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OFFICIAL HISTORY
OF THE
BAY OF PIGS OPERATION

VOLUME II
PARTICIPATION IN THE CONDUCT
OF FOREIGN POLICY
(pages 1-167)

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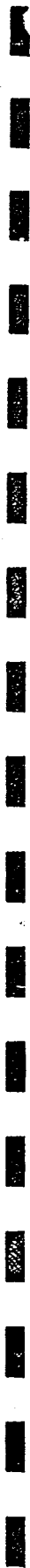
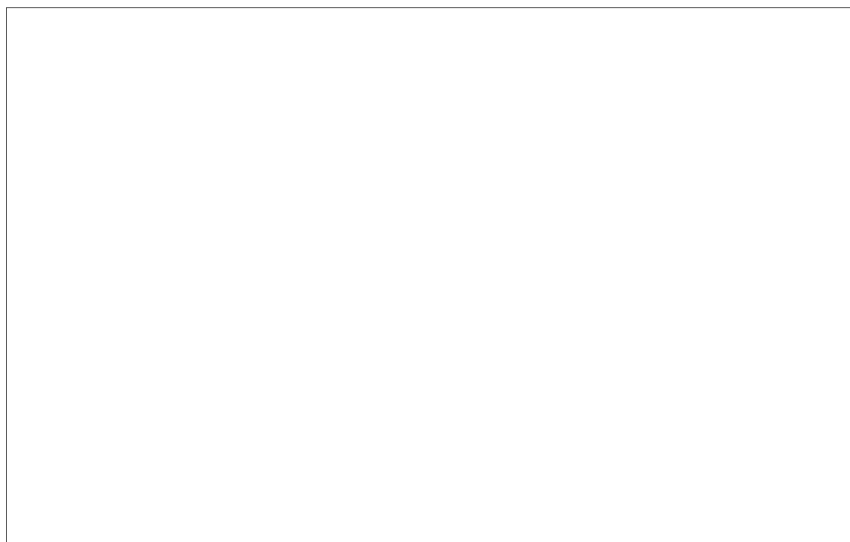
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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

OFFICIAL HISTORY
OF THE
BAY OF PIGS OPERATION

Volume II

PARTICIPATION IN THE CONDUCT
OF FOREIGN POLICY

October 1979

Jack B. Pfeiffer

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FOREWORD

Nearly 20 years have elapsed since the Agency was authorized by President Eisenhower to undertake a program of covert action to overthrow Fidel Castro, but despite voluminous writings subsequent to the activity intending to show the disastrous nature of CIA's guidance of the operation, no attention ever has focused on the Agency's participatory role in the formulation of United States foreign policy vis-a-vis Guatemala and Nicaragua during the course of the operation. One purpose of this volume in the Official History of the Bay of Pigs series is to examine in detail the extent of those relationships as they impacted on -- or in fact became -- the policies of the United States government toward those two countries.

In Guatemala, the Agency dealt directly with the President Miguel Ydigoras Fuentes or his personal representative Roberto Alejos; and the relationships were far more complex -- and covered a longer time span -- than was the case with Nicaragua. In addition,

- ii -

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negotiations initiated by the Agency with the Government of Guatemala heavily involved both the Departments of State and Defense; and, during the Eisenhower administration, the Special Group.

The Nicaraguan story principally concerned the Agency's efforts to obtain an air base and port facility for launching the anti-Castro strike force against Cuba; and the involvement was directly with the President of Nicaragua, Luis Somoza Debayle, and his brother, Anastasio Somoza Debayle, the Commander of Nicaragua's Armed Forces. The US embassy in Nicaragua and its representatives were kept informed and, in general, supported the Agency as the ball carrier with the Government of Nicaragua. The story was relatively straightforward with the Agency being given the green light to negotiate in many areas affecting US relations with that country.

A third Central American country, Panama, was involved marginally in the Agency's anti-Castro effort. Forts Randolph and Sherman in the Canal Zone were the sites initially selected for PM and communications training for the cadres which were to help organize the dissident elements inside Cuba; and France airfield

- iii -

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in the Zone also was used by Agency aircraft during the course of the project. CIA's negotiations for use of these Panama sites, therefore, were with the US Departments of Defense and Army, rather than with the government of Panama.

As the anti-Castro program of the US was implemented, a sometimes embarrassing relationship with the United Kingdom developed because of the frequency with which aircraft of the anti-Castro Brigade made emergency landings on the airstrip at Grand Caymen Island and, in one instance, at Kingston, Jamaica. Agency personnel assigned to the anti-Castro project were not directly involved in the negotiations with the senior UK representatives for release of either the aircraft or their crews. Acting upon instructions received from the DCI level, CIA's [redacted] [redacted] was principally responsible for resolving such problems; and, consequently, such negotiations are not subject to discussion in this volume.*

* The topic is discussed in Volume I of this history, *Air Operations*.

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As with the preceding volume of this series, the author wishes to acknowledge the contributions of the other members of the CIA History Staff, Mrs. Sharon Bond and Mrs. Eulalie Hammond, to the completion of this segment of the Bay of Pigs history. From substantive research to typing and proofreading, they did whatever needed doing regardless of their job descriptions. For any errors of fact or questions of interpretation, they are blameless -- the author assumes full responsibility.

- v -

~~TOP SECRET~~

VOLUME II

Contents

	<u>Page</u>
Foreword	ii
Part I Guatemala	1
A. Background	1
B. Establishing Contacts with Ydigoras and Alejos	3
C. Cover, Security and Latin Pride	12
D. <i>Quid Pro Quos</i>	24
E. November Revolt -- Policy Makers vs Pragmatists	28
F. Minor Skirmishes: Inter- and Intra-Agency	52
G. The Special Forces Trainers -- Pragmatism and Patience	57
H. The Changing Political Climate .	73
I. Third Country Involvement	80
J. GOG - JMATE and the Kennedy Administration	84
Part II Nicaragua	100
A. Background	100
B. Initiation of Discussions with President Somoza	101

	<u>Page</u>
C. Rip Robertson's Excursion into Diplomacy	108
D. Qualms at High Levels	122
E. Back to Robertson -- Activist with Foresight	127
F. Who Would Do What for Whom? . .	133
G. Down to the Wire with Somoza . .	138
Part III Conclusions	147

Source References

Part I Guatemala	149
Part II Nicaragua	161

Appendixes

1. Guatemalan Revolt, November 1960: Miscellaneous Cables	168
2. Memorandums re Special Force Trainers . .	230
A. Four Memorandums of Agreement	231
B. Memorandum for Chief, WH/4 from A/DDP/A, 28 Dec 60	235
C. Memorandum for Chief, WH/4 from A/DDP/A, 30 Dec 60	241
D. Memorandum for Deputy Assistant to the SecDef for Spl Ops, 30 Dec 60 .	245
3. Portion of Oral History Interview with Ambassador John J. Muccio, 13 Apr 71 . .	246

~~TOP SECRET~~

The clearest case to me of the CIA affecting directly negotiations with another Chief of State was Ydigoras. I think that was frankly unavoidable and inescapable, because we had almost constant problems of a kind of operational nature. Here we were training a force that [Col.] Jack Hawkins once characterized to me as the most powerful military force from Mexico to Colombia in his [Ydigoras's] country. He himself faced a lot of domestic opposition -- at one time they tried to overthrow him, as you remember. He wanted to get this [Cuban] group out of there as soon as possible, and I am sure that you have seen a lot of the traffic and memoranda of discussion; but it seems to me really to characterize especially the period in November-December (1960) when Tom Mann wanted to get the Brigade the hell out of Guatemala and Ydigoras would have welcomed it. There was no place for them to go. I still remember that we even talked about ferrying them to that training site [redacted] in [redacted], which was a measure of the desperation -- or desperate desire -- to get them out of there [Guatemala]. We talked again about trying to find a remote site in the continental US, but Tom Mann with the State Department would have none of that. In that period when sort of constant operational problems with Ydigoras were all wrapped up in the larger question of where this training activity could be carried on and how it could be made less obtrusive -- I think it was just inevitable that Agency representatives found themselves dealing directly with Ydigoras.

Richard M. Bissell
to Jack B. Pfeiffer
17 October 1975

- viii -

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THE BAY OF PIGS OPERATION

Volume II Participation in the Conduct
of Foreign Policy

Part I
Guatemala

A. Background

Direct participation in the affairs of Guatemala was not new in Agency history. In 1954 CIA had provided support and had motivated Guatemalan forces which ousted then President Castillo Armas, a pro-communist, in favor of the presidency of Jacobo Arbenz Guzmán.

On 26 July 1957 Arbenz was assassinated and the political situation in Guatemala evolved into a three-way dog fight among the forces of the left, the right, and the center. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] and were opposed to both the leftists and to the party of Ydigoras Fuentes -- the rightist candidate who also had the support of the Army. When it became clear [REDACTED] that Ydigoras was the most popular figure in Guatemala

- 1 -

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[redacted] .. arranging for a behind the scenes conference between Ydigoras and the MDN [Cruz Salazar's party]. A "deal" was arranged whereby the assembly would elect Ydigoras and the MDN would get three seats in the cabinet, forgiveness for the sins committed under the Castillo regime, and a financial "pay-off" to Cruz and other MDN leaders. On 12 February 1958 the Assembly elected Ydigoras as President. 1/

In the interval from the election of Ydigoras until the announcement of Eisenhower's anti-Castro program, both the government of Guatemala and, through the Agency, the United States Government began to focus closer attention on Fidel Castro's revolution which led to the overthrow of the Batista government at the beginning of 1959. Although the Department of State hesitated to classify Castro as a communist, there was little doubt among Clandestine Services personnel about the direction in which Castro was tending; and by the early part of 1960, it was clear that the Government of Guatemala (GOG) was willing to take some risks in opposition to Fidel Castro. Not only did Guatemala sever official relations with Cuba, but before the end of February 1960, President Ydigoras offered the use of his territory to support propaganda activities directed against Castro; and he also made

- 2 -

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a specific offer through the CIA "to groups favorably regarded by us [of] training facilities in the Petén area of Guatemala." 2/*

B. Establishing Contacts with Ydigoras and Alejos

It was more than two months following President Eisenhower's announcement of an anti-Castro program before Chief JMATE, Jacob D. Esterline, and
 Robert K. Davis, met with representatives of the GOG; but in the interval between the announcement and Esterline's first meeting, Davis had already established contact with Roberto Alejos -- the principal representative of President Ydigoras Fuentes in all

* It is interesting to observe that this specific reference to the use of the Petén area in Guatemala was reworded for use by the DCI in a memorandum to the members of the Special Group to read "this training and holding [of anti-Castro Cubans] would be conducted in a secure remote area of a friendly Latin American country." 3/ The Special Group 5412 was a group composed of the Assistant Secretaries of State and Defense, the DCI, the President's National Security Adviser, and a CIA Secretariat. Its principal purpose was to review proposed paramilitary and clandestine operations and to provide guidance on such proposals for the President. President Eisenhower made extensive use of this group, but President Kennedy largely abandoned it until late in the period of the Bay of Pigs operation.

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subsequent matters involving the CIA.* Esterline incidentally, had been the senior officer in the Headquarters end of the operation which had forced the resignation and ouster of President Arbenz in 1954. During the first meetings with Alejos and Ydigoras in Guatemala City on 30 and 31 May 1960, plans were initiated for the use of a portion of Alejos's coffee plantation -- Finca Helvetia -- as a communications training site; and discussions were held concerning additional sites for the training of paramilitary candidates.

At the same time, it was made clear to Ydigoras that the Agency sponsored Cuban exile organization, the Frente Revolucionario Democrático (FRD), would nominally be responsible for whatever training activities of Cubans took place in Guatemala. The names of Antonio Varona and Justo Carrillo were given to President Ydigoras and Robert Alejos as two of the

* Eisenhower's anti-Castro program was dated 17 March 1960. CIA's anti-Castro effort was located within the Western Hemisphere Division, Branch 4 (WH/4). Initially WH/4 was given the crypt JMARC; but when this was compromised, the crypt was changed to JMATE. Throughout this history, except when direct quotations are given, the term JMATE is used.

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key figures in the FRD. According to Esterline's report of the meeting "it was never said in so many words that CIA, in effect, is supporting these people, it was implicit in President Ydigoras's attitude that he well understood that support is being given to these people through indirect means."* In playing his own game of plausible deniability, Ydigoras pointed out that the less he knew of the operation, the better would be his denials to the Organization of American States (OAS) or others who were concerned that anti-Castro activities were being mounted within his country's borders. It was also during this first session between Chief, WH/4 and the Guatemalans that plans were made to introduce Esterline to the Guatemalan ambassador

* Arthur Schlesinger put the situation quite accurately in the following comment:

The Frente was appropriately named: it was a front and nothing more. While its members talked among themselves, CIA was engaged in a recruiting drive among Cuban refugees in Florida and Central America. It had also persuaded President Ydigoras of Guatemala to permit the establishment of a secret training camp and air base in the Guatemalan mountains." 3a/

- 5 -

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in Washington, Carlos Alejos, the brother of Roberto Alejos. 4/*

Portents of things to come followed shortly after Esterline's first meeting with Roberto Alejos. On 8 June 1960, Alejos, as he had indicated in his initial meeting with Davis and Esterline, was in the United States where he met with Esterline. Among the subjects discussed, in addition to the utilization of Guatemalan territory for the training of anti-Castro Cubans, Alejos said that he would be taking a look at the airstrip at Retalhuleu to see if it was capable of handling C-54 aircraft. Construction and renovation of this airstrip would later give rise to both some intra-agency squabbles and also some strain in the relationships between the Agency and Alejos.

At this time, too, Alejos was very much concerned about the United States ambassador to the OAS, John Dryer, who, according to Alejos, was pressing the GOG

* Carlos Alejos apparently was appointed US ambassador a short time prior to Esterline's meeting with Ydigoras and Roberto Alejos. A cable to the Department from Guatemala City on 18 May 1960 noted that Carlos Alejos "Ambassador-designate to the US" would arrive in New Orleans on 25 May 60. 4a/

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to respond to a Cuban charge that Guatemala was being used as a staging base for a planned invasion of Cuba and that an OAS inspection was in order. Alejos's response was that if Cuba would agree to a similar inspection, Guatemala could be freely visited by the OAS team. In what would be a continuing irritant through the course of Project JMATE, Roberto Alejos also expressed his displeasure with the failures of the governments of Honduras and El Salvador to break relations with Fidel Castro's Cuba. 5/

Whether Esterline actually met with Ambassador Carlos Alejos at this time is not known, but it appears possible that such a meeting may have taken place.* In any event a cable sent from Guatemala City to the Guatemalan Embassy in Washington, D. C. for Roberto Alejos dated 7 June 1960, addressed itself in part to Raul Roa's (Cuba's Foreign Minister) request for

* One of Roberto Alejos's cards with the following note (translated from Spanish) was found in Chief, WH/4 records:

. Carolio:

The bearer is a good friend, I pray that you will assist him and make use of his contacts in the US.

- 7 -

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the OAS investigation of Guatemala, and it also contains the following tantalizing message:

Impossible to give proof of what is happening in Cuba[.] Members of the Premier's personal guard have been shot [according to] some sources of information. 6/*

By mid-June 1960 plans were well in hand for establishing training activities in Guatemala. Roberto Alejos, who had gone from Washington to Miami, had been introduced to Casimiro (Chick) Barquin of DPD -- the Agency's air arm -- who was about to take off for Guatemala to survey the airfields at San Jose and Retalhuleu, to check the airstrip at Petén, and to see what other airstrips might be available. Robert Davis, [redacted] was in Miami to perform the introductions. As proved to be the case in Nicaragua, [redacted] [redacted] Guatemala planned to isolate [redacted] activities from the PM and communications training programs which

* In Spanish the message read as follows:

PRUEBAS LO QUE PASA EN CUBA IMPOSIBLE DARLAS
FUSILARIAN MIEMBROS GUARDIA PERSONAL PREMIER
UNA DE LAS TANTAS FUENTES INFORMATION STOP.

Apparently in the transmission or in the cablese some words and punctuation were lost, omitted, or goofed up.

- 8 -

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were about to be established. But unlike the Nicaraguan situation where was better able to do this, such isolation was more theoretical than practical. 7/

Davis did tell Roberto Alejos that matters pertaining to the training sites for the anti-Castro Cubans would henceforth be discussed with Juan Paula Argeo. Paula was a member of the FRD and it had been agreed between the head of the WH/4 political section, Gerald (Gerry) Droller, and the FRD that Paula would work out details of reimbursing Alejos during the course of this initial survey trip.* The funds were ostensibly coming from the FRD through Paula. In the course of arriving at decisions on the financing and the funding of the training, it was pointed out that Droller should urge the FRD leadership to increase its own fund raising program. 8/

While on the one hand the Agency was concerned with masking the funding for the FRD from the Cubans, it was at the same time concerned with disguising

* Droller was known to the Cubans as Frank Bender -- a cover identity that wasn't blown until the publication of Arthur Schlesinger's *A Thousand Days* in 1964. Juan Paula was, in fact, Manuel F. Goudie.

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Alejos's position from the Cubans -- his role would be as a private Guatemalan citizen, cooperating with the FRD element for ideological reasons. 9/ In addition to the Agency's interest in protecting the cover stories, Ydigoras himself was very much concerned that the training program not be revealed to the public. In one instance when he heard that a Guatemalan Congressman was trying to promote support for a group of pro-Batista Cuban recruits to overthrow Castro, he made it quite clear that such a program would find no support at the presidential level. Ydigoras even went so far as to suggest that perhaps he should expel a few pro-Batista and a few pro-Castro Cubans from Guatemala for propaganda purposes in order to protect the Agency's on-going operations. 10/*

By mid-July 1960, construction work had begun on the communications training base and the search was underway for a suitable airstrip. By early August, despite some reservations of the DPD element in charge

* Source reference numbers 11 and 12 not used.

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of the air operations, it had been decided, particularly since it had been favored by the President of Guatemala, that the Retalhuleu airstrip, a graded sod-strip of approximately 4,300' in length, lying in the NW corner of Guatemala, roughly 40 km from the Pacific coast and 50 km from the Mexican border, would be expanded to 5,000'x100' with a crushed stone and asphalt surface. Suitable hanger type structures and other necessary airfield facilities would be installed at that site for the air training base. 13/

Although the details are given in another history, a word should be said here about the highly commendable performance of one of the Agency's engineers from the Office of Logistics, , who on 3 August 1960 was assigned to the Retalhuleu project as the resident engineer and who on 13 September saw President Ydigoras officially inaugurate the opening of the airstrip with the landing of some DC-3's, a C-46, and a couple of Aero Commanders. By 30 September all construction was completed including the extension of the airstrip to 5,000' and the base was ready for the inauguration of training activities. 14/*

* Despite some severe criticism from the A/DDP/A, C. Tracy Barnes, about cost overruns, inefficient
(footnote continued on following page)

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C. Cover, Security and Latin Pride

A high degree of cooperation between the President of Guatemala and the Agency was clearly evident in the plans to provide a cover story for the increase of air activity at Retalhuleu. At the dedication of the base (JMADD), Ydigoras pointed out that the airfield was being renovated to provide protection for the northwest border of Guatemala and to provide a training base for new B-26's which were being acquired under the Military Assistance agreement with the United States. The infantry base (JMTRAV) was to be provided cover by GOG troops -- reportedly the palace guard for President Ydigoras -- who had begun training in the area in order to disguise Agency activities with the Cuban exiles.

In quest of support for his anti-Castro effort, Ydigoras was not reluctant to devise cover stories of his own. In the early part of August, for example, Ydigoras told Carl Jenkins, then COB JMTRAV, that he, Ydigoras, had "invented" a Cuban warship that was supposed to be lurking off of the east coast threatening

management by [redacted], and similar other charges drawn exclusively from hindsight, rather than on-site investigation, Mr. [redacted] did a magnificent job when faced with heavy obstacles, not the least of which was approximately 100" of rainfall in the Retalhuleu area during the period when the airstrip was being extended. The Chief of WH/4 Support said in fact, "the resident engineer is to be commended for the excellent performance of a difficult task." 15/

- 12 -

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invasion. He then leaked the word that he was accepting offers of Cuban exiles in Guatemala to assist his country in its defense against a Castro attack. All of these activities were being carried on directly between the President of Guatemala and the Agency's representatives in the field. The Department of State, if informed of the GOG support for JMATE, chose to appear ignorant of any involvement of the US Government.

Beginning in early August of 1960, Guatemala Air Force B-26's and P-51's flew to all parts of the country to provide additional support for the cover story; and as Ydigoras had indicated in the earlier part of the month, joint Army/Air maneuvers began in the San Jose, Retalhuelu, and Champerico areas to give further support to the story that the increase in training activity was related to improving the status of the GOG's own military. To insure the security of the area where the Agency activities were centered, the newspapers and the public were advised that they should not trespass in the training areas because live ammunition was going to be

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employed in the exercises. 16/*

The President of Guatemala was interested in doing more than simply providing a cover story for the Agency activities. Throughout the period prior to the invasion -- and even through the course of the invasion -- he or his chief spokesman, Roberto Alejos, made it quite clear on numerous occasions that they would be willing, indeed were anxious, to see Guatemalan Army and Air Force personnel actively participate in the operations against Castro's Cuba. As early as September 1960 when the first resupply overflight was being planned, Alejos and the Defense Minister of Guatemala were in serious discussion with Carl Jenkins, the COB of the ground training base, JMTRAV, about the possibility of using some Guatemalan personnel as either PDO's or assigning a counterpart Guatemalan Air Force crew to the C-54

* It is possible that this training was made possible, in part at least, by the 5,000 pounds of small arms and perhaps as much as 100,000 pounds of machine guns, ammunition, and rockets that CIA provided to the GOG at this time. 17/

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that would be used in the overflight. 18/* The prospect of utilizing Guatemalan personnel in addition to the Cubans appeared attractive to Agency personnel in the field, but it created negative responses from Headquarters.

Sounding in one instance very much like a reply originated from the Department of State, the Headquarters response to a [] request that a Guatemalan cadre be infiltrated with the Cuban teams read: "Negative ... Possibility adverse political repercussions too great to justify this action." 19/ The enthusiasm in Guatemala also went beyond those immediately in charge of the government. In October 1960 pending a Guatemalan congressional investigation of activities

* An odd feature about the cable from [] to Headquarters with Ydigoras's request was the following query: "Do you have Cuban crew selected? Would they come from air group already in Guatemala?" This would appear to be the long way around to get an answer to the question and may reflect the incipient antipathy between the WH/4 contingent at JMTRAV and the DPD elements at the air base at Retalhuleu which would later lead to harsh words and bitter recriminations that would only be solved -- and then in part -- by the DDP, Richard M. Bissell. As nearly as can be determined, Carl Jenkins was the first COB at JMTRAV, serving from early September until 9-10 December 1960. 18a/

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at Retalhuleu, the principal political opponent of Ydigoras Fuente, Jose Cruz Salazar, who was scheduled to testify before the Congress about the air base, was briefed by Alejos and Ydigoras concerning their support for Project JMATE. Upon completion of this briefing, Guatemala cabled Headquarters that Cruz

enthusiastically endorses effort and will assist provide cover for project before Congress. Also feels it advisable to have picked Guat in project. In turn, he said in two days he can easily raise an extra hundred who would be willing to fight against Castro and communism. 20/

By way of showing some appreciation to the GOG for its support, the Agency provided numerous name traces at the request of Alejos or Ydigoras -- name traces which turned up Castro agents in Guatemala or indicated legitimate Cuban defectors who wished to enter Guatemala. 21/ CIA assisted in having reported sightings of submarines of unknown origin off the west coast of Guatemala checked out -- submarines suspected of carrying arms or bringing pro-Castro guerrillas to Guatemala. In one instance suggested that Headquarters fabricate a photo of a Soviet submarine supposedly off the Guatemalan coast. said the photo could be placed in the Guatemalan

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press, and suggested "may be good way greeting Khrushchev on arrival UN." 22/*

It was also during the early period of initiation of activities in Guatemala that the Agency accommodated the request of President Ydigoras for about 20,000 rounds of 20mm anti-aircraft ammunition valued at about \$30,000. The ammunition was to be used for training of AA gun crews, both as part of the cover and diversion from JMADD/JMTRAV activities and also as an actual part of the Guatemalan defense program against incursions of Cuban aircraft over their east coast. 23/

Relations with the GOG and its representatives were not all sweetness and light. A couple of annoying problems which came up in the early fall of 1960 concerned air operations, and the key figure, as in most of the disputes between the Agency and the GOG, was Roberto Alejos. In one instance he was exceedingly upset by the change in an incoming aircraft schedule, and Guatemala cabled Headquarters to insist -- again,

* CNO actually had P2V's sweeping the Pacific coast of Guatemala during the period 14-18 October 1960 in an attempt to locate a reported Soviet submarine -- with no luck.

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apparently -- that last minute changes in flight schedules were unacceptable to Alejos and that if he could not be given 24 hour notice of planned flights, then schedules should be revised in order to accommodate Alejos's demand. 24/ Some preliminary discussions between the Agency's representatives in Guatemala and the Thompson Cornwall Company (the construction company responsible for the improvements of the Retalhuleu airfield) over the question of providing cover for the Agency's PBY came to naught when Alejos pointed out the numerous difficulties which would attend the attempts to cover the aircraft commercially. Alejos noted that it would be much simpler to bring the PBY in black, or chartered in his name, rather than to attempt to use it under commercial cover. 25/

The problem of aircraft maintenance posed a more serious question in terms of both cover and diplomatic relations with Guatemala. In the early summer of 1960 negotiations had been undertaken with a Costa Rican aircraft maintenance organization known as SALA. The Development Projects Division, (DPD) which was in charge of air operations for JMATE had initiated the contacts with SALA through

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[redacted], a [redacted] corporation which was Agency controlled. For cover purposes it was owned by two members of the FRD. Agency employees in key positions in the company could monitor its activities and conduct necessary business. The B-26 and C-46 aircraft for use in the JMATE project were nominally to be sold to the FRD by [redacted] which, in turn, would support the cover that the aircraft at JMADD belonged to the Guatemalan Government. [redacted] would negotiate with SALA for maintenance of the "Guatemalan" aircraft. All of this, of course, to involve ferrying of B-26's from CONUS into Guatemala black, removing and replacing of GOG insignia on aircraft as they might move from Guatemala to Costa Rica where SALA had its principal maintenance base, and generally conducting operations in such a manner as to provide viable cover. 25a/

By mid-September however, no agreement had yet been reached. A few days prior to the time that the DPD representatives planned to close the final agreement with SALA, a dispute arose between DPD and WH/4/PM. The question concerned an apparent DPD attempt to go it alone in the negotiations with SALA. The upshot

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was that a SALA representative arrived in Guatemala City accompanied by the Costa Rican ambassador. The two Costa Ricans had then visited various Guatemalan officials seeking information about a damaged C-46 which DPD anticipated that SALA would be called on to repair. DPD planned to have the SALA representative, who had never been cleared by the Agency, visit the JMADD site. This visit was denied, and, in addition, Joseph Langan, Chief, WH/4 Security, in his memorandum on the incident stated:

In view of the fact that relations between Guatemala and Costa Rica are apparently in a rather strained state at this time, these inquiries have resulted in placing the JMADD activities in an embarrassing situation relative to the Guatemalan government and in our dealings with various officials of said government ... Had the Guatemalan government been aware of the need for aircraft mechanics, this need might possibly have been filled from within Guatemala and obviated the necessity for bringing the SALA Corporation into the JMADD activity and, as a by-product, considerably reduced the expense of such activities. 26/

The maintenance contract between the Agency and SALA was never put into force because it got into these very sensitive political areas. 26a/

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Because he played such a significant role in the Agency's relationship with his government, a special word should be said here about Roberto Alejos who was Ydigoras's alter ego in practically all matters concerning the Agency's Guatemala program. Alejos was informed on even the most minute details -- or if he was not informed, he let it be known that he was dissatisfied, displeased, and disagreeable. Where on the one hand he was almost solely responsible for covering the death of the first Cuban trainee, Carlos Rafael Santanya, whose dog tag number would be used to identify the exiles as the 2506 Brigade, on other occasions Alejos could behave as though he, rather than the Agency, were in charge of the training operation in Guatemala. With reference to the accidental death of the Brigade trainee, a cable from Guatemala to Headquarters noted that after the recovery of the body, the autopsy, and the burial, that:

Alejos moved quickly to cover incident with local officials, from Governor down to adjoining finca manager. Thank God they all belong Government Party and he can control them. Believe total costs ops gifts no more than \$1,000. 27/

In the early part of October 1960, Alejos was one of the principals in a potentially explosive

- 21 -

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incident which could have had serious repercussions, including possible loss of Guatemalan and US lives and the closing out of the training bases in Guatemala. The unfortunate situation seems to have occurred, in part at least, because of the inability of Agency personnel to communicate in Spanish with their Guatemalan hosts. Col. Antonio Batres had requested permission to enter the JMADD signal center in order to transmit a message. Batres was not only Chief of Guatemalan Air Force operations, he was also the personal pilot of President Ydigoras. The Agency officer in charge of the communications center had delayed Col. Batres a moment in order to secure sensitive materials in the area. According to the report to Headquarters, Batres thought that he was being denied access to the commo facilities which he apparently had utilized previously; and he departed the scene, only to return again with Roberto Alejos, half a dozen Guatemalan soldiers, and the commander of the Guatemalan security guard at JMADD. Alejos also was told that he would have to wait for a few minutes while the area was made secure -- at which point Alejos, accompanied by the commander of the Guatemalan guard

- 22 -

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unit and Batres, forced his way into the signal center and informed the Agency officer that he was under arrest.

Prior to, and in anticipation of, Alejos's return and the probability of a forced entry, the JMADD security officer had informed the communications officer that such an event would probably occur and that no resistance to Alejos should be made. Fortunately in the ensuing discussions between Alejos and the Agency's representatives, the situation was sorted out -- despite Alejos' angry statements that it was his intention to close down the communications activity in order to bring the number of negative aspects of the operation to the attention of "the big boys in Washington." 28/

There were, however, no repercussions nor security breaks resulting from this incursion by the Guatemalans into the commo center. The communications officer whom Alejos had declared to be "under arrest" was never technically arrested and, by way of apology, Alejos invited the officer to his home as a dinner guest.

- 23 -

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D. Quid Pro Quos

Alejos's displays of temper may have had a less than subtle influence on subsequent negotiations with the Agency's representatives in Guatemala. Shortly after the foregoing incident, Chief, WH/4 (Jake Esterline) requested authority to obligate \$150,000 for compensation to property owners in the area of the Retalhuleu air base for damages resulting from renovation of the airfield. Seventeen kilometers of roadway were reportedly "damaged considerably" when used as an access road to Roberto Alejos's finca, and repair on the seventeen kilometers was set at \$100,000 -- plus an additional \$50,000 to pay for rock taken from the river on property owned by one Señor Ralda on 5 acres of his property. 29/ Following Headquarters authorization of the payments to Alejos and Ralda,

went to Headquarters with a cable on

4 Nov 1960 reading:

1. Payment of the \$50,000 has to be made to Ralda immediately upon preparation and delivery of the local legal documents, as this Alejos understanding, and he had made the commitment to Ralda.
2. Operational activities and liaison with high Guat government officials would have been seriously affected, and the

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success of the project materially jeopardized if payment is delayed. 3. Copies of legal documents will be forwarded Headquarters with the receipt. 30/

Despite the fact that the \$100,000 was supposed to make the finca roadway and the 17 kilometers passable during the rainy season, an engineering report indicated that the steep grade was washing out the ballast and the road would need to be paved. Thompson-Cornwall, the engineering outfit which had restored Retalhuleu, had given an estimate of \$185,000 to do the job. Alejos had tried to raise the difference between the \$100,000 Headquarters had approved and the total contract price, but had been unable to do so. A cable of 25 Nov 60 from Guatemala indicated that [] might be able to make a deal with Alejos for less than the full contract price and requested that he be authorized to offer a maximum of \$130,000. The message to Headquarters ended with the standard plea that the negotiation be authorized as the matter was extremely delicate and could cause embarrassment to the project. An outgoing cable from the Director on 26 Nov 60 authorized [] to negotiate up to \$130,000 if that proved to be necessary; and the releasing

- 25 -

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officer for the cable was the DDP, Richard M. Bissell. 31/

In addition to these sums approved for payment to Alejos, other legitimate expenses the Agency incurred were for the use of Ydigoras's aircraft and for repaving and maintenance of the La Suiza airstrip on Alejos's property -- a total of \$32,000. 32/ Alejos's various claims appear to have been legitimate expenses incurred under the terms of the open-ended oral contract which had been in effect since the initiation of the project in Guatemala. Despite the failure of Alejos to sign documents for using an alias identity -- John Black -- or his failure to execute a written contract, wrote that:

JMATE does feel morally and legally obligated to reimburse Alejos for any expenses he incurs in his efforts for the Project if he submits a claim for reimbursement. It is on this basis that the relationship with Alejos now stands. To sum up the relationship between the Agency and Alejos, there has been no discussion of payment of salary or other monetary benefits. Alejos expects to be reimbursed for any expenses incurred in behalf of the Agency, and the Agency, to maintain its self respect and relationship with the Subject, is committed to pay for such expenses. 33/

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Oral agreements notwithstanding, there is evidence that Alejos tried to take advantage of the situation on a number of occasions. As early as August 1960, for example, Alejos's brother-in-law, an engineer, was proposed for a contract of \$1,000 per month for work related to the development of the JMTRAV training site; and in January 1961, or shortly prior to January, Alejos had proposed that Agency transport aircraft flying between Guatemala and Florida be used to carry shrimp to the United States. The numerous difficulties attendant upon such an operation were sufficient to cool this proposal, but far more pressure was exerted by Alejos during the period shortly before the invasion in an attempt to get the Agency to help him sell his coffee crop -- presumably because his participation in project activities had forced him to miss numerous opportunities to obtain the best price for his coffee. The Agency found an export agent in the US for Alejos, but the coffee sales were to be within the Guatemalan quota. 34/*

* How such relationships would be regarded in light of the investigative morality of the mid-1970's, is a moot point. At a time that the Bay of Pigs was being planned, the activities which now might seem (footnote continued on following page)

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E. November Revolt -- Policy Makers vs Pragmatists

For all practical purposes, the voice of the US Government in Guatemala during the months when the ground and air training bases -- JMTRAV and JMADD, respectively -- were being established was that of the Central Intelligence Agency. Agency training programs were developed with the full and complete cooperation of the President of Guatemala, his principal spokesman, Roberto Alejos, and other high GOG officials. Such interest as the Department of State evidenced in the affairs of Guatemala were concerned principally with embarrassments that might result from Cuban charges in the OAS or in the UN relating to US support for Cuban exiles training in the Guatemalan area. By mid October of 1960 this point was causing some consternation to Assistant Secretary of State, Thomas Mann. 35/ From this time forward until his replacement as Assistant Secretary of State for American Republican Affairs, Mann was the Agency's

prejudicial were unquestionably necessary in view of the fact that CIA was forced to use the Guatemalan training sites. The Agency's preference for the use of CONUS facilities for the training had been continuously denied.

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principal protagonist in the Department of State. Despite this, however, he was a man who, in retrospect at any rate, was held in the highest regard by both Richard Bissell, the DDP, and Jake Esterline, Chief, WH/4.*

While Tom Mann would continue to be embroiled in the Agency's relations with Guatemala, the United

* In an Oral History Interview with the author in the fall of 1975, Esterline had the following comments to make about Mr. Mann:

If you discussed a project in general terms and he didn't like it, he would tell you, but if you could bring him around to the point where he said, "well, go ahead and do it, but be damn sure that you do it all out," that would be the end of it. I think he was one of these who felt that the prestige of the United States was getting very thin in the hemisphere -- in the sense of relating it to our gunboat diplomacy days ... when we could of sort of rape the lock and there would be no problem with it. I think that he felt that the odds of being able to put everything into it were very slim; but, again, when he finally realized what the alternatives were, he finally said, "Well, if this is it, then let's do that plan, and let's go the whole way on it." I had many go-arounds with Tom on something until I finally got him to agree, or he said, "I am not going to agree." In this case he finally agreed. No, it would be very hard to fault Tom on the thing. 36/

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States ambassador to Guatemala, John J. Muccio, who preferred a back seat with regard to all activities concerning the Cuban Brigade, was also going to be forced into an active role in at least one event where the Agency played the key role -- the preservation of the Ydigoras presidency in November 1960. As early as July of 1960, Ydigoras expressed to [] [] his fear that the *Partido General Trabajo* and the *Partido Unidad Revolucionario* could possibly overthrow his administration. With this in mind, Ydigoras had discussed with [] and Carl Jenkins the possibility of forming a multi-national force composed principally of anti-communists from all parts of the world, including Guatemala and other Latin American countries. As part of this program, Roberto Alejos had suggested to [] and Jenkins that Guatemalan volunteers be trained as a part of the JMATE operation. While the field was favorably disposed to undertake this sort of training for the Guatemalans, no progress was made with Headquarters on the plan. 37/*

* In fact, Ydigoras and his Cabinet had decreed -- and the Congress had approved -- a 30 day state of (footnote continued on following page)

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By mid October 1960, the internal situation in Guatemala had worsened, and Ydigoras was pressing hard on Washington for loans and grants-in-aid to assist him in maintaining control. The GOG faced a financial crisis -- salaries had been cut, people were unemployed, and the Leftists were making strong inroads in the political life of the country. A general strike had been called, and this posed a possible threat to the overthrow of the Ydigoras government. "Reports of varying reliability" suggested that Castro might be supplying funds to and training cadres of anti-Ydigoras groups in Guatemala in an attempt both to oust Ydigoras and, consequently, put an end to Guatemalan support for the Cuban training program. The situation had become so serious that by the end of October and the early part of November JMADD had completed preparations for a quick evacuation of all the aircraft and all station personnel

seige on 19 July 1960. Carl Jenkins, assigned to WH/4/PM, was providing operational guidance to [] prior to assuming his job as COB TRAV. In September 1960, Ernest W. Sparks was named Chief, JMATE activities in Guatemala and thus became the adviser to [] on ops plans. 37a/

- 31 -

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to France Field in Panama. Ydigoras himself was facing strong congressional opposition from those who refused to believe that he had not permitted the use of Guatemalan territory for the training of the anti-Castro Cuban group.

How desperate the situation appeared to the GOG was noted in a cable from Headquarters to Guatemala:

JMARC principal Department of State contact told [Gerard] Droller that Alejos [presumably Ambassador Alejos] had informed President Eisenhower of Guat plan stage Cuban invasion Guat. According this plan, it is intended for number of Cubans land Guat beach and dig for arms caches ostensibly placed there by Castro agents. "Invading Cubans" would be apprehended by Guats and brought to trial. Trial proceedings would be extremely fair and sentences extremely light. Ydigoras desires contrast Guat application justice with that of Castro. Intended that the entire operation be bloodless and without shooting. 38/

It was not clear whether the "invaders" were to be volunteers from among the troops in training at JMTRAV, but before any such operation could take place, a real crisis broke in Guatemala.

On 13 November 1960 an emergency cable from JMADD was received in Headquarters at 0931 (Washington time), stating that Roberto Alejos had arrived at the

- 32 -

~~TOP SECRET~~

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MADD base to tell the Agency representatives that various cities, including Guatemala City, were having "minor skirmishes with communist elements." At this time, Alejos made a request that MADD "be prepared to participate in show of strength in form of fly-overs" and it was the plan of the Acting Chief of JMADD to comply with Alejos's request pending Headquarters approval. 39/ The American Embassy's initial message was received in the Department at 1234 hours (Washington time), and said "some kind of uprising" in Guatemala City had been aborted. 39a/

Within a few hours of the first announcement of the revolt, there began a rash of emergency cable traffic among Guatemala City, JMADD, and Headquarters that continued for the next three to four days. Almost immediately, for example, key Agency personnel in Guatemala were hit with requests for support and assistance from the Ydigoras government. One of the first requests came from the Minister of Defense, Rubin Gonzales Sigui who, fearful that the revolt was being directed and sponsored by Cuban elements, asked that the US provide surveillance for enemy ships which might be operating between Cuba and Puerto Barrios --

- 33 -

~~TOP SECRET~~

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one of the principal centers of the revolt. In response to this request, which also was supported by the US ambassador in Guatemala City, the Navy authorized two P2V aircraft to survey the area as far south as Panama and, in addition, assigned a destroyer to patrol the Gulf of Honduras area.* 39b/ The charge that the revolt was Castro backed would be repeated throughout the period of the revolution, but no evidence was ever found to indicate that it was anything other than an internal uprising of dissident Guatemalans, principally elements of the Army. In fact, before the revolutionary episode came to a conclusion, the Political and Psychological warfare unit of WH/4 was to suggest that if legitimate evidence was not found to implicate Castro, that such evidence be manufactured to show that the basis for the revolution was in fact from Fidel Castro and his coterie.

During the course of the first day's action, the Cuban forces in training at JMTRAV were alerted to prepare for any contingency. The Guatemalan troops which had been used as part of the cover and security

* Unsourced comments in the following paragraphs are based on cables reproduced in Appendix 1, Guatemalan Revolt, 13 November 1960: Miscellaneous Cables.

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forces in the TRAV and MADD areas were called to service by Ydigoras, and the Agency's C-46 aircraft out of JMADD participated in transporting these troops to Guatemala City. There was considerable concern about the fact that this left only one C-46 at the Retalhuleu airfield, and this would be insufficient should an emergency evacuation of the Cuban Brigade and Agency personnel be required. Headquarters directed, however, that air transport support continue to be given to the Ydigoras government. An additional problem presented almost immediately to JMATE was a GOG request for large amounts of ordnance to replace expenditures from the first day's strafing and rocket attacks by Guatemalan Air Force B-26's on various points which had fallen to the rebel forces. The Guatemalan government requested, among other ordnance, components for manufacturing napalm bombs; but this request was rejected for technical reasons.

Requests from the field went to Headquarters for the standby of additional B-26's that might be needed by MADD and for C-54 flights to bring in small arms and ammunition. The Chief of Air operations at JMADD, Major Billy B. Campbell, had been to Headquarters

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for meetings with DPD and was visiting [redacted],
Eglin Air Force Base en route back to MADD at the
outbreak of the revolt.* At one point it was planned
that Campbell and another B-26 pilot would make an
emergency flight to MADD with the bomb bays of the
B-26's loaded with ammunition and arms. By mid after-
noon on 13 November, [redacted], Lt. Col. Frank
Egan, who would soon (9/10 December 1960) take charge
of the TRAV base, and Lt. Col. Quentin V. Earl, who
in the absence of Billy Campbell was proceeding to
the MADD base as commanding officer, went forward to
Headquarters with a GOG request to use JMATE's B-26's
and US pilots if they would volunteer to fight for
the Ydigoras government.** MADD also indicated that

* [redacted]
[redacted]
[redacted]

** In an Oral History interview with the author on
15 June 76, Lt. Col. Billy B. Campbell (USAF, Ret.)
offered a somewhat different version of the GOG
approach to JMADD. Campbell stated that:

Alejos had been at the base just prior
to my getting back down and had Guat
troops and had threatened to take over
the base -- JMADD -- and take over the
aircraft and use his own pilots to quell
the invasion which was coming up through
Puerto Barrios and Honduras. 39c/
(footnote continued on following page)

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Ydigoras would like to use the JMTRAV Cubans -- the majority of whom had volunteered to fight for Guatemala -- to help put down the revolt. As the first day wore on, the situation of the Guatemalan government became increasingly difficult. Ydigoras ordered a 30-day state of siege and called an emergency session of Congress. The rebel forces were gaining more ground, literally and figuratively.

Apparently failing to receive an answer from Headquarters concerning the use of US pilots and Cuban troops, [] cabled Headquarters shortly before 0300 hours (Washington time) on 14 November 1960 with a request from Ernie Sparks and Col. Egan for permission to commit 218 Cuban volunteers from JMTRAV as airborne infantry for an assault landing at the Puerto Barrios air base at dawn. In addition, they also requested permission to utilize MADD B-26's piloted by US personnel -- volunteers again -- to

Although the cable traffic fails to mention this incursion by Alejos, it is verified by an eyewitness who was present in the communications room at Retalhuleu when Alejos forced himself into the secure area. This witness recalled Headquarter's instructions to cooperate with Alejos and also the authorization for Seigrist and Beale to fly strikes against the rebels in Puerto Barrios. 39d/

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support the attack. The reason for the use of US B-26 pilots was given as follows:

Due fact Guat pilots have had no practice this type op and Cuban pilots have not yet participated in combined air/ground exercises plus need for precise timing and coordination air strike with air assault landing, request authority use US volunteer pilots to insure success this op.

Request authority use one AEDEPOT volunteer with each assault transport aircraft to provide best leadership available. 40/*

The Headquarters reaction to this request is best explained in the words of the then Deputy Director of Plans, Richard M. Bissell who said:

I remember with some vividness that I was called up by the Watch Officer at about 2:30 in the morning and a cable had come in, I think from Egan, and Ydigoras had asked to borrow some of the Brigade to put down an uprising in Puerto Barrios. Egan wanted an answer within an hour or something of that kind. I did, at that hour in the morning, get in touch with Tom Mann; but I could get no decision out of Tom Mann. He said he couldn't possibly act on a matter of that kind until he could

* AEDEPOTS were defectors from the USSR who had been trained initially by the Agency for various types of [redacted] operations [redacted]. Because their primary mission was phasing out, some 26 of them volunteered and were used as training officers at JMTRAV. See also, pp. 66-67 of this volume.

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see the Secretary in the morning. So here again, you have Ydigoras levying a request on an Agency representative locally, under circumstances and with a time schedule that, as it turned out, made effective reference to the State Department just impossible. The State Department was not equipped to decide something like that within an hour. ... I know that I sent a cable to Egan saying "Yes" on my responsibility; and my reasons for doing that -- very definitely at the time -- were that I didn't think that decision ought to be left to Egan. 41/

There seems to have been some confusion as to what actually happened following the request which Mr. Bissell approved. The initial cable reporting the action stated simply that:

Upon Ydigoras's instructions through Alejos, aircraft and troops launched on schedule. However, when planes at Puerto Barrios, order countermanded as it discovered majority rebels had evacuated base during night. All aircraft and TRAV troops returned JMADD. 42/

On 17 November however, in an after action report it was stated:

MADD B-26's commenced airstrike against Puerto Barrios air base at 0607 hours local, strafing area with rockets and .50 cal. As first C-46 started to land, B-26's strafed in front landing C-46. C-46 made successful landing encountering sporadic small arms fire. Cuban trainees aboard aircraft returned fire through ports during landing. Recall order given before C-46 completed landing. Therefore, pilot did 180 degree

- 39 -

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turn and took off immediately and all C-46's and B-26's returned directly to MADD. 43/

The most accurate story of the air operation mounted by the Agency, however, comes from the principal eye witness to the actual operation against Puerto Barrios, C. W. (Connie) Seigris, who had initially ferried one of the B-26's to Guatemala from the Agency's operations in the Far East, Seigris has written:

I believe the Guatemalan Army Colonel who was in charge of our base informed us of the revolt. This was late in the afternoon [of 13 November 60]. I offered my services, if needed, in support of President Ydigoras. So did some of the Cubans. We felt what we were working for would all go down the tubes if the revolt was successful and we were exposed. Late at night, our offer was accepted. The Guatemalan Air Force refused to participate.

I flew a B-26 with a Cuban pilot-observer named Crespo (he was lost later flying a B-26 at the Bay of Pigs). I strafed and rocketed the airfield at Puerto Barrios to soften the field for the C-46's that were carrying the Cuban troops who were to repress a revolt. The Guatemalan Air Force Colonel, Antonio Batres, asked me later to fly cover for Guatemala army troops who were flown into some airfields in the mountains to counterattack a part of the revolt. Although I flew cover, no close support action was required of me. I flew alone. Also, later Col. Batres asked me to patrol the entire southwest portion along the coast of Guatemala and to fire

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into any grouping of people or vehicles. I patrolled most of the day, stopping to refuel once, but no action was required as there wasn't a soul or vehicle in sight. I flew alone. 44/*

Among other details provided by Seigris was the fact that two B-26's were involved in the Puerto Barrios action, the second being flown by W. H. Beale, who also had flown a B-26 in from the Far East. Seigris flew a total of four sorties, including one to Puerto Barrios, one in the mountains, and two along the coast. Except for the operation in the mountains when he refueled at Guatemala City National Airport, Seigris confined his flights to Retalhuleu. With reference to the actual strike, Seigris noted as follows:

Our targets were restricted by Col. Batres in the Puerto Barrios sortie.

* There is support for Seigris's comments re the Guatemalan Air Force in the cable traffic. Cables to Washington from both [] and the Ambassador indicated that the Air Force officers were unhappy about both using the Cubans and shooting their fellow Guatemalans. In a meeting of the Special Group, Livingston Merchant of State regarded this matter "with extreme gravity, commenting that it might well lead President Ydigoras to withdraw permission for us to continue in Guatemala." 45/ Inasmuch as Ydigoras had already decided that his control of the government depended on support from JMADD (and JMTRAV) Merchant's fears seem unwarranted.

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Some of the airfield buildings were supposed to be holding hostages, but the field proper with its supply sheds and such were pulverized. We strafed ditches, bushes, or anything where someone could find cover close enough to the runway to harass the C-46's that were to land with the Cuban troops. We never were informed of KIA or wounded counts. We did hear that a couple of Americans on the ground watched Bill and I at a safe distance and reported that we did a tremendous job -- whatever that might mean.

Three C-46's were involved. [They were] flown by Cubans. One C-46 landed. As it was rolling to a stop, the Cuban troops started firing out the doors and escape hatches. The pilot thought he had landed in a trap and continued to take off without ever having come to a stop. They refused (all three C-46's) to land after that and returned to Retalhuleu with all other troops still aboard.

I would guess around 100 troops were involved. I can only estimate at what I saw. As to Agency trainers -- here, again, time has slipped my memory -- but I believe their American Commander was on one of the C-46's, but not the C-46 that landed. He was still the same Commander for the Bay of Pigs.*

* This is a reference to Lt. Col. Frank Egan, the PM trainer. Egan's version of the incident is somewhat different than Seigrists. In his testimony to the Taylor Committee Egan said:

President Ydigoras requested that we make an airborne landing, which we did. I was in command of the outfit. Washington gave us permission to do this, but I operated under the Mission Chief in Guatemala.

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- 47 -

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I personally flew a total of around 15 hours on the four sorties. This covered a two day period. My last sortie in the late afternoon on the coast of the second day [15 Nov 60] ended at MADD. I was informed that the revolt was over. I heard that Col. Batres had flown to Puerto Barrios and was negotiating with the ones in charge of the revolt. I was not privileged to find out the results of the revolt, but it was over. I believe the Guatemalan Air Force cancelled our flights when they informed us of Col. Batres' actions ... I did accept my orders at the time and did support Col. Batres' command, but my bosses were Americans; and I would have responded to their orders. None were given after their first permission for me to follow Col. Batres. 46/

Jacob D. Esterline, Chief of JMARC project had some subsequent conversation with the Americans who were mentioned in Seigris's report. In discussions where he had suggested that the B-26's operating

Inasmuch as Egan did not give any specifics about deplaning his troops, both he and Seigris could be technically correct.

The Deputy Chief of DPD claimed that 216 Cuban troops "were committed to Puerto Barrios airstrip at 0600 hours on 14 November. If it is possible, these troops will have to be evacuated if the situation worsens." Once again, however, the language is vague enough to be true, since the referenced evacuation of the Cuban troops does not specify that they were to be evacuated from Puerto Barrios. There is no argument, of course, that they "were committed to Puerto Barrios airstrip," but only in what amounted to a touch-and-go landing. 45a/

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against Puerto Barrios had been flown by Guatemalan pilots, Jake

was challenged several times by people from the United Fruit Company who were there at Puerto Barrios at the time, and they said "look, we have been living around Guatemala for years and we have never seen Guatemalan pilots fly or shoot with the precision that these fellows shot. They didn't kill anybody." (Anybody that they weren't supposed to kill, I guess is the way to put it.) There wasn't a stray bullet anywhere, they strictly hit military targets. But there was a case of a green light from State Department, and then they said they didn't mean it. It was academic, because it was done. 47/*

* Esterline's additional comments are indicative of the confusion that one faces in trying to sort out details of the Bay of Pigs, 16 years after the event. In contrast to Bissell's previously noted remarks with reference to the cable requesting permission to act in response to Ydigoras's request, Jake noted that:

We got this urgent call requesting the use of our troops. We got it, and we looked at it and didn't know what to do with it. We called State Department and said, "We suppose this is critical. The whole thing is going to pot." I suppose that it was Rubottom or somebody at that level over there, that we called. They said "Well, I guess you had better give him what he wants." So we gave him what he wanted, and that was about the time that it was in motion; and we got a call back from State Department saying they'd checked, and they didn't mean it, but it was in motion at that point. 48/

- 44 -

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When the critical request for assistance came in from Egan, the operation -- per Mr. Bissell's decision -- was approved in an outgoing cable from Washington shortly after 0500 hours on the morning of 14 November and it was stated specifically that only CAT pilots could be used -- if they volunteered. 49/* Although the outgoing authorization indicated "we concerned that Cuban troops being committed in advance of Guat troops, also feel part of the strike force must be Guatemalan to offset stigma of attack by foreign mercenaries," there is no indication that Guatemalan troops were aboard the C-46's headed for Puerto Barrios; and as Seigrist pointed out, he flew the Puerto Barrios strike with a Cuban in the right seat and presumably Beale also used a Cuban as his co-pilot. 50/

In addition to the transport of Guatemalan and Cuban troops by C-46's and the B-26 sorties, other events also occupied those Agency personnel at JMADD and JMTRAV. One of the most immediate was the GOG's

* This was to eliminate the possibility that any of the Agency's USAF assignees at JMADD might be involved in a shoot down or accident.

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need for additional small arms and ammunition. During the course of 14 November, there was a heavy exchange of cable correspondence on this subject, with the ultimate plan being that C-124's would pick up materiel from [] at [] and would deliver the required submachine guns, ammunition for the submachine guns, and large quantities of .30 and .50 caliber ammunition to Eglin Air Force Base where it would be picked up by two C-54's and flown down to Retalhuleu air base. 50a/ The C-54 flights were authorized to use USAF or [] contract air crews (OSTIARIES) or any combination of these crews for the deliveries. Flight plans and landing approaches to Retalhuleu were given in great detail in the cable traffic to insure that the materiel -- and personnel -- arrived safely. Discussions concerning emergency evacuation plans for the TRAV and MADD bases were initiated with DOD representatives, and an emergency signal plan was also prepared.* 50b/

* Emergency plans were for air evacuation of Project personnel from Retalhuleu to France Field in the Panama Canal Zone. Contingency planning in case of loss of the airstrip at Retalhuleu called for surface transport from TRAV and MADD to Champerico on the west coast and transfer to small boats at that point for evacuation
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With this flurry of activity it is interesting to note that it was more than 24 hours before Headquarters got around to giving its concurrence to the assignment of Lt. Col. Earl as Chief of Base at JMADD and Lt. Col. Egan as Acting Chief of Base at JMTRAV. The Chief of the JMADD air operations, Billy Campbell, who was up at Eglin Air Force Base when the revolt broke out was off-again-on-again in terms of his return to Retalhuleu. Before the close of 14 November, Campbell's orders had been changed back to the original date and time of departure (15 November) and the plan to have him fly ammunition down to MADD in a B-26 had been scrubbed. Before committing any DPD aircraft Headquarters carefully inquired if any "Guat air assets defected or been taken over by rebels which [sic] can knock down JMCLEAR aircraft. Are their [sic] any Guat areas to be avoided." 51/

About mid-day on 14 November 1960, Headquarters informed Guatemala City that there had been a telecon

by vessels of the USN. Coincidental with possible evacuation were discussions of alternative training sites for the Cubans, including bases in the Z.I., or transfer to training facility. 50c/

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between Ambassador Muccio and Secretary of State Christian Herter concerning use of the Cubans to help quell the revolt. On this point Ambassador Muccio would cable later:

In justification Ydigoras attempted use last week must report that understand prior "Washington authorization" given to use trainees. I knew nothing their use until half hour prior Secretary's call. ... I sent message through [redacted] urging Ydigoras confine them to military bases and not operate out into civilian areas. 52/*

By mid-afternoon, a joint State/CIA message, originated by C. Tracy Barnes, ADDP/A, was sent to [redacted] stressing that if there were any Cuban trainees at or near Puerto Barrios they should be recalled to Retalhuleu. This cable also suggested the possibility that all the Cuban trainees might be removed from Guatemala (this would be an on-going subject of speculation until the close out of the revolt). 53/

Even as the joint message was going forward, Headquarters was aware of the fact that the Cuban

* The admission by Muccio that he was unaware of the fact that members of the Brigade -- to say nothing of the B-26 sorties by Seigrist and Beale -- were being airlifted to Puerto Barrios speaks poorly for the Ambassador's awareness of the situation and indicates that the Agency was playing it close to the vest vis-a-vis Muccio.

- 48 -

~~TOP SECRET~~

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troops had not been deplaned at Puerto Barrios; but the Department of State wanted to put into the official record that they were in opposition to using Cuban troops to support Ydigoras and that Guatemala should request the US to assist in preventing the importation of foreign arms or forces -- Cuban, that is -- into Guatemala. Following its request to the US, the Department wanted the GOG to ask formally for OAS action under the Rio Treaty.

The joint State/Agency message also asked that the field supply any information that could be discovered of Cuban involvement in the Guatemalan revolt and then it went on to walk the line between the possibility of Ydigoras's survival and Ydigoras's overthrow. Lest the record be unclear, was directed as follows:

To avoid ambiguity the following actions are now authorized:

- A. Continued use of C-46's for troop movement and for other necessary transport. Assume pilots are either CAT or Cubans.
- B. Provide GOG with ammo and other materiel if, and only if, senior responsible GOG officer specifically requests such materiel; in consultation with Ambassador agrees that

- 49 -

~~TOP SECRET~~

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need exists and transfer otherwise proper.

- C. Provide GOG with B-26 aircraft if, and only if, critical need exists, use likely give substantial advantage, and GOG can provide pilots.

In connection with any decision support Ydigoras weigh possibility whether not remote that rebels may not be left wing nor anti-US, as active support [for Ydigoras] under such circumstances could be undesirable. 53a/*

Before the afternoon (14 November) was over, a cable from Headquarters went to all Latin American stations alerting everyone to the possibility of Cuban intervention in any of the Latin American countries. It warned:

As events unfold, keep in mind, we want picture Castro "intervention" as result clandestine subversion, money

* As already reported, "ambiguity" was not avoided -- Connie Seigris has noted that he flew some 15 hours in the course of two days, 14-15 November. According to this message -- which was received at approximately 1400 hours Guatemalan time on 14 November -- Seigris technically should have been grounded. As Seigris reported, however, he was taking orders from Col. Batres because no one had told him otherwise. Seigris continued to follow the initial orders that he had been given to support Col. Batres's requests, and he stopped flying missions when Guatemalan officers told him the revolt had ended.

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payments, arms traffic, illegal Cuban Embassy participation, etc. and not give false impression Cuban revolution "catching on" in popularity other WH countries. Also use any pertinent news peg as occasion mention continued shipments and training in use Soviet bloc arms including artillery by Castro militia. 54/

By 16 November 1960, the revolt for all practical purposes had come to an end. At that time there were pockets of resistance reported in the area between Puerto Barrios and Gualán, but no evidence had been found which would support charges of Cuban involvement. Before the conclusion of the fighting, however, President Ydigoras did request -- and received -- two of the JMADD B-26's because the Guatemalan Air Force B-26's had been shot up to the point where they were in no condition to fly additional combat missions. As a result of the unsettled situation in Guatemala, recruitment of PM ground trainees for JMTRAV was suspended until further notice, the B-26's were recalled to the JMADD air base, and, for the moment, all Air National Guard (ANG) and military assignees to MADD were confined to the base.* During the course of the revolt

* It was reported to Headquarters that on the morning of 15 Nov 60, four armorers from MADD had been briefly detained by an "officer group" at the Guatemala City airfield. The detainees probably were USAF military assignees.

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in Guatemala, Headquarters informed the base in Florida to "discourage" Tony Varona from sending any FRD volunteers into the Central American area; and Headquarters also rejected a request from the GOG to have Agency lie detector experts participate in interrogating the captured rebel prisoners. As an alternative, was told to provide guidance to the GOG to hire a commercial firm to participate in the interrogation of the prisoners.*

F. Minor Skirmishes: Inter- and Intra-Agency

In addition to the two B-26's JMADD supplied to the Guatemalan Air Force during the course of the revolt, upon completion of the revolt, it was recommended by the Agency, by the Air Attache, and by the Chief of the US Air Mission in Guatemala that eight new B-26's be procured for the Guatemalan Air Force and that these be configured in a manner similar to the aircraft being operated out of the MADD base. Unfortunately, however, at this point in the game, the US Ambassador was "willing

* See Appendix 1 for copies of cable traffic on the various items mentioned in the foregoing paragraph.

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send recommendation only upon formal request from GOG and does not wish ask GOG unless first assured US Government willingness grant request if made." 55/*

Even as the revolt was being quelled, the US Ambassador was renewing his pleas for the Department to get behind the economic aid program he had been discussing with the GOG since the late spring. In fact in mid October 1960, Mr. Muccio had recommended that a loan and grant package totalling almost \$13 million be approved. The requests were approved before the end of November, about the same time that the Department of State was expressing concern about the Agency's role in Guatemala. 56/ Headquarters requested:

contact Ydigoras and ask him whether continued presence Cuban trainees is placing undue strain on his government. One sector State at least contends their presence is unwarranted liability and strongly urging removal JMTRAV elements soonest. Ydigoras completely frank estimate urgently needed. 57/

"Immediate" said:

[Ydigoras's personal message] emphatically

* Delivery of the eight B-26's was never made to the Government of Guatemala.

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stated that any speculation on above matter is completely unfounded and that he will back this project to the end. Also recommends strengthening forces to avoid failures. When action finally taken we must be sure of success. 58/

It appears probable that the regional area of State which was evincing concern was the office of American Republic Affairs (ARA) directed by Assistant Secretary Mann.*

* Although the author believes that State's perspicacity during the BOP operation was limited by its extreme caution, there is nonetheless evidence to suggest the Department may have had reason to regard those involved in the JMATE operation with some suspicion. A cable of 30 November 1960 to of Central America read as follows:

1. CIA deliberately fomented leak by State of earlier fairly solid report re Cuban 'militiamen' flights over Guat which should be useful Guatemala in case against Cuba and should be played WH assets throughout area to prove Cuban aggression Central America.

2. *Washington Evening Star*, 22 November and (better yet) *New York Times*, 24 November said Cuban recon flights with armed militiamen aboard occurred end October. In *Times* version several flights took place 29-31 October, total 150 Cuban militiamen carried and fewer returned to Cuban airport than left. According *Star*, two Cuban plane numbers were 601 and 631. (631 independently confirmed as Cuban recon plane which buzzed Swan Island 27 October. This fact now overt.) Attribution, both papers were 'diplomatic sources.' 59/

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The fact of long continuing support from the government of Guatemala showed in an incident of early December which also reflected some internal dissension between [] and the Chief of Base at JMTRAV. Colonel Egan had apparently arranged for an air reception and field training exercise for a group of Cuban trainees at the "finca San Jose" (probably the finca San Juan in the San Jose area) which was another of the properties Robert Alejos made available to the Agency; but somewhere in the process Egan had failed to clear the exercise with either [] or the local authorities -- military and civil -- in the area of the finca. The result being that:

Airdrops attracted attention local security forces who appear considerably more alert and effective than in TRAV area. Night 7 December delegations from national police, military, and Army MP visited finca. Fortunately Alejos was visiting and explained that no invasion in progress, only secret army maneuvers.

In his cable to headquarters reporting the incident, Chief of Base TRAV also had indicated that a planned

This particular cable is another of the relatively few concerning the JMATE operation which were released by Richard Helms as Chief of Operations, DDP.

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increment in the number of trainees into the TRAV area was reported to have gotten a negative response from Alejos. 60/

But following receipt of his copy of the cable, [] sent an OPIM to the director pointing out that COB TRAV had failed to properly coordinate his cable for, in truth, Alejos was reported to have been "enthusiastic about additional 400 men in training program" and, furthermore, according to [], Alejos had taken a number of steps to place additional facilities at the disposal of the incoming trainees, including additional housing and the laying of a pipeline to insure that there would be no shortage of water at JMTRAV. [] chewed on COB TRAV for failure to coordinate because this was the sort of thing which could lead to the breakdown of the cover story and embarrassment to the GOG. [] message closed on the following note:

[] wishes to make a matter of record for benefit COB's future action and DIR information the fact that COB's will not (repeat not) release cables to HQS on policy or political matters until subjects have been properly staffed out with []. [] intends to relieve COB from

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duty the next time this occurs. 61/*

G. The Special Forces Trainers -- Pragmatism and Patience

As mentioned in the introduction to the discussion of the relations with Guatemala, a second episode involving the Agency in a unique situation with the GOG concerned the use of US Army Special Forces personnel to train the Cuban ground forces. Almost immediately following Eisenhower's approval of the anti-Castro program in March 1960, WH/4 faced the problem of acquiring trained personnel to instruct the cadre being prepared for small unit guerrilla warfare operations; and later there were numerous difficulties in acquiring

* Unlike [redacted] during the course of the activities related to the Bay of Pigs, [redacted] was very positively identified in all of the actions involving Agency personnel and he was particularly close to the center of power with his relationships to Roberto Alejos and President Ydigoras. While the author has no way of knowing what Colonel Egan's reaction was to [redacted] Billy Campbell indicated that relations between [redacted] and the air operations at JMADD were also sometimes rather strained and that he, too, had been threatened with removal [redacted]. It is not known, however, whether Campbell was referring to [redacted] or to [redacted] who came in as [redacted] in December 1960 -- even though [redacted] continued to [redacted] [redacted] for Cuban ops from December until the collapse of the invasion. Whoever made the threat, Campbell said that he ran the JMADD air ops as instructed by DPD not [redacted]. 61a/

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personnel for training the invasion force. Although not without difficulty, small unit cadres were trained at Fort Randolph in the Panama Canal Zone for infiltration, the establishment of commo activities, and sabotage. With the move to Guatemala, it was obvious that additional trainers would be required; and as a result, Chief JMATE worked very closely with Soviet Division, particularly the Domestic Operations Base, to obtain the services of the so-called "unofficial Americans" who had been recruited by SB under the AEDEPOT program to serve as trainers for the Cuban Brigade. Formal arrangements between the Soviet Division and JMATE were concluded in early September 1960. 62/ Despite the fact that the AEDEPOT program had been initiated

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] a total of 21

agents and five staff personnel joined the JMATE project. The actual recruiting was run through the FRD recruitment program headed by Juan Paula Argeo. The WH representatives were introduced as US Government officials sympathetic to the cause of the anti-Castro Cubans. It was pointed out, however, that the US

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Government could not officially sponsor or openly support the movement; and, therefore, these Americans were working unofficially to assist the Cubans in their search for volunteer instructors, cadre leaders, and so on. As one report put it, "the cover story didn't hold up well and the agents soon knew they were working for the CIA; however, in almost all cases the agents believed that Army intelligence had loaned them to CIA and compartmentation was maintained." 63/

With the closeout of the Panama training activity and the move to Guatemala and with the opening of the JMTRAV activity and the increasing number of recruits, the small number of Soviet Division assets who were being used to train the Cubans were being spread too thin; and JMATE turned to the United States Army Special Forces for assistance. The problem of the acquisition of the requisite number of Special Forces training officers was the one which would involve Chief, JMATE in a unique relationship with the GOG, and would precipitate a lengthy, often acrimonious, series of discussions which involved the Special Group, the Department of State, the Department of Defense, the Department of the Army, and even the

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President of the United States himself, Dwight D. Eisenhower.

The Agency's request which was to touch off the brouhaha was initiated by Col. Jack Hawkins (USMC), Chief, WH/4/PM on 19 October 1960. After approval through the chain of command to the DDP was formalized (16 November 1960), then J. C. King, Chief, Western Hemisphere Division, prepared a memorandum for the Mobilization and Military Personnel Division (MMPD), Office of Personnel, CIA asking that 38 US Army Special Forces personnel be acquired for training JMARC assets in a foreign area. In his memorandum, Col. King noted that Captain Burns Spore, Office of Special Operations, Department of Defense had been informed about the requirement; but since no official action had yet been taken by DOD regarding the Special Forces personnel, MMPD was being asked to make it official.

At a subsequent meeting between representatives of WH/4 and Captain Spore, the DOD representative apparently got his back up about the lack of information that DOD -- in his opinion at any rate -- had about the Agency's operational plans against Cuba. Inasmuch as the Agency's request came about the same

- 60 -

~~TOP SECRET~~

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time that serious thought was being given to the possible removal of the Cuban trainees from Guatemala, the DOD representative was much concerned about the actual base at which it was intended to station the Special Forces trainers. Until this matter could be cleared up to the satisfaction of DOD, Captain Spore assumed the position that no further action would be taken with regard to the Special Forces personnel. Jake Esterline, Chief, JMATE, made a strong plea to the DOD representative based on the argument that the question about the actual site of the training activity was up in the air as a result of Department of State cautiousness; and Esterline expressed the opinion that as a result of State's greater interest in the program of economic strangulation of Cuba, the situation for the United States and for other Latin American governments friendly to the United States would grow increasingly desperate. He further suggested that the Department of Defense was being tainted by State's opposition rather than by realistic appraisal of the situation in Cuba, and he volunteered to brief senior DOD personnel at a time convenient to them. 64/

- 61 -

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The question of the use of Special Forces personnel was brought before the Special Group in its meeting on 30 November, 5 December, and 8 December of 1960. From the 8 December meeting came the unique suggestion which Thomas Parrot, Executive Secretary for the Special Group, noted in the minutes of that meeting:

Mr. Douglas [James H. Douglas, Deputy Secretary of Defense] went on to say that he is anxious to make the 38 trainers available but that the Army wants to have them as fully protected as possible. He, therefore, asked that CIA explore the situation further to see if the Government of Guatemala could not make a formal request for trainers from the DOD. Mr. Esterline said that he thought a secret agreement could be negotiated with President Ydigoras, but that it would not be feasible to have an open agreement of any kind. Mr. Mann expressed some fears about having anything in writing with Ydigoras because of his somewhat unsure tenure. He asked that this be taken up with him later. (At the later meeting referred to above, Mr. Mann agreed to a plan suggested by CIA whereby a secret agreement would be negotiated, but no signed copy would be in the hands of the GOG.) 65/

Following the suggestion that a secret agreement be negotiated with the government of Guatemala, plans were made for Jake Esterline to fly black into Guatemala to undertake negotiations with Ydigoras. The

- 62 -

~~TOP SECRET~~

~~TOP SECRET~~

affair then became a comedy of near misses. It was anticipated that Roberto Alejos would be contacted prior to the meeting with Ydigoras to get the President's opinion on signing the proposed secret agreement. Unfortunately, however, Alejos was arriving in Washington about the time that Esterline was scheduled to land in Guatemala.*

With Esterline in Guatemala and Alejos in the United States, Esterline sent an OPIM cable to the Director requesting that Dick Drain, Chief of Operations, WH/4, attempt to contact Alejos to discuss the proposed secret agreement regarding the request by the government of Guatemala for US Special Forces trainers. But, unfortunately, Mr. Alejos, instead of being in Washington as anticipated, was somewhere in New York; and there was no possibility of getting his advice and guidance prior to the time that Esterline had his meeting with Ydigoras. 66/ In any event, the results of a two hour meeting that and Esterline

* Alejos was coming to the United States at this time as a member of the Guatemalan coffee group -- thanks to the Agency's efforts on his behalf!

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had with Ydigoras on the night of 14 December were negative. The report of the meeting stated:

Written agreement discussed in general terms, but not shown him [Ydigoras] as he said he would not sign any secret pact. Made reference to secret agreement he signed with Castillo Armas 1953 which has since caused him serious political problems. Expressed continued willingness give any and all support, including receiving training personnel, short of signing any agreement. 67/

The cable went on to request that Headquarters contact Roberto Alejos requesting that he remain in Washington to meet with Esterline and Robert Davis, who would be flying up to Washington on 16 December -- the thought being that discussion with Alejos might yet bring about a change in Ydigoras's thinking.

Esterline's remembrance of this visit to Ydigoras is at some variance with both the cable traffic and subsequent events, but it is interesting to observe the comments which he did have to make on the subject:

I actually, myself, executed with Ydigoras Fuentes the agreement. At the time that I did it -- in true name -- I thought "I suppose they'll be reading about this someday and I'll have to save that piece of paper." He [Ydigoras] said, "that piece of paper will never be exposed," and it hasn't to my knowledge.

- 64 -

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In response to a question of how it happened that he was sent to Guatemala, Esterline remarked:

State said, "Oh, we don't want to touch that," and Ydigoras said, "well, I'm not going to do it unless it is signed by some responsible individual." We looked around the Agency and said to J. C. [King], "J. C., this kind of ..." "No, no," he said. "I don't think I ought to do that." He said, "Jake, you are in charge of the project, why don't you do it." So being a brash young man I said, "Well, we're never going to get this thing going unless somebody signs it."

So I flew to Guatemala black with Roberto Alejos, who is now a substantial banker in Miami, and with Bob Davis, who [redacted] at the time, and I think, with the powers and full knowledge of the Ambassador, although I didn't meet him because I was there black. I went in illegally and left illegally. We drew up the particulars of the base agreement -- if you will, a Status of Forces Agreement.

When asked if Bissell and Dulles were aware that he had been sent to negotiate with Ydigoras, Esterline's response was: "Oh, hell yes! Oh, hell yes! I went as an instructed delegate from Washington. The wording 'an expendable pawn.' No, I went on specific instruction from Bissell and Dulles.'" 68/*

* Despite Esterline's conviction that a piece of paper actually passed between himself and Ydigoras, the author thinks it more likely that Esterline's story, as noted above, reflects an honest confusion of the
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Esterline's failure to get Ydigoras to sign the Status of Forces Agreement must have gone down hard with Agency representatives because of the extreme difficulties that had been encountered in reaching an agreement with the Department of Defense, particularly the Army representatives, to undertake the negotiations in the first place. Richard D. Drain, who was Chief of Operations for the project at the time, in an oral interview with the author, told some other details of the story which are believed worth repeating here because Drain was involved in the negotiations with DOD and was responsible for drawing up the actual agreement which it was anticipated Ydigoras would sign. To the question of whether he had drawn up the agreement, Drain responded:

Jesus, yes. On self-destructing paper. Well, this was all typical of the idiocy that prevailed because of the failure of Mr. Nixon to succeed Mr. Eisenhower. From the time the vote was in -- the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November -- up until JFK took the oath on January 20,

personnel and the details involved in the negotiations with the GOG at the time. As will be pointed out subsequently, what Esterline did sign was the agreement with Carlos Alejos, Guatemalan Ambassador to the United States.

- 66 -

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the Eisenhower government was increasingly zombie. You know, you would go over there to talk to James Douglas Smith [sic], Undersecretary of Defense, and, "well, Mr. Smith probably won't be in much any more, he is in New York looking for a job. Mr. Irwin is in charge," and so on.

I guess this is one of the maddest anybody ever saw Eisenhower because three times the President of the United States had to be involved in this weighty matter -- should Special Forces troops be made available to the Agency for this matter? Doubly stupid because, as I said earlier, Colonel Yarborough and Dick Drain were entirely in accord on this. Yarborough wanted these guys to get some Latin American experience on the ground, and we desperately needed them. Three times the cock crew before the President of the United States had his order carried out. The first time it was discussed the President of the United States authorized it; and the Undersecretary of Defense went back and told the Secretary of the Army -- that goddamned fool Brucker, or whatever his name was ... from Michigan -- "You are authorized to do this."

I went over to see Yarborough, and expected to see him jump for joy; and he hadn't gotten the message. So I take this problem to Tracy Barnes and he says, "I think this is something that we will negotiate." I said, "Well, you do what you want with it, but the President of the United States has ordered it, and nothing is happening." He said, "well, I will go see Jack Irwin." Well, he came back with the word that the President had not "directed" it, he had only "authorized" it; and the Secretary of the Army did not feel that "authorized" to do something ... he was "required" to do it. O.K., we take it back to the NSC,

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and the President says, "Is that so ... all right, I order it." And, again, nothing happened.

I checked with Yarborough, and it hasn't dropped down his tube yet ... and find out that the Secretary of the Army has said that even though "directed," he has to, as a statutory matter, assure that something equal to the Status of Forces Agreement is in effect with the host country, lest there be a court martial proceeding ... or some host country ... da, da, da ... and it goes back to the President again. "Will you authorize or direct that this be done, in the absence of a special Status of Forces Agreement," and the President of the United States says ... "Goddamnit ... Blankety-blank ... you do it!" So Mr. Barnes "negotiated" it, and he came back saying that if President Ydigoras will sign the document that says that the Status of Forces will apply -- even though not technically in force -- then the Secretary of the Army will let this go forward.

So, I worked with TSD to see if we could come up with some paper which, after a certain amount of time, whether exposed to light or not, would just disintegrate. Whether we actually typed it on such paper or not, I don't know; but I wrote up a very learned piece of paper, and goddamned if Jake Esterline didn't have to drop everything else that he was doing and go down and get the old Indian to sign this thing. 69/

In response to the query of the origin of the idea for the Status of Forces Agreement, Drain explained this as follows:

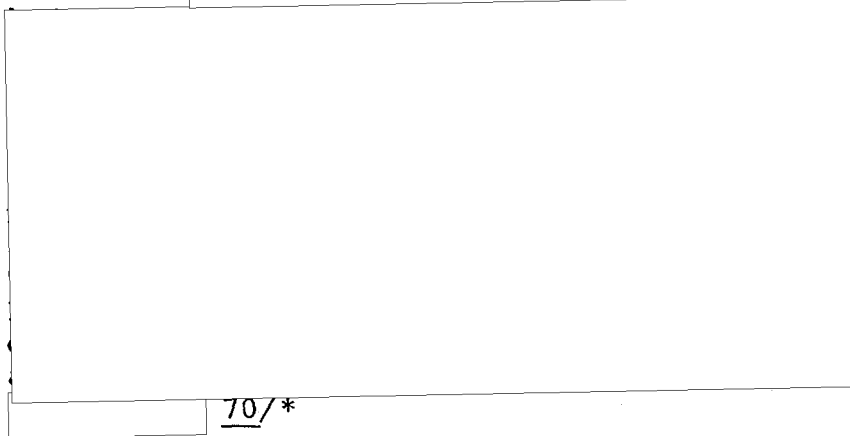
Well, now, I remember -- and I haven't thought about it until this moment -- that

- 68 -

~~TOP SECRET~~

~~TOP SECRET~~

faced with this weighty problem which had now lost us three weeks ... "directed" or "authorized" ... I remember what Lucian K. Truscott



How the actual negotiations in Washington were conducted is not clear from the records that are now available. In a Memorandum for the Director of Central Intelligence dated 21 December 1960, however, C. Tracy

* During an Oral History (9 January 1976) interview, Mr. Drain had indicated that Esterline had signed the agreement with Ydigoras, but in a telecon with Mr. Drain on 19 August 1976, when the author raised the question of whether Drain was certain that Esterline and Ydigoras had signed the agreement -- pointing out to Drain the indications in the cable traffic were contrary to this -- Drain said that he could not be positive. With reference to the possibility of having met with Roberto Alejos in Washington, Drain did remember one meeting that he had with Roberto Alejos and his brother Carlos Alejos, the Ambassador to the United States, in which he thought that this subject might have been discussed and that Roberto Alejos did get in touch with Ydigoras. Drain, however, could not be positive that it had been over the matter of having Carlos Alejos sign off on the Status of Forces Agreement. 70a/

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Barnes, the A/DDP/A, mentioned among other things "Although we failed to complete these arrangements with Ydigoras [e.g., the signing of the Status of Forces Agreement] we have since been successful in making identical arrangements with the Guatemalan Ambassador to Washington who acted as the Government of Guatemala representative in place of Ydigoras." 71/ Esterline continued as the principal in the negotiations that led to the signing of the agreement (21 December 1960) with the Guatemalan Ambassador.

This, however, was not the end of the story. In a meeting on 22 December with representatives of the Department of Defense, John M. Irwin, Assistant Secretary for Defense and a newcomer to the negotiations, raised a question about the utility of the secret agreement that had been signed; and he indicated that the agreement showing that the CIA was providing US military forces to another government to train personnel of that government would not serve the primary purpose of providing a secure cover for the SF trainers. As a result of Irwin's objections it was decided that an attempt would be made to get

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the Department of State to sign a Memorandum of Agreement with the Guatemalan Ambassador, setting forth that in response to a request from the Guatemalan government the US would provide military training for selected elements of the Guatemalan armed forces. 72/

The ball continued to bounce, however, with no one wanting to assume responsibility overtly for the United States Government action; and it was reported on 27 December 1960, for example, that in a meeting with Thomas Mann, the Assistant Secretary of State for American Republic Affairs, concerning the suggestion that State sign the agreement with the Guatemalan Ambassador:

Mann was extremely hesitant to agree to any signature by a representative of the State Department to a document. After considerable discussion, however, he did agree to the possibility of having a Memorandum for the Record prepared (suggested draft attached) which could be signed by the Guatemalan Ambassador as an accurate statement of the understanding reached between the Government of Guatemala and the United States. The Department then could refer this signed memorandum to the Department of Defense for appropriate action. 73/

This, in fact, was the method that was finally evolved to solve the problem; and on 29 December 1960, Carlos

- 71 -

~~TOP SECRET~~

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Alejos, Guatemalan Ambassador to the United States, signed the document.*

Once this document was completed -- and even before he had CIA's firm requirement in hand -- General Erskine, Assistant to the Secretary of Defense (Special Operations) -- issued instructions that active military personnel would be made available as requested by CIA. 73a/ In his formal request to the Office of Special Operations, on 5 January 1961, where he spelled out the detailed requirements for Special Forces personnel for the project, Jake Esterline neatly summarized the situation that had finally been resolved:

Because DOD desired certain agreements between governments before it was willing to act affirmatively on the original [16 November 1960] requirement, the Agency, with the approval and concurrence of the Department of State, negotiated an agreement with the host government which

* Appendix 2 contains copies of the complete set of documents involved in this episode of the Special Forces Trainers, and clearly illustrates the degree to which nits were picked on what to the pragmatist would appear to have been a relatively simple matter. Included in Appendix 2 are the four versions of the Memorandum of Agreement which Esterline initially attempted to negotiate with Ydigoras and the series of memos related to the Memorandum for Record which Ambassador Alejos eventually signed per the request of the Department of State.

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provided protection for US military forces in that country supporting project CROSS-PATCH. A copy of this agreement was provided to DOD by memorandum dated 30 December 1960. 74/

H. The Changing Political Climate

Following resolution of the Special Forces program, the beginning of the new year was marked by a spirit of close cooperation between the Government of Guatemala and the Agency's representatives.* Roberto Alejos, the

* The same could not be said for the degree of rapport between the Department of State and the Government of Guatemala. Between the end of November 1960 and the beginning of 1961, there was a noticeable effort on the part of the Department of State to keep US relations with Guatemala at something less than the level of an *abrazo*. When planning a US response to President Ydigoras's message thanking the US for instituting naval operations which "prevented outside forces from giving support to the Communist-inspired revolutionary movement," Secretary Herter cautioned the President that: "Since the degree of direct involvement of pro-Communist and pro-Castro elements in the recent Guatemalan uprising has not yet been determined, the text of the suggested reply reaffirms that our action was aimed at prevention of intervention from abroad." 74a/

In planning a response to President Ydigoras's greeting for the New Year, Secretary Herter again cautioned: "The Department feels that an exchange concerning the Cuban question with President Ydigoras would not be appropriate at the present time. It is recommended, therefore, that you merely acknowledge briefly his telegram." 74b/ Even though this advice was followed, the Department directed the Amembassy Guatemala to understand that after delivering President Eisenhower's message: "White House desires text this message not rpt not become public." 74c/

- 73 -

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Minister of Defense of Guatemala, and the President of Guatemala all visited the various training sites and indicated considerable pleasure at the progress that was being made. It was also reported that these leaders of the GOG were impressed with both the trainees and their armament; and considering the political unrest, it is possible that Ydigoras wanted to get some idea of the materiel -- if not the personnel (Cuban) -- that might be used for or against him in an emergency. Where a few weeks earlier there had been some confusion over airdrop operations training, by mid-January 1961 it was reported that there was close cooperation between [] and Roberto Alejos with regard to an upcoming program of this nature.

To belay the charges that the GOG was permitting CIA activities in his country, Roberto Alejos personally escorted some *Time* magazine reporters and a photographer and an NBC reporter whom President Ydigoras had invited to visit the JMADD and TRAV sites. Prior to the reception of the newsmen, however, the Cuban trainees and Agency personnel, except for several pilot instructors and a couple of ground force trainers, had all been

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moved either into restricted areas or out of sight of the newsmen -- the Cuban air trainees being orbited over the ocean in a C-54. Guatemalan soldiers were moved into the areas to pass as the ones who were being trained by the few Americans posing as mercenaries hired by the GOG to provide the training.

Ydigoras believed that the guided tour procedure was the best defense against both the heavy internal political pressures as well as the inquiries from outside news sources for information on the activities which were being observed at the Retalhuleu airstrip. Through the device of admitting to a certain amount of US technical help in the form of "mercenaries" he hoped to blunt the charges that he was preparing and supporting the Cubans who planned to overthrow Castro. 75/*

US newspapers and periodicals began to show so much interest in possible CIA involvement in Guatemala

* Robert Zunzer, presently Executive Officer to the Deputy Director for Administration, clearly recalls having to take to the woods in order to get out of the path of the media investigators who were brought into Guatemala at this time. He said it provided one or two of the few days of leisure that he experienced during the course of his participation in the JMATE activity.

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toward the end of 1960 that early in January 1971 Carlos Alejos, the Ambassador to the US, released a statement to the Associated Press from Guatemala's Minister of Defense, Colonel Enrique Peralta Azurdia, which claimed that all US military personnel in Guatemala were official members of the US Military Mission. The Minister of Defense not only stated that US personnel were engaged exclusively in training Guatemalan forces for self defense, but he went on to emphasize the GOG's fear of Castro and communist intervention:

Guatemala is not an aggressor country, Guatemala is not receiving ten ships every week loaded with war material [*sic*] and equipment manufactured in Communist countries. Guatemala has no Chinese Communist instructors. Guatemala has no jet Communist planes. Guatemala has no Communist guided rockets and missiles. The only thing Guatemala has is men with great hearts ready to fight for their independence and political liberties. Batista is not in Guatemala, but Arbenz is in Cuba. 75a/

Even more significant was that the news stories inspired some members of the US Congress to make inquiries about CIA involvement; and this, in turn, caused President Eisenhower to express himself very strongly on the constitutional issue of the separation of powers. In a 10 January 1961 meeting of the Special Group, the

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President reportedly:

Raised certain questions as to the right of a [Congressional] committee to ask questions on foreign policy affecting the security of the United States. He commented that when this is demanded as a right you are "sunk," and wondered how much right have they got, inasmuch as the Constitution says that it is the responsibility of the Chief Executive. 75b/*

In an attempt to divert attention from the Agency, Chief, WHD apparently forwarded a suggestion that the Agency sponsored Cuban exile organization, the FRD, publicly acknowledge that it was involved in sponsoring the military training in Guatemala. Jake Esterline, however, noted that such an admission would contradict statements already issued by the Government of Guatemala; and he also emphasized that it would be used by

* It is assumed that this was a Special Group meeting. In addition to the President, the attendees were the usual members of the Special Group on Cuba -- National Security Adviser Gordon Gray, Secretary of Defense Gates, Deputy Secretary of Defense Douglas, Under Secretary of State Merchant, Assistant Secretary of State Mann, and Ambassador Whiting Willauer. (Willauer was Eisenhower's appointee to assist the incoming Kennedy Administration in the transfer of the anti-Castro activities.) The memorandum of the meeting, however, was prepared by Colonel J. C. King, Chief, WH Division, not by Thomas A. Parrott who normally acted as Secretary for Special Group sessions. 75c/

- 77 -

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the opponents of Ydigoras to discredit his administration. 75d/ Initially, however, Col. King must have ignored Esterline's warning; but the DCI failed to support King's Plan. 75e/

The hassle with the media would continue throughout the course of the Bay of Pigs operation, but in no instance did the Government of Guatemala back off from providing cover for the training activity being sponsored by the Agency at Guatemalan sites. If anything, the GOG went to extremes to protect the cover story. In late March 1961, for example, following an article in the *Washington Post* which stated "an army estimated at several thousands is presently training at a clandestine camp in Guatemala," Carlos Urrutia-Aparaicio, Guatemala's Ambassador to the OAS, wrote a letter to the editor of the *Post* stating:

On behalf of my government I categorically deny this to be a fact. Not one Cuban exile is receiving training in Guatemala. There are several hundred of them in my country, but we strictly enforce the Pan American instruments governing territorial asylum. Whenever these have been overlooked or disregarded, my government has immediately requested the Cuban refugees concerned to leave the country.

It is our own army which is getting military training, but for defensive

- 78 -

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reasons alone. The present democratic and constitutional government of Guatemala is duty-bound to defend itself from extracontinental forces based on Cuba, which are determined to overthrow it by force. Nobody can deny Guatemala the immemorial right to self-defense, recognized as such by the Charter of the Organization of American States and the Charter of the United Nations. 76/

The training facilities in Guatemala also had other visitors during the early part of 1961 -- the leaders of the FRD, Tony Varona, Antonio Maceo, and Manuel Artime. The FRD visit was precipitated in large part because of charges that were filtering back to Miami that the Batistiano factions were trying to penetrate -- or perhaps had even captured -- the leadership in the training camps at JMTRAV and JMADD. In mid-February 1961, the FRD leaders were moved to Guatemala by black flight; and they were met by Roberto Alejos, who played host for a session at which Ydigoras was in attendance. Prior to the meeting Ydigoras had indicated to and to Jake Esterline who was in Guatemala, that "he [Ydigoras] will handle meeting any way Agency desires, i.e., stressing need for Cuban unity, need to keep military leadership apolitical based on ability, etc." 77/

- 79 -

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With the reorganization of the political structure of the Cuban exile group in the United States demanded by the Kennedy administration, the leaders of the newly formed Cuban Revolutionary Council (CRC) visited Guatemala from 29-31 March 1961. Again Roberto Alejos played host and President Miguel Ydigoras Fuentes met with Jose Miro Cardona, Chairman of the CRC, Tony Varona, Manuel Artime, and Carlos Hevia. Once again Ydigoras lectured the Cuban political leaders about the need for unity and cooperation with the US government, and once again the political leaders were impressed by the visit to the training facilities at JMTRAV and JMADD. 78/*

I. Third Country Involvement

During the summer of 1960, as negotiations were proceeding with Guatemala for the training bases, an incident occurred which foreshadowed one of the few areas where the US would be in contention with the GOG during the course of Project JMATE. In a cable of

* This visit of the CRC leaders to Guatemala in March of 1961 caused considerable consternation to President Somoza of Nicaragua when he learned that his country would not be visited by the CRC.

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10 July, Guatemala informed the Director that British military maneuvers were being planned for Belize (British Honduras); and Ydigoras had informed [] [] that the GOG would have to send troops and planes to the border in order to maintain the prestige of his country if the maneuvers were held. GOG requested that [] try to get Washington to intervene with the British to call off the exercise. 78a/* Whatever action was taken, the JMATE project personnel were not concerned with the Belize issue again until 14 February 1961 when Ydigoras requested that Chief, JMATE and [] meet with him to discuss the subject.

He gave [] and Chief, JMATE the original of a paper on Belize which "he requested be given to appropriate authorities within the Department of State" -- a rather interesting method for transmitting material to the Department when the US had an Ambassador in Guatemala City! Ydigoras emphasized that

* Whether the Agency actually approached State at this time has not been investigated for purposes of this history. There is no question, however, that the Department was well aware of the dispute between the GOG and Britain over Belize.

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his government had been negotiating for some time with Her Majesty's Government over the subject of granting greater autonomy to the Government of Belize on economic matters, particularly on the right of that colony to negotiate reciprocal trade agreements with its neighbors. As pointed out to the Agency's representatives by Jesus Unda Marillo, the Guatemalan Foreign Minister, Jorge Garcia Granades, Guatemala's Special Representative on Belize affairs, and Ian Munn, the son-in-law of Ydigoras, the economic development program which the GOG was then promoting for the Petén area, bordering Belize, was dependent in considerable degree upon reciprocal trade relations with that British colony. Although not specified in the discussions, Chief, JMATE believed that what the Government of Guatemala wanted specifically was a guarantee of a direct outlet to the sea for the oil, chicle, timber and other products from Petén.

Both Chief, JMATE and told Ydigoras that international negotiations such as had been discussed were not within the province of the Agency, but they did agree to give the paper to State:

- 82 -

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The President and the Foreign Minister both indicated their desire that said paper come to the attention of Mr. Adolph [sic] Berle, a man whose past career they seemed to know very well. C/JMATE assured them that this would be done. 79/

Available records do not indicate that the Agency was further involved in the promotion of this particular activity on the part of the GOG, however, it was quite clear that Ydigoras continued to be very sensitive about Belize.

In March of 1961, one of the JMADD C-54's was forced to land in Jamaica after an airdrop over Cuba -- said aircraft having filed a flight plan out of San Jose, Guatemala. Unfortunately, the GOG had not given prior authorization for this flight plan. When word from Jamaica apparently got out that the flight originated at San Jose, Roberto Alejos was constrained to make an immediate press release denying that the aircraft had ever come out of Guatemala, and he suggested that the British were trying to embarrass the Guatemalan Government, in part, at least, so that there would be no pressure for negotiations on the Belize issue. In any event, Headquarters sent an OPIM cable to Guatemala recommending that Alejos and Ydigoras

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be dissuaded from making any press release which would be critical of the British for it was pointed out to [] that the British had been most helpful in terms of getting the C-54 released and in cancelling the original flight plan without any further publicity. 80/*

J. GOG - JMATE and the Kennedy Administration

Even though President Ydigoras had already assured the Agency that the training activity could continue, he felt some concern about the change of administrations in the US; and an EMERGENCY cable from [] on 25 February 1961 indicated that [] had been called to a meeting with Ydigoras. [] was told that Ydigoras was writing a personal letter to President Kennedy

* At the end of 1961, in his New Year's Eve speech of 31 December 1961, Ydigoras for the first time acknowledged that his government had participated with the exiled Cuban leaders, and that Guatemala had been used as a training site for the Bay of Pigs invasion. In that same speech he reportedly said that as a fair price the "friendly government" that was supporting the Cuban exiles -- the US -- had agreed "to request good offices to convince Britain to return Belize to us under certain conditions, acceptable to a majority of that colony's inhabitants." Reportedly the training activity did not begin until after this agreement with the US had been reached. 80a/

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setting forth his views and recommendations on policy vis-a-vis Cuba, particularly suggesting that it was time to get the Cuban Brigade off the dime and into action. The letter was to be hand carried to JFK by Roberto Alejos, and [] was to accompany Alejos to Washington.

During a private luncheon with Ydigoras and Alejos, [] heard the discussion of the proposed letter that was being readied for President Kennedy. Among other things, the letter would point out that Ydigoras, more than any other Latin American leader, was taking direct action to oppose the spread of Castro communism and cited the 13 November 1960 revolt as a part of that plot -- though as has been noted, there was no evidence of Cuban involvement. Ydigoras pointed out that it was his firm conviction that the Brigade -- both air force and infantry -- was quite ready; and remarking on the Cuban temperament suggested that if they weren't engaged soon they were very likely to lose their spirit and be unwilling to continue. Moreover, the Guatemalan President emphasized that the longer the Brigade delayed its

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invasion, the more training the Castro militia was going to have and the more difficult it would be for the Brigade to overcome them.

Ydigoras claimed that there was extensive anti-Castro sentiment throughout Cuba and that if the attack took place soon, this force could be applied in support of the invasion. Continuing he noted that since Kennedy had said that he was opposed to Castro, the United States should actively support the anti-Castro movement at this time. By so doing, the standing of the US in the eyes of Latin America would be greatly enhanced and Kennedy would be looked on as a savior who kept his promises. Ydigoras closed the letter by saying that if the attack were postponed much longer, the people of Cuba would lose faith that anything could be done, the insurrectionists in the Escambray would be defeated, and other governments in Latin America would be even more fearful and subject to takeover by the leftists.

Copies of this letter dated 28 February apparently hit the Department of State like a lead balloon. In a chance meeting with Ydigoras, was told

- 86 -

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that after a session with Thomas Mann the Guatemalan Ambassador, Carlos Alejos, felt that the Guatemalan cause was lost. [] apparently was unaware of the contents of the Ydigoras letter to Kennedy which presumably precipitated Mann's reaction, but in any event, he cabled OPIM to Headquarters reporting on Ydigoras's feeling.

Roberto Alejos was successful in setting up a meeting with President Kennedy on 7 March 1961 -- with Thomas Mann and an Agency representative also in attendance.* The letter from the President of Guatemala, which incidentally had been prepared in both Spanish and in a bad English translation, was discussed.** Mann's Memorandum of Conversation and copies of the Spanish and English versions of Ydigoras's letter were transmitted to Ralph Dungan of the White House Staff on 16 March 1961, and in the transmittal it was noted

* It is believed that Tracy Barnes, rather than Jake Esterline, represented the Agency.

** The English translation had been prepared by GOG not by State.

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that the material had been reviewed by the Secretary of State. In the transmittal to Dungan, the Department said:

As you will note, President Ydigoras' letter takes up extremely sensitive matters regarding Cuba. We believe that the President's comments on March 7 to Mr. Alejos obviate the need for any written reply to President Ydigoras. Moreover, it is believed that it would not be desirable in any case to reply in writing to the letter. 81/*

* Of interest with reference to the letter from Ydigoras to President Kennedy are the following: In briefing the Special Group on 2 March 1961, the DCI noted:

That [Roberto] Alejos is in Washington with a letter from President Ydigoras addressed to President Kennedy, and that he is attempting through his brother, the Guatemalan Ambassador [Carlos Alejos], to obtain an appointment with Mr. Kennedy. Mr. Dulles said that he understood the letter took a strong position on the necessity of early action, vis-a-vis Cuba, but -- in answer to a question -- assured the group that we [CIA] had neither written nor inspired the letter. 82/

Then, whether incidental or intentional, at that same meeting, "Mr. Dulles also said that he thought we should discuss soon with the Special Group actions to be taken with respect to employment of the forces now in training in Guatemala." In other words, the identical subject that Ydigoras was raising with President Kennedy.

In 1964, when he appeared in an NBC television White Paper on the Bay of Pigs, Roberto Alejos put a somewhat different emphasis on the meeting that was
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Shortly, following the visit of Roberto Alejos to the Department of State, Carlos Alejos, the Ambassador of Guatemala to the United States, paid a formal call on Secretary of State Rusk "mainly to get acquainted and to extend greetings personally and in behalf of President Ydigoras." Wymberley Coerr, the Deputy Assistant Secretary for American Republic Affairs, who would replace Thomas Mann, and Richard Godfrey, the Officer in charge of Guatemalan affairs, were also in attendance at this session, along with an interpreter. The Department of State Memorandum of Conversation is couched in the general platitudes of diplomatic language and while Alejos probably was hoping to get some support from the Department for the employment of the Cuban Brigade against Castro, nonesuch was forthcoming. What he got instead was the "big picture" about developments of an inter-American, anti-Castro program from Secretary Rusk. One interesting comment which appeared in State's

held with Kennedy. He said that he came to Washington at the request of President Ydigoras to discuss getting the Brigade out of Guatemala. ^{83/} Although this was of concern to Ydigoras, this was not the principal thrust of the letter which Alejos carried to Kennedy. Ydigoras's principal concern was whether the Brigade was in fact going to be employed in an attempt to oust Fidel Castro from Cuba.

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memorandum -- particularly in view of the position later adopted by the Secretary of State -- was the following:

The Secretary said the United States was concerned because a number of Latin American countries did not see the threat from Communism as clearly as did the Foreign Minister or else these countries felt certain restraints in dealing with it. 84/

In early April 1961, Jake Esterline had a session at State to give Adolf A. Berle a thorough briefing on the recently completed visit of the CRC leaders to Guatemala and to give Berle some positive guidance for his upcoming visit with Jose Miro Cardona.* Chief, WH/4 also discussed the planned operation, particularly the negative effects that a cancellation of the projected strike against Cuba would have on US relations not only with the Government of Guatemala, but also on the whole of Latin America -- particularly those nations with ambivalent feelings about Communism. Esterline

* Esterline mentioned that, among other topics, Dr. Miro probably would raise questions about US funds for a new Cuban government, US recognition and open support, use of US personnel with the Cuban Brigade at the time of the invasion, and US reaction to various Cuban political leaders.

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"concluded his remarks by saying that the cancellation blow would be so severe that the administration's plans for the Western Hemisphere, which have received so much publicity, would probably lose all meaning." 85/

During the period immediately prior to the invasion, but after the bulk of the Cuban forces and the operational aircraft from JMADD had departed Guatemala, President Ydigoras requested that he receive daily situation reports in case he had to respond to either internal or foreign crises which might result because of GOG support for the Brigade. In the confusion attendant upon the operation, the system could not be maintained; and on 19 April 1961, following attacks on the GOG in the United Nations and by the opposition Congressmen in Guatemala, Ydigoras informed that he had been forced to agree to permit a visit to Retalhuleu and to the La Suiza site by opposition Congressmen. JMADD was ordered to sterilize the base in the same manner as had been done three months earlier when the newsmen had been escorted through the area. Two US "mercenaries" were to remain on the base as advisers and all the other Agency personnel, including

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communicators, and Cubans were ordered to go to TRAV. The Agency was to provide two bilingual advisers to be in attendance at La Suiza when the Congressmen came through on their inspection. Moreover, a halt was called on all incoming flights to JMADD until further notice. 86/

That Ydigoras was expecting some domestic difficulties was apparent in a cable from [] to Headquarters reading: "GOG request and [] concurs immediate air-shipment 500 to 1,000 tear gas grenades for use control possible mob activities next few days." This went forward to Headquarters on 19 April 1961, 87/*

The Agency also displayed considerable concern for its commitment to the Ydigoras government in the period following the collapse of the invasion; and early in May, in response to Ydigoras's request that the Agency continue to support the training activity for a Guatemalan Special Battalion until the end of

* In anticipation of possible difficulties from his political opposition, Ydigoras had requested that [] make inquiries about the possibility of obtaining a 100-man pack for caching. It is not known, however, if these weapons were obtained, even though a number of such packs reached Florida between 17 March 1961 and 17 April 1961. 88/

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June -- JMATE already had made a commitment to support it through May -- [] supported the request. He made the case that this was a security measure because the press was still trying to prove that the Cuban Brigade had training bases in Guatemala. [] furthermore noted that continuing the training of the Guatemalan Battalion would help to deter the revolutionary activities against the Ydigoras Government. 89/

Headquarters approved the request for the additional support, but one problem did come up -- the question of whether or not the Special Forces trainers would be continued through the month of June. The Special Forces personnel began to get quite edgy because their commitment had only been through the end of May, and [] was notified that if the training of the Guatemalan Battalion was completed by 20 May, the Special Forces personnel would then be returned. Pushing for an earlier exit, the Special Forces personnel had contended that the Guatemalan trainees and officers were completely indifferent toward the ongoing training activity. Headquarters did say that while the SF trainers would be released

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beginning on 20 May, [] was not to approve any departures of Special Forces personnel until further authorization from Headquarters. 90/

How close the ties between the Government of Guatemala and the Agency's representatives were was revealed late in April 1961 at a meeting that was called at the request of Carlos Alejos, the Ambassador to the United States from Guatemala. He requested that Jake Esterline meet with him at the embassy residence to discuss some sensitive information that he had recently received from his brother, Roberto. The sensitive information concerned an offer that General Trujillo of the Dominican Republic had reportedly made to both President Ydigoras and to President Somoza of Nicaragua to make available to them, in the Dominican Republic, airfields, training sites, and other facilities needed to continue to wage war against Castro. According to the report that Esterline prepared on the meeting "the only *quid pro quo* involved would be that the United States give sanction to this arrangement in the first instance and, in the second instance, agree to let Trujillo live out the rest of his days

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in peace without further interference from the United States." Carlos Alejos said further that his brother, Roberto, had been authorized by President Ydigoras to deal with Somoza and Trujillo on the matter; and what Roberto Alejos was looking for, because of this responsibility, was some reaction from the US, directing his attention not to the US Department of State but to the Central Intelligence Agency.

Chief, WH/4 apparently suggested that there was some problem in dealing with Trujillo because of his "unsavory" reputation; and this suggestion was not particularly well received by Ambassador Alejos, who,

with some heat replied that Trujillo may be unpopular, but he is certainly anti-Communist and prepared to do something, whereas the alleged great friends of the United States, such as Figueres of Costa Rica and President Betancourt of Venezuela, have made many friendly noises but never once have made a firm offer of real estate or material [*sic*] support to the battle against Castro.

The Ambassador went on to indicate that since the collapse of the invasion he had been getting what he considered a rather unfavorable reaction from Adolf Berle and other members of the State Department with whom he had been holding discussions. This, perhaps,

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explains why he had come to the Agency with this particular story rather than going to the Department. In any event, however, Chief, WH/4 ended his memorandum with the following suggestions:

Action required: Exposure of the Trujillo offer to the DDP and or other interested parties and early advice to the Guatemalan Ambassador with simultaneous notification to of the answer given.

Recommendation: That acceptance of assistance from Trujillo be given the greatest scrutiny. In the writer's judgment, exposure of Trujillo's assistance at this time could well swing increasing support to the United States in the wrong direction. No serious consideration should, therefore, be given to this offer. 91/

Except for the story of the retrograde and disposition of the materiel which will be discussed in a later volume, this concludes the story of the Agency's policy related -- if not policy making -- contacts with the Government of Guatemala during the course of Project JMATE. Agency representatives rather than Department of State personnel dealt directly with the President of Guatemala and his closest associates over actions which involved relationships with the United States Government and bore heavily on the formulation

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of US policy for Guatemala. There is little question that in his choice of working with the Agency rather than with the US Ambassador in Guatemala, John J.

Muccio, Ydigoras was no fool. As [redacted], who [redacted]

[redacted] on 1 December 1960 indicated, relations between [redacted] and the Ambassador were strained to the point where the [redacted] "operated almost as a separate entity until the departure of the Ambassador in the Fall of 1961." 92/*

If the oral history interview which Muccio made for the John F. Kennedy Library in the Spring of 1971 is indicative of his character, it is understandable why relations between Muccio and Agency personnel were strained. In that interview, the pertinent portions of which are reproduced in Appendix 3, Muccio tried to indicate on the one hand that he was uninformed about CIA activities in Guatemala, yet on the other hand he

* As indicated earlier in this chapter, [redacted] and [redacted] overlapped as [redacted] and, in fact, each [redacted] in his own particular bailiwick -- [redacted] with the Bay of Pigs Operation, and [redacted] with the operation [redacted]. Muccio's successor, John Bell, was named 10 November 1961. 93/

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pointed to an unidentified Agency contact who was keeping him fully posted on the Agency's operations. As revealed in the cable traffic, Muccio participated in various of the operations related to Project JMATE -- both before and after the fact. Some of Muccio's remarks in the JFK Library interview may have been the reflection of interviewer biases, but they also indicated that Muccio was trying to avoid any tie-in with the "bad guys" of CIA.*

* The question of interviewer bias, for example, shows through in the following comment made at one point: "The whole ineptitude of the [Bay of Pigs] operation is amazing, not only what you [Muccio] are talking about now, but I was struck by the simple tactics at the beach. It was just incredible to me that it could have been done that way, but that's an aside, my opinion." With this kind of "an aside" could the interviewee not have detected a bias of the interviewer?

- 98 -

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During the course of the operation [of the air base at Puerto Cabezas] I had one security officer ... He came up to me quite concerned ... He said, "We've got a bunch of Nicaraguans who are ... in our secure area ... What'll I do?" ... I looked out ... Christ Almighty! ... They were all generals and were led by [General] Somoza ... I said, "It's their country, you had better let them come in." So they came in and we gave them a general briefing ... But Somoza was concerned ... His concern was the United States willingness to follow through.

Garfield M. Thorsrud
to
Jack B. Pfeiffer
6 February 1976

- 99 -

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Part II

Nicaragua

A. Background

Although Project JMATE operations in Nicaragua were of considerably shorter duration than in Guatemala, there were many similarities in the degree to which CIA personnel were involved directly with the nation's President or his close personal staff on issues which were of direct importance to US foreign policy. This section therefore, focuses on the relations between the Agency and President Luis Somoza Debayle. The internal situation in Nicaragua presented the Department of State with difficult choices. Somoza was an absolute dictator and, particularly after the 1960 election of John F. Kennedy, State was much concerned that, in appearance at least, the *abrazo* for Somoza be formal rather than friendly, lest the US risk loss of support in the OAS and UN from the reputedly "democratic" Central and South American nations. The Agency had no such problems -- it needed a base from which to mount air operations against Castro's Cuba; and the

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most likely available site outside CONUS was in Nicaragua.

B. Initiation of Discussions with President Somoza

Puerto Cabezas on the northeastern coast of Nicaragua lies approximately 650 miles due south of Havana. During WWII, Puerto Cabezas had been developed as one of the principal airfields in that country; and despite having fallen into some disrepair, it nonetheless looked like the most feasible site for launching air activities against Castro.* On 13 June 1960, less than three months following Eisenhower's decision to act against Castro, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Louis P. Napoli, had made arrangements to talk privately with President Somoza about Central American politics with particular emphasis on Cuban activities in the area. At this first meeting, President Somoza made it quite clear that he needed assurances that the United States Government would back whatever actions or operations were to be put in motion to the end of overthrowing Castro. 1/

* On 10 December 1960, the Puerto Cabezas facility was assigned the crypt JMTIDE.

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Although he was [redacted] [redacted] in July of 1960, Lou Napoli was sent TDY to Managua to participate in a meeting between Agency representatives and the President of Nicaragua in September 1960. Accompanied by [redacted] Walter S. Holloway, the CIA representatives met with President Somoza on 17 and 19 September 1960. 2/ The purpose of Napoli's TDY was to inform Somoza that the Frente Revolucionario Democrático (FRD) was the organization of anti-Castro Cuban exiles which deserved the support of Somoza's government. This information for Somoza was in response to a question he had raised with Napoli in the previously mentioned June meeting. 3/

Somoza agreed that he would receive an FRD representative to discuss the situation and in addition indicated that he would make available a landing strip at Puerto Cabezas, a training site for about 100 men, and a shortwave radio station.* The Nicaraguan leader was not at all reluctant to raise pointed questions with

* The radio station, incidentally, that had been used during the course of operation PBSUCCESS which resulted in the ouster of the leftist Arbenz government in Guatemala in 1958.

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the CIA representatives, asking specifically what the position of the United States Government would be toward his country if Cuba should formally charge -- in the OAS or the UN -- that Nicaragua was fomenting war against them. Somoza wanted it understood and accepted by all levels of the US government that Nicaragua was on the side of the angels and, therefore, no US official should be allowed to attack Nicaragua for either its actions or its position vis-a-vis Cuba. Despite his cordial relations with the United States Ambassador, Thomas E. Whelan, Napoli reported that Somoza believed that:

There are some long-haired, Department of State liberals who are not in favor of Somoza and they would welcome the chance to use this as a source of embarrassment to his government by verbally blasting his country for her actions against Cuba. 4/

It should be emphasized, however, that in dealing with the Nicaraguan leaders, the Agency representatives, while expressing that in their own opinions Somoza's requests were reasonable, did make clear that they spoke only for themselves. Their views did not represent formal US policy -- that would have to come from higher levels. 5/ Napoli was quite specific in saying that:

- 103 -

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It is the opinion of the writer that guidance must be passed to Holloway by Headquarters in line with Somoza's query in order that [] will be properly informed and prepared to answer Somoza's questioning on this matter. This query is certain to arise again from time to time until a satisfactory reply is given to Somoza. 6/*

Napoli also indicated that:

The Acting Chief of the US Embassy further said that inasmuch as he had no instructions or prior notice of the mission, plus the fact that only the US Ambassador to Nicaragua was authorized to sit in talks, he would prefer to remain clear of

* The Department of State representatives in the foreign areas which were the sites of JMATE operations frequently got quite goosey, particularly those of less than ambassadorial ranks. In this instance, for example, [] noted in his transmittal:

The aspect of urgency which brought Napoli to Managua has given the Acting Chief of the American Embassy the impression that we might be operating on a non-coordinated, uncontrolled, free wheeling basis ... particularly since Napoli was []. [] has done much to overcome past administrative resistance here and improve the relationship of this office with the rest of State, the cooperation of which we need. It is incumbent upon the Agency that the American Ambassador be thoroughly briefed while he is in the United States on the circumstances of Napoli's visit to insure no future conflict of interests and continued maintenance of rapport. 7/

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any talks that Napoli had with Somoza. This was agreeable to Napoli. The writer wishes to emphasize that relations between Napoli and the Acting Chief of the American Embassy remain completely cordial and no change is anticipated. 8/

In mid-October of 1960, a survey team from Agency Headquarters under the direction of Napoli made a trip to Nicaragua to inspect Puerto Cabezas. Again the Agency representatives dealt directly with the President of this Central American country, receiving his full support and cooperation. Somoza volunteered to foot the cost of the DC-3 aircraft that would be provided to the survey team, including the pilot and the crew. He also was asked to provide a senior official who could act as his spokesman, and in this connection Noel Pallais Debayle, a cousin of Somoza's who had accompanied the survey team, was identified as the contact. Except for Napoli, who [redacted] [redacted], the other members of the survey team travelled as [redacted] looking for opportunities in Nicaragua.* The visit by the Agency

* The other members of the survey team included E. A. Stanulis, who was Executive Officer for WH/4, Ralph Brown, a logistics officer, Norman Imler and Robert Moore, PM officers.

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representatives had been cleared by Napoli with the US Ambassador to Nicaragua, Thomas Whelan; and, in addition, WH/4 had advised Frank Devine of the Department of State of the trip and Col. King had informed Thomas Mann. 9/*

In a meeting with the leader of the survey team (Napoli) on 14 Oct 60, Somoza agreed, among other things, that the airstrip area could be isolated for the exclusive use of the Agency. Somoza would provide a guard force, construction of some temporary housing for personnel at the base would be permitted, and initially he would help out with the transportation and supplies for repairing the airstrip. He agreed to the use of a practice bombing range on a nearby lagoon about 10 miles south of Puerto Cabezas; he agreed to the use of Puerto Cabezas as a strike base for attacks on Cuba; and he also agreed to permit the exile air force to use the Nicaraguan Air Force insignia during any internal flights. It also was apparent that at least

* Mr. Mann was Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs and Mr. Devine was Special Assistant to Mr. Mann.

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two US companies located in the Puerto Cabezas area would play significant roles in the Agency's plans for Puerto Cabezas. Facilities of the Nicaraguan Long Leaf Pine Company (NIPCO), a lumber company controlling the terminal facilities, and the Standard Fruit Company, controlling the rail line and the docking facility, were critical to both planned air and maritime operations. 10/

In return for his support, Somoza wanted assurance that once action against Castro started, there would be no backing down by the USG; and he also wanted to be sure that the proper levels of the US Government were sanctioning the activities of the survey team. When he was told that the US Ambassador was thoroughly familiar with and involved in the planning, he was somewhat mollified; but he did raise the question of wanting a contact to whom he could turn if he believed that the operation was not going as it should -- or if he had complaints or suggestions to offer. Somoza was told in this connection that the best thing he could do would be to go to Holloway. As before, Napoli made clear that these talks were exploratory and that

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they represented no firm commitment. Somoza, of course, was told that he was dealing with [redacted]; but there is little doubt that he knew exactly with whom he was negotiating.

Following the return of the survey team toward the end of October 1960, representatives from WH/4/PM, WH/4/Support, and DPD recommended that:

1. Policy approval be obtained for the use of the Puerto Cabezas complex.
2. Repair of the airstrip be commenced at once for JMARC use and as a long term CIA asset because of its overall strategic location.
3. Construction of buildings be commenced for an air-maritime base, including storage of ordnance, ZRMEDRICK pack, and other supplies.
4. An infantry training/holding base be constructed if no facility is to be made available in the US. ll/*

C. Rip Robertson's Excursion into Diplomacy

Following the return of the survey team in October, Napoli was succeeded by William "Rip" Robertson

* As a portent of things to come, the team recommended that it would be advisable to acquire the infantry base because of the crowded conditions at the Guatemala base.

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as the Agency's principal contact with President Somoza. In August of 1960 Robertson wrote to the Agency from Nicaragua indicating that a business venture in which he had been involved was terminating. A former contract employee, he asked if there was any need for his services at this time. His letter went forward from to the DDCI, General Cabell; and it ended up with the Deputy Director for Plans who suggested to Chief, WH Division (Col. J. C. King) that Robertson be brought into the JMARC program for operations in Nicaragua. 12/

With the concurrence of Chief, WH/4, Jake Esterline, Col. King prepared a Letter of Instruction (LOI) for Robertson on 2 December 1960. The LOI confirmed Robertson's verbal orders to proceed to Nicaragua as coordinator of JMATE activities in that area. Among other of the operational duties and responsibilities Robertson was told:

You will have authority over all JMARC personnel and responsibility for the coordination of all JMARC activities, including JMTIDE, as set forth in Para 11. You will be the sole JMARC official in contact with the President of Nicaragua and authorized to be in Nicaragua. 13/

Although cautioned concerning the responsibilities of the US Ambassador in Nicaragua and the relationship

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of [] to the Ambassador, Robertson was given a free hand to determine the extent of his contact with other US personnel in the Managua area. As a point of some contention, Robertson was also told that he would "be responsible for the coordination and general supervision of JMTIDE construction activities and air and maritime operational activities, when implemented under their specialized senior officers". 14/

Rip's Letter of Instruction indicated that the facility at JMTIDE should be completed by 15 January 1961, and that as soon as Robertson concluded satisfactory arrangements with the President of Nicaragua, the 5-man construction team would be sent back into the Puerto Cabezas area to conduct a survey estimating the scope and cost of the work. And then, somewhat paradoxically, in view of the previous comment about Robertson's authority, it was stated that:

On Headquarter's approval of the plan for base construction, a Base Manager will be provided, with the responsibility for maintenance, operation and support of the facility. On activation, JMARC/PM Personnel will be assigned in connection with both air and maritime operations, and your responsibilities regarding these various JMTIDE activities include:

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1. Being the sole JMARC channel to the President and Government of Nicaragua;

2. Assisting and expediting local procurement of materials and equipment; and

3. Assuring that JMARC security and general operating standards are maintained at JMTIDE. 15/

Even though the matter of the base at Puerto Cabezas had not yet been formally resolved, it was apparent, as Robertson was getting ready to depart for Headquarters, that the air element in DPD which had been assigned to the JMATE function was readying itself to move into action at the base. Not only were plans outlined for the survey team to go to Nicaragua at the earliest opportunity following Robertson's negotiations, but plans for housing, messing, cover, security, and air operations also were being outlined by Jim Cunningham, Assistant Chief/DPD, before the end of November. 16/*

Robertson's assignment in Nicaragua, which had been preceded by Napoli's trip in mid-October 1960,

* At this time operations anticipated maximum sortie rates of 100 a month for 3 months and probable maximum numbers of aircraft to be accommodated as 10 B-26's, 4 C-46's and at least two C-54's.

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caused varying reactions within the Department of State. U. S. Ambassador, Thomas Whelan, was a strong supporter of the Somoza government; and, consequently, looked with great favor on the Agency's attempts to negotiate directly with Somoza, believing that this was a proper step, not only from the US point of view vis-a-vis Cuba, but also in terms of our relations with the government of Nicaragua. 17/ On the other hand, Thomas Mann, 18/ the Assistant Secretary of State for Inter American Affairs, preferred to tread very cautiously with regard to Nicaragua, adhering to the formalities of diplomatic nicety vis-a-vis that government. Within the Agency itself, Mr. Bissell's Assistant Deputy Director of Plans for Action (ADDP/A), C. Tracy Barnes, was apparently nervous about the implications of using the Nicaraguan site because Somoza was such a bad guy; and Barnes at one point stated that "in the long run, we would lose an unacceptable amount of face with these [more democratic?] countries" in Central America if we worked closely with Somoza. 19/ Barnes, however, did realize the urgent need for developing a strike base.

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Another concern at the time that Robertson was about to depart for Nicaragua was the possibility that Guatemala, at least the ground training site, might be subject to an OAS inspection team; and in late November 1960 the prospects for an internal US training site for the Cuban Brigade was being investigated. Among the possible areas discussed were Fort Benning, Fort Bragg, the Belle-Chase Naval ammunition depot in Louisiana, Camp Johnson in Louisiana, and Camp Bullis in Texas. While the possibility of holding, and/or training of ground force troops within the continental United States was a subject for discussion, there appeared to be little question that the forward strike base would have to be outside of the continental United States; and Puerto Cabezas was consistently regarded as the most likely -- if not the only -- site for that strike base. 20/

Shortly prior to his departure for Nicaragua, Rip Robertson raised a series of pertinent questions which he hoped to have answered -- or at least discussed -- prior to his departure. Among the questions were several which clearly indicated Robertson's

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awareness of the political implications of the position that he was assuming:

1. Am I cleared to speak frankly with local President and local Chief of Army as to US Government participation?
2. General but not specific operational concepts (example: we plan supplies and infiltrations until we can stir up something, and then we will support it with plenty of firepower).
3. Announcement of the number and type (resupply, bombing, strafing, etc.) air missions daily on the day it is to run?
4. When the local President asks for politics and identity of indigenous movement or movements we are supporting, do we tell him? (Where can I get a good briefing on this point?)
5. Have arrangements been made for reimbursement to local President abroad for expenditures he may assume for us? What do I tell him re this subject, at first meeting?* 21/

Also, as Robertson was about to depart, there was considerable concern about the problem in Nicaragua

* Robertson also asked for guidance on the most pragmatic questions of contracting authority, cover, and base security -- particularly whether DPD would be subject to WH security practices even at the expense of air ops.

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that was being raised with the Special Group, particularly the concerns of Assistant Secretary of State for American Republic Affairs, Thomas Mann. In an apparent response to a question raised by Mann, Chief, WH Division, sent a note to Mann on 1 December 1960, in which it was stated:

As one of the actions to be taken in response to the Presidential and Special Group Meetings, we would proceed to survey, construct, and man a staging and refueling facility at Puerto Cabezas. This action is in accord with preliminary conversations with President Somoza. There would at no time be a substantial force at the installation, and no US personnel would be in the capital of the nation except one agency contract employee with long local experience, who would [redacted] [redacted] by dealing with the President on this operation.

The initial survey team of 5-men would fly into Puerto Cabezas on or about 7 December. Subject to their findings it is expected that such minimum airstrip repairs and construction of temporary buildings would be completed by 15 January [1961]. 22/

The Agency presumption that it had been acting in response to the directive of the President and the wishes of the Special Group, apparently met with opposition from Mann; for in a handwritten note on a copy of the memorandum cited above, Dick Drain (Chief, WH/4/P&P) recorded:

- 115 -

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Later that morning [2 December 1960], Devine called C/WH to say that Mann had referred the matter to [Livingston] Merchant and felt there had been no Special Group discussion or decision underlying the Nicaragua proposal. I called ADD/A who (after speaking w/C/WH) called Joe Scott to see where we stood. Scott said Merchant felt this was a matter for secretarial review. For this review, State would need more detail. Barnes undertook to provide same. Used [Thomas A.] Parrot to inform [Gordon] Gray and DOD and himself inform DCI. 23/*

In order to insure that the Special Group was properly notified, WH/4 prepared a memorandum on Nicaraguan aspects of the Cuban operation on 3 December 1960, and on 6 December 1960 another memorandum was prepared concerning several problems, among which was included that of the Nicaraguan strike base. These materials were forwarded for use at the Special Group meeting of 8 December 1960. 24/

Although formal sanction for his mission was still being debated, Robertson departed for Nicaragua

* Mr. Merchant was Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, and Joseph W. Scott was his Special Assistant. Thomas A. Parrot served as Executive Secretary for the Special Group 5412, and Gordon Gray was President Eisenhower's National Security Adviser.

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early in December, and [] was instructed that either he or the Ambassador should advise President Somoza about Robertson's role and arrange for an early meeting. 25/ On 8 December 1960, Robertson had his first meeting with President Luis Somoza and Noel Pallais Debayle, Somoza's cousin and contact man with JMATE. The purpose of this initial meeting was to establish his identity with Somoza and to arrange for the black flight for another survey team that was coming in to examine the Puerto Cabezas area. For all practical purposes, from this time forward until his departure in mid-February of 1961, the conduct of a major segment of US foreign policy was in the hands of a CIA contract employee -- the State representatives standing to one side as the Agency forged ahead with its anti-Castro program. 26/*

* Not only did the State representatives stand aside, but also []. In his transmittal of Robertson's first reports, [] reported as follows:

"CADICK [Robertson] is now operating completely outside of []
-- because [] wants to know nothing more than what is absolutely required that he know regarding these activities, he has given CADICK the essential cryptonyms, []
(footnote continued on following page)

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Prior to his first meeting with Somoza on 8 December 1960, Robertson did meet with Pallais on 7 December 1960, to make arrangements for the session with Somoza. 28/ The delicate situation in which Robertson found himself is quite evident from the questions which were put to him by Pallais in his initial meeting. The President's cousin pointed out that Somoza would be pushing for a promise that "we would back him, if and when he was caught in the act," and Robertson was faced with a similar question during his session with Somoza. Rip straddled the line very carefully and pointed out in all instances that he could only express his own personal opinion and make quite sure that the Nicaraguans understood that he had no official verification that Somoza would be supported in case of difficulties with other member states of

[President Luis Somoza], [] [General Anastasio Somoza], and [] [Noel Pallais de Bayle], which he has memorized. This has been done for his own and operational security. Hereafter [] will receive CADICK's finished reports sealed in an envelope." 27/

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the OAS, the UN, or with Cuba. Robertson did play down the likelihood of serious military intervention by Cuba because of the strength of the Brigade's Air Force, once it moved into Nicaragua. 29/

The care with which Robertson was treading the line with Somoza is quite similar to the handling of the situation by Lou Napoli at the time of his visit to Nicaragua in mid-October of 1960. Napoli also avoided very carefully indicating that views that he expressed represented anything other than his own personal thoughts.*

* However, in a conversation with a member of WH Division on 9 August 1972, Napoli stated that he had assured the Somozas that the United States would not back out once the Cuban operation started and, further, that if Castro retaliated either militarily or in the UN/OAS, Somoza could expect full support from the US.

When the interviewer questioned Napoli about the authority that he had for making such statements, the response was that he had this from Headquarters. He further stated that he did not worry concerning the authority that Headquarters had. 30/

For whatever reason, Robertson's role in the negotiations with Somoza apparently left a bad after taste with Napoli, for in this same interview in 1972 he was quite pointed in noting that it was he, rather than Robertson who had played the principal role in negotiations with the head of the Nicaraguan state. 31/
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Robertson's on-going dialogue with Somoza continued through December, quite successfully from the standpoint of acceptance of Agency proposals for developing Puerto Cabezas. Robertson noted that aside from the political discussions which could not be escaped, every point raised by the engineering advance party was agreed to by Somoza. 32/

Even though the Agency's representative in Nicaragua was making good progress, the same apparently did not apply in Headquarters area. On 28 December 1960 the Chief of WH/4 was requesting action on the part of the A/DDP/A to get a formal policy decision. The question of the *quid pro quo's* requested by Somoza apparently had been put to Assistant Secretary Mann, and according to Chief, WH/4, Mann was

rather cold on the subject, with the inevitable result that nothing had happened. I would appreciate, therefore, if you [C. Tracy Barnes, A/DDP/A] in your role as coordinator would take the matter up with Ambassador Willauer. We are now at the point that we must obligate funds and commence rehabilitation of JMTIDE if we are to meet the 15 February - 1 March deadline.

The record verifies that both Napoli and Robertson acted in a highly commendable manner during the touchy negotiations with the Central American dictator.

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Obviously, we cannot in good conscience expend government funds unless we have reasonable assurance that we can use the area. Given the absolute essentiality of JMTIDE to our operation, the need for early resolution is quite apparent. 33/

Despite the concern over the official policy for Nicaragua, Headquarters apparently missed or ignored one very important point made by Robertson in mid-December 1960. It was a point which from project inception until near the collapse of the Brigade was to plague the JMARC operation. Robertson pointed out that

the real problem is that though all preliminary activities can be explained away by cover schemes devised thus far, we much face fact that once shooting starts, it is certain that JMTIDE will come to light for what it is. 34/

Had this comment been carefully considered at this time, perhaps the whole question of plausible deniability could have been laid out on the table or laid to rest before it became a critical factor -- if not *the* critical factor -- in modifying the operational plan. While Robertson went about his business in Nicaragua, there was an increasing flurry of activity in the Headquarters area concerning the anti-Castro

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movement; and the situation in Nicaragua was consistently introduced as a part of that on-going problem.

D. Qualms at High Levels

With reference to the use or non-use of the Nicaraguan base -- a question which was still unanswered at the turn of the year -- Tom Mann was looked on as the villain in the piece by the Agency's representatives. In preparing material for the DCI to use at a high level meeting, Tracy Barnes indicated that Mann would probably oppose the use of the Nicaraguan strike base. Barnes argues that Mann would reason that since the operation was essentially one backed by the United States Government, the attempt to establish a covert Agency operated base was improper. The United States Government should openly admit its anti-Castro posture, for continuation of the attempt to maintain covert activities in Nicaragua and Guatemala would (in Mann's thinking according to Barnes) jeopardize the already somewhat shaky governments of Ydigoras and Somoza. 35/

In his memorandum noting Mann's position, Barnes chose to ignore, or at least to pass over, the merits of overt US intervention. Instead of looking at the

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question in issue, he pointed out that the Agency's position was that unless bases in the US could be obtained, the only acceptable land mass from which we could fly the B-26's to strike Cuba was Puerto Cabezas. 36/

In preparing material for Barnes prior to a 5 January 1961 meeting of the Special Group, the Chief of WH/4, P&P, the hard-nosed, hard-talking Dick Drain noted an even more significant problem concerning the situation in Nicaragua. Drain pointed out that the Special Group in its meetings of 8 and 15 December had left a number of points hanging, including the authority to use the airstrip at Puerto Cabezas for spoiling raids and tactical air support, and in reference to those two meetings of the Special Group, Drain wrote:

There was considerable discussion of the logistics timing involved in the development of the strip for strikes in the time framework of 15 Feb - 1 Mar. Even though the logistics factors alone would seem to make it necessary for the Group now to approve this facility for airstrikes, it was felt that the more basic question was the very approval of airstrikes. It was therefore agreed that this Special Group would be asked

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to approve spoiling raids and tactical airstrikes from Puerto Cabezas beginning D-1. 37/*

Despite discussion of these issues, when Barnes prepared his background memorandum for the DCI to use at the 5 January meeting of the Special Group, the questions and problems which have just been mentioned were totally ignored! With reference to Puerto Cabezas, Barnes said that steps had been taken to prepare the strike base

and we are planning to move to Puerto Cabezas substantial amounts of material [*sic*] starting around the 15th or 20th of January, including aviation ordnance, resupply ammo and weapons for ground forces, aviation gas, diesel fuel, and possibly some extra one-man packs,

although work on the base did not actually begin until late January or early February 1961. 38**

* In view of what would subsequently become one of the most controversial issues concerning the whole Bay of Pigs operation -- the number and nature of the airstrikes -- it is interesting to note the reference at this early date to D-1 air activity.

** On 11 Jan 61 according to one source, a Headquarters team arrived at JMTIDE to arrange for and supervise the construction; and Rip Robertson was notified to report to Headquarters on 27 January 1961 "for participation JMCLEAR planning for JMTIDE construction." 39/ The Chief, WH/4, PM, Col. Jack Hawkins also noted on 4 January 1961 that "necessary construction and repairs at this base are now scheduled to commence." 40/

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Completely ignoring the issue of authorization for use of Puerto Cabezas or the question of permission for airstrikes which had previously been brought to his attention, Barnes chose to focus on the economics and the potential loss of US inventories which might be moved into Puerto Cabezas and lost -- that is, appropriated by Somoza -- if the decision should be made either to move the training activity to United States bases and/or to back off from the use of the Nicaraguan air base. What motivated Barnes to suggest this approach is unknown; and in view of the real problems requiring decisions it was a unbelievable performance.

Even as the Agency was seeking policy guidance with respect to utilization of Puerto Cabezas, Robertson alerted Headquarters that the Nicaraguan situation would soon be complicated by requests from the Government of Nicaragua for a \$(US) 2 million loan to rebuild motor and railroads which had recently been flooded -- a request which the Nicaraguan Ambassador Oscar Sevilla-Sacasa would present to the Department of State. In addition, a Development Loan fund of \$(US) 8 million was also pending. 41/ When General Anastasio Somoza --

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President Somoza's brother -- came to the United States to attend the Kennedy inauguration, he also met with Allen Dulles to discuss the problem of JMTIDE and of continued US support for Nicaragua. At the same time, the General also pressed the DCI for assistance in obtaining the loans that were just mentioned. The DCI however pointed Somoza toward the Department of State, suggesting that Assistant Secretary Thomas Mann was the logical contact for discussing loans. 42/

The question of the *quid-pro-quo* of loans for Nicaragua in return for the utilization of Puerto Cabezas continued through February, with the Chief WH/4 and the Chief, WH Division both playing active roles in attempting to get a commitment from State for the \$2 million loan -- and State support for the \$8 million World Bank loan. 43/ On the last day of February 1961, a proposal from Chief, Western Hemisphere Division to the DCI suggesting that the DDP, the DDCI, or the DCI "press the Department of State for favorable action in Nicaragua's two pending loans" was signed and approved at least through the DDP level. Whether the DCI actually approved this recommendation is a

- 126 -

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moot point and one which was not clarified even subsequent to the close out of the JMATE operation. 44/

At the same time that he was suggesting that pressure be put on the Department of State to assist Nicaragua in obtaining the loans, Chief, WHD also was recommending that Ambassador Whelan be designated to discuss Project JMATE with President Somoza. Col. King, in speaking of Whelan remarked as follows:

His relationship with President Somoza makes him an ideal representative to convey assurances that the project will be implemented, will continue until Castro's defeat, and be conducted with US awareness of Nicaragua's contribution and with support for her position should the operation produce pressures on her in the UN, the OAS, or otherwise. Should it not be possible to extend such assurances during Ambassador Whelan's availability, then such assurances should be extended by a representative of the US government as soon as possible thereafter. 45/*

E. Back to Robertson -- Activist with Foresight

While negotiations over the formalities of the use of Puerto Cabezas, dragged on at Headquarters,

* To the author's knowledge, the suggestion for a commitment to support the project "until Castro's defeat" was never officially made to either President Somoza or President Ydigoras nor to the anti-Castro Cuban political or military leaders.

- 127 -
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Robertson, on the scene in Nicaragua, made solid progress in establishing a base at JMTIDE. Between 3 and 17 January 1961, for example, he reported on three meetings with General Anastasio Somoza; and in the course of these, made arrangements for the movement of guards into the TIDE area in anticipation of the arrival of the first supply ship toward the end of January 1961. He also worked out arrangements for housing and paying the *guardia nacional* contingent which would be responsible for base security; and he set up the bookkeeping for the expenditures for the *guardia*. Although he gave no specifics, Robertson indicated that he had set up a system for alerting JMTIDE when "doubtful persons or newspapermen board the local airlines," and apparently this system was considerably more successful than the program established for the JMADD and JMTRAV activities. 46*

With reference to the security problem, Robertson reported that the arrival of the team responsible for

* In this context Rip did note that he was being "pestered" by Cora Waterhouse, a newspaper woman from the United States who was trying to find out what was going on.

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supervising the re-creation of Puerto Cabezas tipped the local Americans off as to who was behind the activity at the airfield. Rip was particularly high in his praise of the Agency engineer who both reduced the time for getting the operation in order and also had saved money in the process. In reporting on his activities through mid-January Robertson made one complaint which he voiced as follows:

In the future, I would suggest that the size of such groups be cut to a minimum. There is something uncommon about a group of four men, of whom only one is occupied (to the eyes of observers) and only one of which knows the business for which they are there. In reality, one engineer would accomplish all that is being done at TIDE with the exception of course, of commo. 47/

In terms of security at JMTIDE, Robertson also had some other problems which he seemed to have handled very well, especially considering that they concerned US military representatives in Nicaragua. The Chief of the US Military Assistance Group to Guatemala, in the course of an inspection of National Guard facilities, had come into the TIDE area; and upon his return to Managua had prepared a report on the activities and installation. The US Ambassador requested that this

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report not be forwarded to Washington, but as a result of the trip, the Military Attache and the Air Attache in Managua got the hots to trot down to TIDE. Ambassador Whelan, however, backed Robertson's request that such trips be denied; but fearing that the Ambassador would be unable to contain future requests from the Department of Defense representatives, Robertson asked Headquarters for assistance. On 1 February 1961, a cable went to Robertson from Headquarters stating "Headquarters has arranged with Pentagon superiors Mil Attache and MAAG Chief to send them today orders neither visit nor report on JMTIDE". 48/*

Rip Robertson performed yeoman service in his stint in Nicaragua in the early months of 1961. In

* An additional problem with a US military contingent apparently was headed off when the Agency requested the Pentagon to scrub the planned visit of an Army Map Service NIS (National Intelligence Survey) group to TIDE. 49/ Toward mid-June 1961 the arrangements which the Agency had made through the Subsidiary Division, Joint Staff and Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, US Army still held. At that time (12 June 1961), however, the Agency did authorize access to JMTIDE to US military personnel who were involved in decisions concerning disposal of the materiel still stockpiled at Puerto Cabezas. 49a/

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addition to what has already been noted, his relationships with the Somozas -- President and General -- were carried on in a direct and friendly manner. If the situation demanded, there was no hesitation on Robertson's part to make a direct approach to President Somoza. Based on reports of these meetings, it is clear that Robertson was regarded as the de-facto representative re US foreign policy in Nicaragua. Robertson reported, however, that he always emphasized to the Nicaraguan leaders that his opinions were not necessarily those of the USG. By the same token, Robertson made clear that he would forward Somoza's views to the proper authorities in the US Government. Even though the United States had an Ambassador in Nicaragua who was quite friendly with Somoza, Robertson's knowledgeability about the Agency's anti-Castro operations really made him the key figure in the ongoing relationships between Nicaragua and the United States.

With his detailed knowledge of the operational plans for Puerto Cabezas, Robertson was in a much better position to understand and appreciate Somoza's

- 131 -

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desire for a more formal commitment for the United States than he had received by mid-February of 1961. In a lengthy exit session with Robertson at the time of his departure (14 February 1961), the Nicaraguan President emphasized how difficult it would be for him to survive his pro-Castro opponents once Robertson and Ambassador Whelan -- who was being replaced -- had both departed the country, unless the United States provided him with some greater guarantees of support for his assistance in the USG's anti-Castro activities. As Somoza put it to Robertson, "I need to meet a man who can say he just left Mr. Kennedy, and Mr. Kennedy sends assurances that we are all in this together." 50/*

When Robertson departed Nicaragua for Headquarters on 14 February 1961, he received high marks from all sources. cabled back as follows:

* Robertson noted that Somoza in response to a question concerning whether Mr. Dulles was of sufficient stature to give the proper assurances responded "that certainly Mr. Dulles was of stature enough to be able to assure him, but as he (Somoza) had pointed out to his brother, General A. Somoza, Mr. Dulles had talked 'only in generalities' to the General, and had avoided the main issue." This was with reference to the General's visit to the US at the time of the Kennedy inaugural. 51/

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[] desires commend Robertson for excellent presentation and accomplishment mission. Robertson's detached objective approach, vis-a-vis Somoza. Ambassador and [] underlined positive results. 52/*

F. Who Would Do What for Whom?

Robertson's suggestions for discussions were taken to heart in Nicaragua and in Washington. Almost immediately upon his departure, a series of cables indicate that meetings were held between the President of Nicaragua and Ambassador Whelan and, in Washington, between Lou Napoli and Ambassador Sevilla-Sacasa. A principal subject of the conversation was the status of Nicaragua's pending loan applications to the USG and the DLF. In neither Managua nor Washington did Nicaragua get any commitment that the loans were going

* It should not be inferred from the foregoing that all of Robertson's activities were devoted to hand-holding with the Somozas. He got down to the very nitty-gritty things directly related to the planned operation against Fidel Castro, concerning himself with such matters as port security, planning for fueling and watering the vessels which would be used to transport the Brigade to Cuba, and, probably, to negotiating an agreement with Nicaragua to dispose of the Brigade dead resulting from the invasion. One knowledgeable source recalled that an arrangement was made whereby the bodies would be transported to Nicaragua by boat or air, and that Somoza had offered to give them a hero's burial. 53/

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to be approved or authorized; but it was quite clear that the Agency wished to defer to State on the matter of the formal loan applications and to put the political burden on the Department's back. 54/ At the same time that the Agency was holding Somoza's hand, Headquarters was being extremely concerned that none of our assurances to Nicaragua got put into writing. 55/

On a very local level, Somoza pointed out to Ambassador Whelan that because the government of Nicaragua had diverted funds which had been appropriated by the Nicaraguan Congress to keep the railroad and road systems operating in order to support TIDE activities, he was going to be in a very embarrassing position should TIDE collapse, and should the US fail to provide the \$(US)2 million loan. 56/ In Washington, Ambassador Sevilla-Sacasa pressed Napoli for assistance in getting high level assurance that Nicaragua would not suffer in either the UN or OAS because of her anti-Castro position. Sevilla-Sacasa suggested that Berle, Rusk, or President Kennedy would be a suitable US spokesman to indicate that Nicaragua's position would be supported should any international or regional sanctions be

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threatened for assistance given the Brigade by Nicaragua should the invasion of Cuba take place. 57/

As the date for the invasion approached -- and with the approval of Jake Esterline and C. Tracy Barnes -- Lou Napoli was reassigned (27 March 1961) to Managua on TDY to maintain personal contact with both President and General Somoza on the upcoming operation insofar as it might affect the Nicaraguan government; and like his predecessor, Rip Robertson, Napoli was to confine his activities to Managua and avoid JMTIDE. Napoli expected to do a certain amount of hand-holding on the matter of the loans and make reassuring noises without any firm commitments; and, similarly, he hoped to be able to assure the Nicaraguan government that it would receive support from the US should their Latin American neighbors take umbrage at Somoza's anti-Castro posture. Probably the most significant duty he was to undertake upon his return to Nicaragua was to brief Somoza on the upcoming military operation without, of course, revealing the strike date -- in fact, the instruction indicated that Napoli himself would not know the exact date. 58/

- 135 -

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Among the points outlined in his scenario for the military briefing of Somoza, the following items are worth mention in view of the situation as it actually evolved. With reference to the Cuban Brigade members, it was to be emphasized that once they were on the ships they would never return to Nicaragua. With reference to the air strikes, the scenario stated:

Air strikes will begin once landings [are] made and will continue until Castro knocked out. Fifteen B-26's will be used. Somoza need not worry about Cuban Air Force following the B-26's, as the mission of those planes in [*sic*] the total destruction of the Cuban Air Force. The success of the operation hinges largely on the continued uninterrupted use of TIDE for strategic and logistical support for rebels. Once we start, we must go until Castro falls. 59/

Despite the fact that Lou Napoli talked rather glibly about promises and assurances that should be given to Somoza, Jack Hawkins, Chief, WH/4/PM, in testifying to the Taylor Committee made the point that neither the Agency nor the USG ever gave Somoza a high level promise of support as a condition for use of Puerto Cabezas. In fact, Hawkins emphasized that up until the last moment, the use of this base might have been denied at the whim of Somoza. 60/

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The situation was complicated by the fact that Washington was sitting on its hands waiting for a policy decision to implement the operational phase of JMTIDE; and this was further complicated by the question of the utilization of US military personnel at the Nicaragua base. As pointed out in the discussion of the Agency's relationships with the Government of Guatemala,* Jake Esterline had been forced to negotiate an agreement which, in effect, was a Status of Forces Agreement with the Government of Guatemala before permission was granted for the use of US Army Special Forces personnel at the ground training base, JMTRAV. When it was time to consider the initiation of operations at Puerto Cabezas, the question of utilization of US personnel in a foreign area again came up.

In early March 1961, a memorandum to the DDP from the Assistant Director for Operations, Office of Special Operations, Department of Defense, stated in part:

The services and the Joint Staff have all reaffirmed that the Department of Defense policy established for Guatemala must apply to Nicaragua in the same manner. This subject has been discussed with the

* See Part I of this volume, pp. 57 ff.

- 137 -
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Deputy Secretary of Defense by Brigadier General Lansdale with a proposal that it be raised at the next Group meeting. 61/

The end result was that neither Army Special Forces nor USAF assignees were officially permitted to move from Guatemalan bases to TIDE. The number of USAF ground crew personnel who were at TIDE "unofficially" cannot be determined.

G. Down to the Wire with Somoza

Whether or not, adequate formal assurance of support in the OAS or UN was actually reached between President Somoza and high level officials of the United States Government is uncertain -- what is certain, however, is that Somoza gave his full cooperation to the Agency effort to mount the operation out of Puerto Cabezas. As of 10 April, in a meeting with the Agency representative, it was made clear that the Somozas were going to do everything in their power to insure the security of the operation. Measures to be taken included the monitoring and censorship of radio, outgoing cables, international telephones, television, and the press, and control of the airlines -- on 15 April 1961, for example, commercial air traffic to Puerto

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Cabezas and all other air traffic, except for Agency operated aircraft, would be completely prohibited. 62/

Somoza also was going to go so far as to make an announcement on 15 April that the activity which certainly would be known to be taking place at Puerto Cabezas was in response to the threat of possible incursions from Costa Rica and the need to have the Nicaraguan military forces in a state of readiness. 63/ At the same time that this cover story was being discussed with the representatives of the Nicaraguan Government, General Somoza was visiting TIDE and spoke with Colonels Hawkins and Gaines who were in Puerto Cabezas to give the final briefings prior to the beginning of operations; and Somoza raised the question of possible attacks by Castro's Air Force should any of his planes get off the ground. The Agency's representatives regarded this as a legitimate concern; and even though convinced that Castro's FAR (Fuerza Aerea Revolucionario) would be destroyed on the ground, they asked Headquarters to approach the US Navy about establishing a radar picket operation off the Nicaraguan coast to relay warnings of incoming Castro aircraft.

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The picket would not only assuage Somoza's fears, but would be insurance against any unorthodox surprise attack on TIDE.* The emergency cable from TIDE to Headquarters recommended that the radar picket be established by 0800 local time 15 April 1961, or as soon as possible thereafter; and it also suggested that instructions be provided for communications to link the Navy picket with both TIDE and Managua. 64/

One of the few points of contention between the Agency representatives and the highest officials of the Nicaraguan government occurred at the time that the operation was being mounted at Puerto Cabezas. One of the Garcia Lines ships -- the *Lake Charles* which was to be one of the backup ships of the invasion fleet -- arrived in Puerto Cabezas where 10 of her Cuban crew members were detained as potential pro-Castro security risks. These crew members were removed from the *Lake Charles* and turned over to Captain

* The idea suggested by General Somoza -- that bombs might be rolled out the doors of Cubana airlines C-47's or other transport aircraft -- undoubtedly struck a familiar note with the air ops people at TIDE. After all, they had tried to develop a make-shift napalm bomb to be rolled out -- or dropped out on a pallet -- of a C-46 or C-54. (See Volume I, Air Operations.)

- 140 -

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Quintana, the commander of the Nicaraguan Guardia Nacional unit which was the security force for TIDE; and then they were confined to some of the nearby military barracks. 65/ As early as January 1961, General Somoza had told Robertson that Nicaragua would provide detention facilities for any of the Cubans who proved to be "reluctant warriors" when it was time to embark for the invasion. 65a/ This action, however, apparently did not fit the case or else it had not been cleared properly with General Somoza for a cable from TIDE to Headquarters reported that General Somoza had visited TIDE on 13 April and "in strong terms ordered removal from JMTIDE immediately 14 detainees currently in custody Capt. Quintana." 66/*

The order for the immediate removal of the Cubans who were being held under guard of the Nicaraguan

* The only explanation for the discrepancy in the number of detainees is that there were additional Cubans who had been pulled out of the Brigade units when they were being embarked at Puerto Cabezas. The figure of 10 from the *Lake Charles* comes from a Havana news release attributed to one of the detainees. 66a/ As of 25 April 1961, the crewmen were still in custody, and Headquarters instructed TIDE to release them ASAP to the Captain of either the *Lake Charles* or the *Atlantico*. 66b/

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troops was apparently rescinded, for on 22 April a cable from Managua to Washington indicated that President Somoza had approved delaying the removal of the Cubans until 24 April. Somoza himself was characterized as continuing to be quite cooperative with the Agency representatives but fearful that with the reopening to commercial air traffic of Puerto Cabezas that the detainees in TIDE would be discovered and consequently his cover story for TIDE activities would be exposed. 67/ In any event, the Cubans who were being held prisoner were returned to the United States aboard the *Atlantico* which, upon the collapse of the invasion, had returned to Puerto Cabezas and thence to the US via Key West, Norfolk, and Baltimore. From the last port, the prisoners were then sent to Washington, and from Washington on down to Miami and thence to Cuba. 68/*

* The Agency's relations with Nicaragua also became somewhat strained because Miro Cardona was never brought to Nicaragua to meet with President Somoza, despite the fact that this had been requested by Somoza on several occasions. Why Headquarters was so reluctant to approve such a meeting is, in hindsight, difficult to understand. Just prior to moving the operation from Guatemala to Nicaragua, Miro Cardona was completing a tour of the TRAV/MADD installations. Why he could not have been taken on to the JMTIDE area at that time is not made clear in either the cable traffic or other data that are available. 69/

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As an appropriate final note to indicate the dominant role of the Agency in determining US foreign policy vis-a-vis Nicaragua, a cable of 15 April 1961 from Managua to Headquarters reads as follows:

Napoli requests know, if Ambassador Brown, who ETA Managua 16 April, briefed on JMATE/JMTIDE. If not, does Headquarters authorize briefing if Ambassador so requests. 70/.

This was a strange question to have to be asked of Washington at this particular time. Even stranger, perhaps, is the fact that the Department of State was scheduling a new Ambassador to arrive at the time that the planned attack on Cuba -- out of the country to which he was being assigned -- was about to kick off. Whether this was an indication of relative indifference on the part of the Department or a sign of supreme confidence in the ability of its personnel to cope is left to the reader's judgment.

H. Postscript on Nicaragua

Two interesting postscripts to the story of the Agency's involvement in Nicaraguan foreign policy concern the period following the collapse of the invasion. In May 1961, Lou Napoli was informed by former Ambassador

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Whelan that Somoza, through Ambassador Sevilla-Sacasa, expressed the opinion that Napoli had not kept him properly informed regarding the military activities at the time of the invasion. In the memorandum of his conversation with Whelan, Napoli pointed out that this undoubtedly was true because he, himself, had not been informed immediately of the developing military situation; and, in fact, it was through Captain Quintana of the Nicaraguan Guardia Nacional at TIDE that he first learned that the beach at Playa Giroń was being abandoned.

Moreover, Napoli pointed out that the Agency had violated its own commitment to Somoza that none of the Brigade wounded would be brought back into the TIDE area -- a commitment that Napoli had made to President Somoza after receiving prior Headquarters guidance. Further, the Agency failed to meet the date that it had agreed to for removing those wounded. In addition some of the vessels returning to TIDE from Cuba had wounded aboard, but through Napoli's efforts, apparently, they were not off-loaded. Somoza apparently bore no ill will toward Napoli, for upon the latter's departure,

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the President told him that he looked forward to his return. Napoli, in the hope of maintaining the close and supportive relationship with the Nicaraguan President, expressed the desire to be able -- in the future -- to pass on full and complete details of planned activities that might relate to Nicaragua. 71/

The other postscript concerns the apparent reluctance of newly appointed Ambassador Brown to step on the Agency's toes. In June 1961, the Agency had apparently evolved a plan for using some of the Cuban pilots who had been trained during Project JMATE as instructors for the Nicaraguan Air Force. Ambassador Brown in objecting to this, requested that the following message be sent CIA:

Now that Cuban invasion is over and we are closing out the NIC operation, it seems to me that we should not open up the possibility of raising future problems or bad local press by bringing back Cuban exiles as instructors. It seems we could avoid all chance of adverse local reaction by the use of already existing mechanisms such as Col. Hardee and his unit which capable of doing good job. I would not like to hamper progress of negotiations, but I would like to express the opinion, based on my present knowledge of the situation, that I would prefer no Cubans be used as instructors. 72/

- 145 -

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The rather cautious wording of the cable which the Ambassador asked to be sent to the Agency indicates that he apparently was aware that the Agency more than his own Department was conducting the close out of activities vis-a-vis the Nicaraguan government, particularly the question of what materiel would be turned over to the Somozas.

- 146 -

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Part III

Conclusions

In the instances of both Guatemala and Nicaragua from the Spring of 1960 until the Spring of 1961, it has been shown that Agency personnel involved in Project JMATE were the principal figures in the on-going relations between those countries and the US Government. In the instance of Guatemala, the US Ambassador for all practical purposes became "inoperative"; and in Nicaragua the opposite condition prevailed -- anything that the Agency suggested received ambassadorial blessing. Neither extreme was desirable; and in both instances what the Chief Executive of each country most wished to avoid -- that it become known that his country provide a base for the anti-Castro Cubans -- became unavoidable.

That the relationship between each nation and the US could be "plausibly denied" when the concept of the anti-Castro plan shifted from guerrilla type operations to invasion was a snare and delusion. That the White House and the Department of State were prayerful that the USG would not be criticized by the UN or the OAS

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as a partner in crime was similarly wishful. The one voice of reason in Washington was that of Thomas Mann, Assistant Secretary of State for Latin American Affairs; and it was Mann who from the fall of 1960 until he was replaced in 1961 railed against the failure of the US to abandon plausible deniability and openly support an anti-Castro program with use of arms. Unfortunately Mann won no converts. In the end, he, too, played the game.

The question that will always remain unanswered is whether the whole shooting match at the BOP might have been cancelled if the Department of State representatives in either Guatemala or Nicaragua had been better qualified and had been given better guidance from Washington about the fact that there could not be degrees of plausible deniability -- either the operation was deniable or it was not. If it was not -- and it obviously was not -- an alert and forceful Ambassador might have precipitated a decision either to stand down the operation or to openly support the Brigade.

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- 150 -

~~TOP SECRET~~

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- 164 -

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- 166 -

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- 167 -

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