

19 November 1962

**MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE****SUBJECT: Letter Reply to Senator Stennis**

1. Attached is reply to letter from Senator Stennis in which he suggests using naval and marine training exercises to wear down Communist Cuba by constant alerts and resultant disruption of the economy.
2. His suggestion touches on the highly sensitive subject of Cover and Deception which we would prefer to discuss verbally rather than in correspondence outside the Department of Defense, even if classified. Accordingly, we suggest a briefing.
3. Senator Stennis being one of our staunch supporters, we are ready to give him an informal briefing of a historical nature of Cover and Deception operations without committing ourselves specifically in the current situation.
4. Recommend signature.

(Signed)

1 Incl  
Reply to  
Sen. Stennis

A. H. BERNDTSON  
Captain, U. S. Navy  
Military Assistant (L&L)  
to the Chairman, JCS

DECLASSIFIED

Authority AND 21895

Prepared by Capt Ber :son, USN/sef/19Nov62  
/OCJCS/

**Dear Senator Stennis:**

Your letter of November 13th, which suggests the use of training maneuvers to hasten the end of communist control of Cuba, meets with enthusiastic response here. To properly discuss your suggestion would require a classified reply, which I am prepared to forward. However, you may prefer to have a qualified officer from the Department of Defense visit you, upon your return to Washington, to provide information concerning this type of operation and to answer questions. I shall be glad to make an officer available for this purpose at your convenience.

Your interest and thoughtful suggestion is appreciated.

Sincerely,

Honorable John Stennis  
Chairman, Preparedness Investigating  
Subcommittee  
United States Senate Committee on  
Armed Services  
Washington 25, D. C.

OFFICE OF THE  
SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

**United States Senate**

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HARRY L. WINGATE, JR., CHIEF CLERK

DeKalb, Mississippi  
November 13, 1962

Honorable Robert S. McNamara  
Secretary of Defense  
Washington 25, D. C.

Dear Mr. Secretary:

I am writing this letter to make a suggestion as to one measure which may help the United States hasten the end of communist control of Cuba. I am sure that this must be the ultimate, but not too distant objective, of our government. We cannot supinely acquiesce in the continuance of a base for the creation of anarchy and chaos in the underdeveloped countries of Central America, with their generally weak and impoverished governments, and poor ability to contend with skilled communist methods of creating internal disruption.

The suggested measure is to use the naval and marine forces, their training maneuvers, deliberately to create costly confusion in the Cuban economy, wasted effort, and steady deterioration of morale within the native Cuban forces, particularly the militia and their families. The maneuvers we periodically hold in the Caribbean could be so designed and manipulated that bona fide exercises could force the Castro government to at least partially mobilize; since they could not take the chance that the assembly and movement of forces is not in fact a real invasion force.

We know that the recent mobilization of the Cuban forces and militia disrupted all local transportation, disorganized their national working forces, and in many ways strained and drained the Castro government's control machinery, facilities and resources. It must have afforded the native opposition to Castro much opportunity within the overall uproar. We should deliberately and repeatedly create such occasions for Castro's government to vainly diffuse their efforts and resources against a threat which does not materialize.

There are other benefits besides those of economic disruption. Chief among these would be the psychological effect across the Cuban countryside. There is little that breeds more disaffection among the troops than repeated stand-to's by all hands to repel phantoms. The effect is even more pronounced among the families of the militia men, who have to put up with what becomes ridiculous nonsense. The humorless communist governments are peculiarly vulnerable to ridicule.

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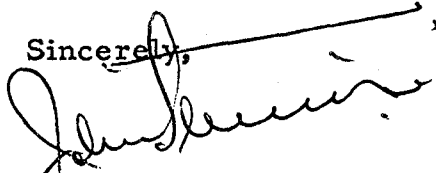
This idea came to mind as a result of what I am informed was an unplanned effect of the same nature upon Communist China in the spring of 1960. Exercise Blue Star, a large-scale landing exercise on Taiwan, gave the appearance of a possible landing to the Chinese Reds. They mobilized to repel this phantom along several hundred miles of their shoreline. Troops, equipment and supplies were moved, monopolizing transportation to the detriment of the economy, and at considerable cost in wasted resources. The militia of a large area were called up, at particularly great cost to their agriculture. I understand that the Communist howls of anguish were considerable. We should be able to use deliberately the same effect to hamper greatly the communist control of Cuba.

Incidentally, it seems that the opportunities could be created to repeat the effects upon Communist China. Any additional burden upon their transportation - military and economic system should do something to at least make more difficult their present undertakings against India.

I do not want to give the appearance of trying to be a latter-day Napoleon. This scheme, however, which seems to offer such great profit to ourselves, at so little cost, appears to be worth advancing for consideration. No doubt, the Communists would emit large sounds of righteous indignation. No doubt, our public counter-explanations would be somewhat tongue-in-cheek. But there would be no difficulty in keeping a straight face. The phantom they saw would be in truth a perfectly routine training exercise. We could arrange for the world press services to see for themselves.

Please accept my very kindest regards.

Sincerely,



John Stennis  
Chairman, Preparedness  
Investigating Subcommittee