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8/3/86

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Date:06/06/94

Page:1

JFK ASSASSINATION SYSTEM

IDENTIFICATION FORM

AGENCY INFORMATION

AGENCY : SSCIA
RECORD NUMBER : 157-10005-10421

RECORDS SERIES :
MEMORANDUM

AGENCY FILE NUMBER :

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DOCUMENT INFORMATION

ORIGINATOR : SSCIA
FROM : JOHNSTON, JIM/DWYER/GREISSING
TO : HART, SEN. GARY/SCHWEIKER, SENATOR

TITLE :
CONNECTION BETWEEN AMLASH OPERATION AND JFK ASSASSINATION

DATE : 01/27/76
PAGES : 6

SUBJECTS :
AMLASH CONNECTION TO JFK ASSASSINATION
CUBA
CASTRO

DOCUMENT TYPE : PAPER, TEXTUAL DOCUMENT
CLASSIFICATION : U
RESTRICTIONS : 1A, 1B, 1C, REFERRED
CURRENT STATUS : X
DATE OF LAST REVIEW : 06/07/94

OPENING CRITERIA :

COMMENTS :
BOX 353

[R] - ITEM IS RESTRICTED

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SSCI BOX #

353-

10421

MEMORANDUM

TO: Senator Hart (Colorado) and Senator Schweiker

FROM: Jim Johnston
Dan Dwyer
Ed Greissing

DATE: January 27, 1976

SUBJ: Connection Between Amlash Operation and Investigation
of JFK Assassination

Background

The staff's memorandum of January 5, 1976, postulated that the Amlash operation might have had some effect on CIA's response to the investigation of President Kennedy's assassination. On January 9, 1976, the staff asked for access to the Amlash file at CIA; and after a delay which was not explained, the staff was permitted to review the file on January 23 and 26.

Summary of Amlash File

Amlash initially contacted by CIA in 1961 met occasionally with case officers through August 1962, at which time he was given instruction in secret writing and explosives. Interest in Amlash continued after the August meetings, but there was no further direct contact by CIA agents until mid-1963. Why there was a year lapse in contact with Amlash cannot be determined; the Cuban missile crisis in October 1962 undoubtedly made CIA cautious in dealing with Amlash.

In any event, DIR 48198* to Rome of 19 June 1963 states that Amwhip, a Cuban exile who assisted CIA, had sent a letter as part of an "activation effort to reluctant dragon." Presumably, Amlash was "reluctant dragon" and was, by this letter, asked to recontact CIA.

In late August, Amlash traveled with a large contingent of Cuban officials and athletes to Porto Alegre, Brazil. He cabled Amwhip about his arrival on August 29. This cable apparently was the signal that he was prepared to meet Amwhip in Porto Alegre.

Amwhip and two CIA case officers met with Amlash in Porto Alegre between September 5 and 8. The two case officers have testified to the Committee about their understanding of events at this series of meetings which they viewed essentially as a get acquainted session. CIA messages tell a different story. Porto Alegre 0704 to DIR of 7 September stated that Amlash told Amwhip he felt there were only two ways of getting rid of Castro. The first was an invasion by U.S. forces which Amlash knew was out of the question and the second was an "inside job." Amlash indicated he was awaiting a U.S. plan of action. He referred to the explosives demonstration CIA gave him a year earlier as "too cumbersome" for his purposes.

* DIRs are messages sent from Langley.

At the conclusion of the meetings with Amlash, Headquarters cabled on 9 September that, based on what little feel Headquarters had, Amlash appeared hopeless as an intelligence performer and should be approached as a chief conspirator allowed to recruit his own cohorts. He should be urged to recruit a few trusted friends to assist him, initially in "FI and Ops reporting" and then progress to sabotage and more serious matters on an orderly basis. (DIR 67110 to Porto Alegre, JMWAVE and Rio.)

On 11 September, Porto Alegre 0708 to DIR summarized the intelligence information Amlash had given on Soviet units in Cuba, saying all IRBM and bombers had been removed. By this time Amlash had left Brazil apparently heading for a vacation in Europe.

A document in the file dated 16 September and marked OFPA 72775 appears to be a transcript of a conversation obtained by covert means. There is no indication as to where the conversation takes place, but it probably is in the Cuban Embassy in Paris.

"Mary: I don't want to imagine things but this thing of Amlash.

Moreno: It is either a tremendous secret or a top secret matter (unreadable) then the word "treason" or "reason").

Betty: I believe it is a top secret matter."

By letters of September 14 and September 16, Amlash stayed in contact with Amwhip. Paris station apparently was picking up responsibility for Amlash at this time, since Paris 0706 to DIR dated 19 September asks for some background material on Amlash.

On 19 September, JMWAVE 4580 to DIR warns that Amlash is part of an anti-communist group in Cuba and details the membership of his group as well as a communist group. The message also notes that Fidel is allegedly aware of the two groups and acts as moderator between them in order to maintain cohesion in the Government of Cuba.

Nevertheless, Amwhip is asked to continue to work with Amlash and is assigned to accompany him around Europe. According to Paris 0934 to DIR dated 7 October, Amlash met with case officer O* on 5 October. Case officer O sat and listened permitting Amlash to get everything off his chest. Amlash seemed to be complaining about the low level espionage matters that had been discussed at the September meeting in Brazil, implying he had a more valuable role. Case officer O "provided necessary assurances his feelings not in fact true and that his case receiving consideration highest levels. (emphasis added)" "With this problem which had undoubtedly been bothering Amlash con-

* The files do not accurately identify these case officers. Nestor Sanchez and ~~(William Wainwright)~~ however, were the principal case officers.

siderably, off his chest, a much more relaxed Amlash departed restating his desire return Cuba to undertake 'the big job.'"

On October 15, London 5224 to DIR states case officer O met with Amlash and Amwhip on 13 October. Although the case officer had been forewarned by Amwhip, he was not successful in discouraging Amlash's request for a high level meeting. "Amlash convinced that if such meet does not take place at this time it will be almost impossible come out again and we will be in same situation as last year with no definite decision. Also finds it difficult to believe why RFK who receives many Cubans would refuse to see a major" such as Amlash. The message notes the fact remains that Amlash does "have excellent entree to highest target level which believe we cannot afford overlook."

This message seemingly moved Headquarters to re-evaluate Amlash's role. DIR 75683 to London on 15 October directed case officer O to return headquarters soonest for discussions of all phases of the case.

The next meeting apparently took place on October 29. One case officer met Amlash holding himself out as the personal representative of RFK. He informed Amlash, according to a 13 November MFR, that the U.S. was prepared to render all necessary assistance to any anti-communist Cuban group which succeeded in neutralizing the present Cuban leadership and which assumed significant control to invite the U.S. to render assistance. He emphasized that U.S. support could come only after a successful coup. Amlash responded by saying that without Fidel, the military would break up into 4 or 5 groups and the regime would disintegrate. He also said he was satisfied with the policy discussion but desired to know what technical support he could get.

Since Amwhip was closer to Amlash than the case officers, he was asked about Amlash's reaction to the meeting. His reactions are summarized in Attachment A to Amwhip's Memo of Meeting dated 14 November. Amwhip said Amlash was still not pleased with support from U.S. government. While Amlash was satisfied on policy grounds, he was not at all happy with the fact that he still was not given the technical assistance for the operation plan as he saw it. Amlash could not understand why he was denied certain small pieces of equipment which promised a final solution to the problem, while, on the other hand, the U.S. gave much equipment and money to exile groups for their ineffective excursions against Cuban coastal targets. Amlash had accepted the fact he had to work with the CIA, but CIA might lose him if it continued to procrastinate. Amlash talked about going to the French terrorist organization, the OAS, but realized that was not feasible. The memorandum ends with what apparently is the author's conclusion: "It is hoped that he does realize that Havana must first be taken . . . or failing that, a truly sizeable piece of land (say, almost an entire province) which could be true rallying point."

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In a Memo for Record dated 19 November, one case officer summarized the actions to be taken at the next meeting with Amlash. Amlash was to be told the U.S. was prepared to give full support to Amlash's coup. He would be shown President Kennedy's speech in Miami of November 18 and told this reaffirmed support for Amlash's proposal. Headquarters had approved giving Amlash scopes and rifles and other equipment. The memo ended by stating that "C/SAS* requested written reports on Amlash operation be kept to a minimum."

Pari 1564 to DIR of 20 November indicated Amlash had been called on the night of November 20 and had agreed to postpone his return to Cuba in order to see case officer O "if it something interesting." The CIA officer said he could not assure it was interesting but that it was to be a meeting which Amlash had requested. (Obviously, CIA wanted to give Amlash the "technical support" he felt he had not been promised in the 29 October meeting.)

Case officer O flew from the U.S. so as to arrive in Paris on the morning of November 22 for this meeting.

Pari 1607 to DIR received at Langley at 6:25 a.m. on 23 November is the only message in Amlash's file reflecting the fact the meeting had taken place. It indicated that Amlash was anxious to return to Cuba and that case officer O was to arrive in Washington at 1810 that day.

The file contains no outgoing cable to Paris on November 23 or any other time telling Paris to break contact with Amlash.**

On 25 November, a contact report was prepared. There is reason to question the authenticity of this document which is three pages and reports the 22 November meeting with Amlash. The first two pages have dark type as though prepared on a typewriter with a new ribbon. The type on the third page is much lighter as though prepared on a typewriter with an old ribbon. It made no mention of the passing of a poison pen to Amlash.

On November 27, Pari 1669 to DIR reports information obtained in October possibly by clandestinely listening devices. A source complained bitterly about official (Cuban) visitors to Paris and how they denigrate the revolution. The source said she wished she had a concealed tape recorder to record these conversations. She named Amlash as one of these visitors.

* Desmond Fitzgerald

** In its 1967 report, the IG stated such a message had been sent but could not be found.

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On 3 December, Headquarters furnished JMWAVE some details on the Amlash meeting including the fact that he had been promised "full U.S. support if he is successful in a real coup against the Castro regime." He was also promised arms which will have to be furnished through JMWAVE's operations.

A series of confusing cables passed between Headquarters and JMWAVE on December 6, 7, and 8. Apparently, Headquarters first gave JMWAVE authority to drop a cache of arms in Cuba. Then Headquarters called off the operation. In DIR 87615 of 7 December, it is noted "major top level Cuban/Caribbean policy review scheduled early next week which should provide basis for decision."

JMWAVE complained about the change in orders in a cable of 8 December. JMWAVE 8702 pointed out that one Headquarter's message indicated December infiltration operations were approved by higher authority but a second message indicated a scheduled operation should be delayed and not run in December.

Headquarters responded in DIR 87880. Headquarters procedure was to present infiltration operation plans to "higher authority" even though there is a reasonable chance operation may be postponed or delayed as was case with the scheduled operation. "This procedure will secure approval for the operation with only telephonic reconfirmation needed when previously relaxed operation finally mounted." Headquarters recommended delay until January after considering and equating objectives against risk factors for Amlash and others. "Believe by January, CIA should be in position better evaluate status of internal assets."

By Pari 1914 of 13 December, Paris reported that Amlash left Paris for Prague on November 27 but did not seek recontact with case officer. DIR 90966 to JMWAVE of 23 December reported that Havana radio on 2 December stated Amlash arrived Cuba on 1 December.

The last document in Amlash's file for the period ending December 1963, is a long report on Amlash, but it does not contain information relevant to the October-November activities. Nevertheless, in red pen on the cover page appears: "Dec 1963 Not to leave this office on Nestor's (Sanchez) orders." followed by initials that appear to be "GM."

One later document in the Amlash file contains more information about the November 22, 1963 meeting. That document, a rough draft of a biographical information sheet on Amlash (no final draft was found) appears to have been prepared in 1966 at the time of Amlash's arrest for a later plot against Castro. It states: "22 Nov. 63 Mr. Fitzgerald and Mr. Sanchez assured subject that this Agency would give him everything he needed (telescopic sight, silencer, all the money he wanted). The situation changed when Mr. Sanchez and Mr. Fitzgerald left the meeting to discover that President Kennedy had been assassinated. Because of this fact, plans with subject changed and it was decided that this

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Agency could have no part in the assassination of a government leader (including Castro) and it would not aid Subject in his attempt. This included the following. "We would not furnish the silencer, nor scope nor any money for direct assassination; furthermore, we would not lift a finger to help subject escape from Cuba should he assassinate Castro."

The same document states this message was communicated to Amlash in November 1964 by Mr. Sanchez.

Despite this decision, the CIA in fact continued to assist Amlash through a cut-out until Amlash's arrest in 1966.

Later documents on Amlash are also relevant to the September-November 1963 Amlash operation. Several such documents report information received to the effect that Fidel Castro had long been aware of Amlash's plots against him. For example, Amlash's one time Cuban mistress was believed to be working for Cuban intelligence and her brother was known to be with Cuban intelligence. ²⁰⁻ (Part) 8242 to DIR in December 1964 warns that Amlash's objective may be known to too many Cubans. And, one CIA informant reported in 1966 on one known double agent of Cuban intelligence working for CIA and said the CIA's Cuban operations had been penetrated at a high level by Cuban intelligence. He identified this latter individual only as one of the Cuban

exiles who was knowledgeable of a number of the most important operations. Nevertheless, Amlash's file contains nothing to indicate any detailed analysis of these possible penetrations of the CIA's Amlash operation, although a cryptic handwritten note on at least one report rejects the suggestion that Amlash was himself reporting to Castro.

One other document bears on the testimony Amlash's case officers gave before the Select Committee to the effect that Amlash was given a poison pen for self-protection. That document reports that Amlash, and other Cuban officials in Paris in 1963, were carrying pistols for self-protection throughout their travel in Europe.

Finally, although the staff has not reviewed all possible CIA files to determine what other operations Castro might have been referring to in his September 7 statement, the Amlash file indicates that some coastal landings of supplies in August were the only other CIA operations conducted against Cuba in this time period.

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