who bought the concession.

LANSKY stated the combination had yet not opened the Stardust, a new gambling casino in Las Vegas which had been built by them because of difficulty in obtaining a license for the Stardust until such time as they have sold their interests in Cuba.

LANSKY stated the edict of the Nevada State Gambling Board requiring a separation of interests was strictly a political maneuver directed in the main at CLIFF JONES, former Lieutenant Governor of Nevada, and that while the decision would, of course, affect JONES, who has just recently invested a substantial amount of money in the Hotel Havana-Hilton, it was also affecting other individuals with interests in both places who have nothing to do with Nevada state politics. He stated that JONES, prior to buying an interest in the gambling casino in the Havana-Hilton, had discussed the matter with the Governor of Nevada to insure there would be no difficulty and had been assured he would have no problem. LANSKY stated that subsequently, however, JONES, a Democrat, had thrown his support behind other Democrats in the forthcoming Nevada elections in November and as a result, the present incumbent, a Republican, had sent the word down to the Nevada State Gambling Board to "put the squeeze" on JONES.

HAV-31 advised on May 28, 1958, that JOE MORISI has been employed as a supervisor in the casino at the Hotel Nacional for a substantial period of time. Source said MORISI was leaving the casino June 1, 1958, and intended spending approximately a month seeing friends and thereafter expected to arrive at Atlantic City, New Jersey, about July 4, 1958, to accept a position in an illegal gambling operation there.

Source said that LOUIS NIER, an associate of SAM TUCKER, will take over MORISI's job at the casino.

Havana, Cuba

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10101-20092

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Ohio Cuba

HAV-31 stated that GEORGE GORDON, who is reported to represent certain Cleveland interests and who is presently working at the Desert Inn, Las Vegas, Nevada, had come to Havana to discuss with JACK LANSKY the possible sale of the concession at the Hotel Nacional. Source said it appeared efforts were being made to have GORDON "front" for a new group of buyers of the casino.

HAV-31 advised on May 27, 1958, that TOM McGINTY had come to Havana to discuss the disposal of the casino at the Hotel Nacional. In this regard, on May 29, 1958, THOMAS KELLEY, resident manager of the Hotel Nacional, advised that TOM McGINTY was in Havana for the purpose of discussing the problems that had arisen in connection with ownership of the casino because of the recent edict of the Nevada State Gaming Board. Mr. Kelley indicated that MC GINTY had said that SAM TUCKER would probably be "transferred." On May 30, 1958, HAV-31 advised that an individual named "SAMMY" (possibly identical with SAMUEL LAWRENCE BRATT, a former associate of the LANSKYS in gambling operations in Broward County, Florida) was in Havana to discuss the sale of the Nacional gambling casino. Source said he had ascertained that LOUIS NIER, mentioned above, has a partnership with SAM TUCKER in an apartment building in Las Vegas and that NIER is reputed to have a substantial interest in the W. and S. Horse Breeding Stables in Lexington, Kentucky. Cuba

On June 4, 1958, HAV-31 advised that GEORGE GORDON had turned down the offer made to him by the Desert Inn group to be the front man for the Nacional gambling casino. Source stated that an individual named MEL GOLDEN is presently in Havana and that GOLDEN will be the operator of the Stardust, a new gambling casino being constructed by the Desert Inn combination in Las Vegas. Source said further that LOUIS NIER, SAM TUCKER and JACK LANSKY had been invited to the opening of a new gambling casino in the West Indies, location unknown. Cuba

On June 11, 1958, HAV-31 advised that on June 10, 1958, CHARLES TOURINE, Miami top hoodlum, had visited the casino at the Nacional to see JACK LANSKY and in LANSKY's absence had talked to HARRY GOLDBERG. Cuba Flay Cuba

Source also advised that since MEYER LANSKY, New York top hoodlum, returned to Havana on May 30, 1958, he had paid two visits to the casino at the Hotel Nacional and on the second occasion had been in the back room of the casino counting the house receipts, together with JACK LANSKY. Cuba

On June 5, 1958, JACK LANSKY advised that as yet no buyer had been obtained for the casino at the Nacional. He advised that a decision on his part as to whether he would stay with the casino would depend upon whether he could work out satisfactory terms with

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the purchasers. [On June 13, 1958, Lieutenant Heriberto Hernandez, agent of the Department of Investigation, Cuban National Police, advised that the casino at the Hotel Nacional had been offered to the Hotel Nacional itself, but that no agreement had been reached.] (u)

On June 13, 1958, PCI Arthur Newman mentioned that he believed the present interest holders in the Nacional casino would be given plenty of time by the Nevada Gaming Board to effect the sale of their interests. Source said he did not believe JACK LANSKY would leave the casino unless there was a very radical change in ownership. Source believed there would not be any actual change in ownership but just a change in faces in Havana.

On June 18, 1958, Thomas Kelley, mentioned above, advised that SAM TUCKER had received permission from the Nevada State Gaming Board to take whatever time was necessary to dispose of the interest he had in the casino at the Hotel Nacional. Kelley was of the opinion that TUCKER might attempt to delay taking action on selling his interest in the casino until the November elections in Nevada in order to see whether the present incumbents might lose out thereby resolving his problem.

~~HOTEL HAVANA-RIVIERA CASINO~~ Havana, Cuba

On May 21, 1958, HAV-31 advised that JULIUS E. ROSENGARD, a member of the Board of Directors of the Hotel Havana-Riviera, is acting as MEYER LANSKY's legal representative and also as his gambling representative in Cuba in LANSKY's absence from Cuba. Havana, Cuba

Havana, Cuba On May 30, 1958, HAV-31 advised that MANNY SHERMAN was in Havana. SHERMAN was staying at the Havana-Riviera Hotel. He has FBI No. 447418. In 1953, he worked as a shill in the gambling casino at the Sans Souci Night Club. SHERMAN has the reputation of being an operator of "fast dice games."

Cuba On June 9, 1958, PCI Luis Alonso Montenegro (conceal), who is employed as a "bouncer" at the Havana-Riviera casino, advised that AL CANTOR is managing the casino at the Havana-Riviera on the day shift and that JOHN LINK, a Canadian, is managing the casino on the night shift. Source said that DINO CELLINI is normally present in the casino from about noon to 8 p.m. and that CELLINI has assumed the title of director of the casino. Source said that information had been received that HARRY and BEN SMITH, Canadian Hotel operators, were attempting to separate themselves from the Havana-Riviera Hotel and casino operation. Canada

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On June 2, 1958, numerous sources advised the Legat, Havana, that MEYER LANSKY had returned to Cuba on May 30, 1958. In this regard, JAKE LANSKY advised on June 5, 1958, that MEYER had returned to Cuba permanently with the approval of the Cuban Government.

An article appearing in "The Times of Havana" on June 19, 1958, indicated that both HARRY and BEN SMITH had been charged with theft and fraud involving the stock of the Brilund Mines, Ltd. This article described the SMITH brothers as being owners of the Hotel Prince George in Toronto and the Havana-Riviera Hotel. Both brothers were free on \$50,000 bond each.

On June 23, 1958, PCI Luis Alonso Montenegro advised that ~~ED LEVINSON~~ from Las Vegas is back in Havana and staying at the Hotel Havana-Riviera. LEVINSON is the former director of the gambling Nevada Cuba casino at the Havana-Riviera and was an interest holder in the casino. PCI Alonso said that LEVINSON had sold part of his interest in the casino to DINO CELLINI.

PCI Alonso further informed that on June 22, 1958, JACK LANSKY, MEYER LANSKY, EDDIE CELLINI and MAURICE LICHTMAN had a Cuba private meeting in the rear of the bar adjacent to the gambling casino at the Havana-Riviera. Source stated that another individual was also present whom source did not know. Source was unable to furnish the subject matter discussed at this meeting.

HAV-31 advised on June 23, 1958, that the additional individual at this meeting was a person by the name of ALLEN, a bookmaker from Miami. HAV-31 did not know the purpose of the meeting. It should be noted that HAV-31 has previously informed that LICHTMAN represents the interests of former Cuban Minister of the Interior, SANTIAGO REY, in gambling operations in Havana. LICHTMAN has frequently been seen in the company of JACK LANSKY.

~~*HOTEL CAPRI CASINO: Havana, Cuba~~

On May 9, 1958, PCI Arthur Newman stated that CHARLES TOURINE, Miami top hoodlum, continues to have a large interest in the gambling casino at the Hotel Capri. Source noted that TOURINE's son had been in Cuba recently and had purchased some fighting cocks which he transported to Manila, P. I., to use for gambling purposes there.

On May 16, 1958, PCI Newman stated that ROBERTO "CHIRRI" MENDOZA, one of the owners of the gambling casino at the Hotel Havana-Hilton, had recently lost \$150,000 in one night gambling at the Capri. Havana, Cuba Source also informed that MARBIN KRAUSE, who owns "two points" in the Capri, had lost \$30,000 in one night playing blackjack there. Havana, Cuba

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Letter to the Director

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On June 5, 1958, JACK LANSKY stated that the Capri casino is doing excellent late night business and is probably the most successful gambling operation at present in Havana. On June 13, 1958, PCI Arthur Newman also informed that the Capri is the most successful gambling casino presently operating in Havana.

~~*HOTEL HAVANA-HILTON CASINO, Havana, Cuba~~

[On May 9, 1958, HAV-4] made available a list of the Americans who are employed in the gambling casino at the Hotel Havana-Hilton. A review of the list indicates that a majority of the employees in this casino have previously worked at the Sans Souci, Havana-Riviera and Capri casinos. (u)

On May 9, 1958, GEORGE FENTRESS, an employee at the Havana-Hilton, advised that JOE SILESI, with alias Joe Rivers, New York top hoodlum, is still managing the casino at the Havana-Hilton. He stated SILESI is employing his brother, CHARLES SILESI, at the casino. Source noted that recently IRVING LEVITTS, a dealer, had a fight with CHARLES SILESI, as a result of which LEVITTS was fired by JOE SILESI. Cuba

On May 13, 1958, HAV-4 advised that NICHOLAS ARROYO, the former Cuban Minister of Public Works and the present Cuban Ambassador to the United States, has an interest in the casino at the Havana-Hilton. Havana, Cuba D.C.

As previously indicated, on May 19, 1958, JACK LANSKY stated that the edict of the Nevada State Gaming Board had been directed principally at CLIFF JONES, former Lieutenant Governor of Nevada and an interest holder in the Havana-Hilton casino.

On June 13, 1958, PCI Arthur Newman stated that the edict of the Nevada State Gaming Board, although directed at CLIFF JONES, had possibly done less damage to him than to other individuals in Havana who also had interests in Nevada because JONES has a relatively small interest in the Havana-Hilton casino. PCI Newman noted that JOE SILESI is employed on a salary basis as manager of the casino at the Hilton; however, he has some sort of profit arrangements that allows him to receive an extra bonus if business is good.

~~*SANS SOUCI NIGHT CLUB CASINO, Havana, Cuba~~

On May 16, 1958, PCI Arthur Newman advised that several months ago he had received a credit inquiry concerning JOHN WILLIAMS, Boston top hoodlum, from the Sans Souci casino. Source said he did not know the basis for this inquiry. Mass. Cuba

It should be noted that the Sans Souci casino continues to be owned and operated by SANTO TRAFFICANTE, Miami top hoodlum, and by JOE STASSI, FBI No. 559327. Fla. Cuba

Cuba

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On May 28, 1958, HAV-31 advised that DINO CELLINI, the director of the gambling casino at the Hotel Havana-Riviera, is making nightly visits to the Sans Souci casino. Source said that in view of CELLINI's past close association with SANTO TRAFFICANTE, it was his opinion that CELLINI has some financial interest in the Sans Souci casino. Source noted that a recent redecoration was made at the casino and CELLINI directed this redecoration.

On June 4, 1958, HAV-31 advised that HENRY RUBINO is overseer of the craps tables at the Sans Souci casino. ^{Havana, Cuba} Source had previously advised that RUBINO was a close associate of SANTO TRAFFICANTE and that RUBINO will operate the Hotel Deauville casino when it opens.

On June 17, 1958, PCI Alberto Suarez Aleman (conceal), who is employed in the apartment house where SANTO TRAFFICANTE resides, advised that TRAFFICANTE has recently been associating with two "new Americans," whose identities were unknown to him.

* TROPICANA NIGHT CLUB CASINO, Havana, Cuba

This casino continues to be managed by WILLIAM GUSTO BISCHOFF, with alias Lefty Clark, Miami top hoodlum. On June 13, ^{Fla.} 1958, PCI Arthur Newman advised that BISCHOFF receives a salary and, in addition, has an interest in the casino. Source stated that ^{Cuba} business at the Tropicana has been very poor recently and that BISCHOFF's "take" is strictly limited to the salary he is receiving.

* HOTEL COMODORO CASINO, Havana, Cuba

This casino continues to be managed by RALPH REINA, former ^{Cuba} Tampa, Florida, gambler. HAV-31 advised on May 14, 1958, that SANTO TRAFFICANTE, SID JACOBS and DINO CELLINI have interests in the Comodoro casino. Source said that JOSEPH TAMBURRO and TONY GAGLIANO are employed in the Comodoro casino. ^{Havana, Cuba}

On May 27, 1958, PCI Alberto Suarez Aleman stated that JOSEPH TAMBURRO is a close associate of SANTO TRAFFICANTE.

* HOTEL PLAZA ^{Havana, Cuba} and HOTEL DEAUVILLE CASINOS, Havana, Cuba

Sources have previously advised the Legat, Havana, that SANTO TRAFFICANTE is the principal interest holder behind these two new casinos. Neither casino has opened as yet. On June 13, 1958, PCI Arthur Newman informed that the opening of these casinos will probably be delayed for at least another month because of the poor tourist trade.

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~~*HOTEL SEVILLA-BILTMORE CASINO, Havana, Cuba~~

This casino continues to be owned by Cuban Congressman AMLETTO BATTISTI. It is managed by BURT FREEMAN and appeals to a low-class gambling crowd. Cuba

~~*ORIENTAL PARK RACE TRACK Havana, Cuba~~

Information was previously furnished Legat, Havana, that an individual known as "JOCKEY" DENNIS, a former con man had purchased an interest in the gambling casino at the Jockey Club at the Oriental Park Race Track. On May 29, 1958, HAV-31 advised that this individual had died on that date of pleurisy.

Cuba On June 16, 1958, PCI Pedro P. Tapia (conceal) verified the fact that "JOCKEY" DENNIS had died. This source stated that GEORGE LEVINE, FBI No. 382915, continues to operate the Oriental Park Race Track as well as the casinos at the track. Source said that the track is losing about \$5,000 a week but that LEVINE appears to have unlimited resources. Source noted that the profit at the casinos is not sufficient to offset the losses at the track.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Sources have advised that there has been a recent improvement in tourism in Havana with the resultant slight increase in activity in the casinos. At present, only two casinos are reported to be breaking even or better. These are the casinos at the Hotel Capri and the Havana-Hilton. Sources feel, however, if the political situation remains reasonably quiet that all the casinos will eventually be showing a profit.

On May 14, 1958, Mr. Thomas Kelley, mentioned previously, advised he had been visited by JOE Z LIPSKY, who claimed to be the owner of Gallagher's Steak House, 12605 Biscayne Boulevard, Miami, Florida, and by JOHN SCHWARTZ, 710 Wayne Street, Miami Beach, Florida. Kelley said these two individuals attempted to interest him in operating a hotel for them in Cienfuegos, Cuba. Kelley said this hotel is to be constructed in the near future and will have a gambling casino. He stated it will ostensibly be financed by Compania Cubana de Aviacion and that President Fulgencio Batista will have an interest in the operation. Mr. Kelley said that LIPSKY and SCHWARTZ indicated they will operate the gambling casino and that Senator KENNETH JOHNSON of Nevada will have an interest in the casino operation. Mr. Kelley said that while he had not previously known LIPSKY, he recalled having met SCHWARTZ on several occasions many years ago in New York City. Kelley said at that time SCHWARTZ was considered to be a "right-hand man" for FRANK COSTELLO. Cuba D.C.

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Havana files indicate that on January 1, 1958, Dr. Aristides Menendez, a contact of the Havana office, informed he had received information from a friend, who requested that his identity not be revealed, and who has contacts with labor leaders in New York City, that one JOHN SCHWARTZ, a labor racketeer from New York City, had been vacationing in Havana at the Havana-Riviera Hotel. Dr. Menendez said that his source claimed that SCHWARTZ was a "right-hand man" to FRANK COSTELLO.

On May 20, 1958, the Spanish language newspaper, "Informacion," carried an advertisement concerning a land development project in the Isla de Pinos (Isle of Pines), Cuba. This advertisement indicated that a large hotel-motel and gambling casino would be constructed on the Isle of Pines. On June 5, 1958, JACK LANSKY advised that the publicity about a new hotel and gambling casino to be constructed on the Isle of Pines was simply a land-selling promotion on the part of the Mayor of Havana, JUSTO LUIS POZO, who has substantial property interest there. LANSKY stated that tourism is and has always been "dead" on the Isle of Pines and that the publicity was an effort on the part of POZO to realize a profit on his large land holdings there.

LANSKY said he had serious doubts that any hotels or casinos would be built in the foreseeable future on the Isle of Pines.

On June 3, 1958, HAV-4 advised he had received information that ROBERTO FERNANDEZ MIRANDA, the brother-in-law of President Batista, had installed a private guard force in all of the gambling casinos to insure there would be no difficulty in operation. Source said that the head of this guard force is Lieutenant FERNANDEZ, who is usually located at the casino at the Hotel Capri and that the Hotel Capri pays FERNANDEZ' salary. (S) (u)

On June 20, 1958, Mr. Malcolm McArdle, branch manager, 23rd Street Branch of the National City Bank of New York, furnished the following confidential information concerning the group of Americans who are putting up 10 million dollars for the construction of the Monte Carlo Hotel and gambling casino in the Barlovento development:

WALTER KIRSHNER, Belle Towers Apartments, Venetian Isle, Miami Beach.
IVAR J. BLACKER, Hotel Deauville, Miami Beach, Fla.
SAMUEL EDELMAN, 160 Broadway, New York City.
William MILLER, 3158 N. Bay Road, Miami, Florida.
ALFRED DICKER, JR., 1400 Brook Road, Bethen, Maryland.
EDWARD MARSHALL, 300 E. Palisades Avenue, Englewood, N. J.
TONY MARTIN, DONALD O'CONNOR and FRANK SINATRA, all of Hollywood, California.

Cuba

Mr. McArdle indicated that this list was subject to revision.

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On June 13, 1958, PCI Arthur Newman said that the Monte Carlo is a promotional deal on the part of WILLIAM MILLER and that MILLER has none of his own money tied up in the promotion. Source said that PETE BRADY had previously had an interest in the operation but there were some indications that BRADY may have "pulled out."

Cuba

On June 13, 1958, HAV-21 advised that BOBBY MASTERS, who formerly operated the "Chemin de Fer" at the Sunny Isles in Florida, and GORDON RUIZ, who had the "Brookside Park Casino" in West Palm Beach, Florida, were in Havana to look into the possibility of setting up a gambling casino at the St. John's Hotel. (S) (u)

Cuba

The Cuban daily newspapers for June 18, 1958, carried a press release indicating that a company known as the Antilliean Hotel Corporation had been given a concession by the Cuban Government to construct a 15 million dollar hotel and casino in Havana. Under an agreement worked out with the corporation the Cuban Government is turning over the Jose Marti playground located on the Malecon in the Vedado Section of Havana to the corporation as the site for the hotel. Initial inquiry has indicated that Miami interests may be behind this corporation.

POLITICAL TIE-INS WITH GAMBLING ACTIVITIES

On June 20, 1958, Lieutenant Heriberto Hernandez, agent of the Department of Investigation, Cuban National Police, advised there are over 5,000 numbers selling outlets in greater Havana. Lieutenant Hernandez stated these outlets are expected to contribute to the Department of Investigation \$8 to \$10 a week each. He stated that the total amount goes as follows: One-third to Colonel ORLANDO PIEDRA, Chief of the Department of Investigation; one-third to the Chief of Police, PILAR GARCIA, and one-third to President BATISTA's wife. (S) (u)

Cuba

Lieutenant Hernandez stated further there are a large number of small Cuban gambling operations in greater Havana. Some of them are extremely successful. They contribute as much as two to three hundred dollars a day in the same manner as the numbers selling outlets. Lieutenant Hernandez stated as a result the "take" from these sources is tremendous. He stated it is estimated that in the approximate one-year period that HERNANDO HERNANDEZ HERNANDEZ was in office as Chief of Police, he made over one million dollars. He stated that Colonel Piedra is estimated to have three million dollars. (S) (u)

Cuba

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