## XI. JUNTA DEL GOBIERNO DE CUBA EN EL EXILIO

(342) In April 1963, the spirit of the exiled Cubans who hoped to return to a liberated Cuba reached its nadir. The U.S. Government, which had been subsidizing a Cuban anti-Castro organization, the Cuban Revolutionary Council, dropped its extensive backing of this most visible example of American assistance to the Cuban movement. (1) The move came on the heels of an announcement of a tough new policy of the Justice and State Departments. They planned a vigorous enforcement of laws breached by anti-Castro Cuban raiders, who were operating hit-and-run guerrilla attacks from the United States on Cuban and Russian targets. (2) These events resulted in another shuffling of alliances between various Cuban groups, but no bright new hopes.

(343) Despite a common desire to overthrow Castro and return to Cuba, the exiles differed in many ways. They represented the extremes of the political left and right, and everything in between. Many had carried arms against Batista; others were former Batistianos. They differed as to how the counterrevolution could be accomplished. They differed as to what type of government and which leaders would take the place of the ousted government. Unification of these diverse stances seemed doubtful.

(344) Dr. Paulino Sierra Martinez, a Cuban exile and lawyer from Chicago, hoped to foster a change. Arriving in Miami in May 1963, Sierra scheduled a series of meetings at a local hotel and invited Cuban exile leaders of all political persuasion to discuss unification for the purpose of military invasion of Cuba.(3)

To many Cubans the idea seemed ridiculously naive. (4) Sierra (345)was hoping to unify elements that had remained splintered throughout most previous efforts, attempting to draw well-known exile leaders when he himself was virtually unknown in the anti-Castro movement. (346)But Sierra came with some big ideas and big promises. He claimed to represent a group of Americans in Chicago interested in combining their efforts with those of the Cuban exiles to overthrow the Castro regime with or without U.S. Government approval. (5) Sierra told them that American financial interests would participate on condition there was a true unity of the majority of Cubans in exile. (6) For military planning, he claimed he had the assistance of several high-ranking U.S. Navy and Army officers, who would also help arrange for arms and the establishment of training bases in a Latin American country. (7) Most surprisingly, Sierra claimed the Chicago backers were willing to lend assistance to the extent of \$30 million.(8) no small sum even for a large-scale government-backed operation. For a private group it was unheard of.

(347) While many Cubans did not immediately join Sierra, by July 1963 he had built a coalition of predominantly rightwing anti-Castro

groups and attracted some impressive names from among the exiles to form an organization called the Junta de Gobierno de Cuba en el exilio (JGCE-Junta of the Government of Cuba in Exile.)(9)

(348) Among the groups to join Sierra's junta were the Unidad Revolucionaria faction headed by Juan Medina Vega (10) and the major faction of the 30th of November Group headed by Carlos Rodriguez Quesada. (11) Sierra could also boast the participation of Jose "Pepin" Bosch, president of Bacardi Rum, and Alberto Garrido, a much-admired Cuban entertainer. (12)

(349) In the selection process by which the committee chose those anti-Castro groups to be further investigated, certain factors about the junta discovered in preliminary research indicated a need to carefully examine the purpose and activities of this group.

(350) The junta was active during the critical period of interest to the committee. Sierra surfaced in March 1963 (13) and the organization abruptly ceased activity by January 1964.(14) The committee hoped to discover what sparked the group's genesis and what contributed to its final demise.

(351) Its financial backing appeared to be remarkably impressive, and although Sierra claimed the group was to receive funds from American companies whose financial assets in Cuba had been nationalized, it was widely rumored that the money was actually from "gambling interests" of organized crime. (15) There were other rumors that wealthy Texans were behind the group. (16) The committee hoped to determine exactly what means were available to the group and from what source.

(352) Preliminary research also indicated that the Secret Service in Chicago was investigating a "threat to the President" case at the time of President Kennedy's assassination, in which Paulino Sierra was of interest. (17) The committee wished to explore the nature of the allegation and the extent of Sierra's involvement in the case.

(353) The committee obtained considerable information from the contemporaneous investigative reports of the Central Intelligence Agency, the FBI, and the Immigration and Naturalization Service regarding the structure, membership, and activities of the junta. Field interviews and research into reports of the Secret Service probed those questions raised by the alleged threats against the President.

(354) Paulino Sierra Martinez was a tall and dapper lawyer (18) employed in the legal counsel's office of the Union Tank Car Co. in Chicago. (19) Before his immigration to the United States, he had reportedly been employed by Carlos Saladrigas, a minister under Batista. (20) He had also worked with Santiago Alvarez Rodriguez, former senator during Batista's regime. (21) Sierra left Havana in 1960 and settled for a time in Miami where he worked as a judo instructor and translator (Sierra speaks, reads, and writes English, Italian, French, and Spanish). (22) In 1962, he moved to Chicago and was admitted to the Illinois bar under the sponsorship of William Browder, general counsel of Union Tank Car Co., for whom Sierra soon began work. (23)

(355) By early 1963, Sierra had organized a Cuban Lawyer's Association in Chicago and gained somewhat of a reputation as "coordinator" of Cuban activities in the Chicago area. (24) In March 1963, he

was mentioned in an article in the Chicago Tribune for his active role in Cuban exile affairs in Chicago. (25) Nevertheless, he still had not made a national name in Cuban exile affairs.

(356) Yet, as noted previously, Sierra's meetings with anti-Castro Cuban exiles in Miami in the spring of 1963 produced the official structure of a Cuban government in exile by July. (26) Sierra was named Secretary General, Felipe Rivero Diaz was named Vice Secretary General. Carlos Rodriguez Quesada was appointed head of internal affairs, Juan Medina was to head up finances, Manuel Lozano Pino was named head of external relations, Alberto Garrido was put in charge of propaganda, Reinaldo Pico was given a position in charge of labor issues, and Gilberto Rodriguez was asked to run military operations. (27)

(357) The junta was formed after an organizational meeting in Chicago in June 1963 with Union Tank Car Executive Vice President J. W. Van Gorkum and General Counsel William Browder. (28) Information regarding the meeting is scant. One source who attended said that Van Gorkum and Browder discussed the unity plan only insofar as suggesting that if the group could successfully establish a government in exile, it then might be able to obtain U.S. Government support and financing from other sources. (29)

(358) But evidence exists to suggest that Union Tank Car had a greater role in the junta. The company was reportedly paying for Sierra's personal and travel expenses plus his salary. (30) Browder also told FBI agents in October 1963 that although he did not know the identity of Sierra's backers, he (Browder) kept the group's funds under his control to avoid any possible criticism of misappropriation or mismanagement of funds by Sierra. (31) Browder would not indicate the exact amount under his control other than to say it was. "considerable." (32)

(359) There have been several contradictory reports to the CIA and FBI regarding the source of Sierra's funds.

(360) Early reports indicated Sierra's backers were Chicago gamblers. The Miami News headline for an article reporting on Sierra's meetings read "Gamblers Pop Out of Exile Grab Bag." (33) The source of such reports is unclear, although there are indications it may have been Sierra himself.

(361) At Sierra's initial meetings with Cuban groups, he was accompanied by an American named William Trull, (34) who may have been partly responsible for circulation of rumors of the involvement of gambling interests in Sierra's proposals, but whose ultimate relationship to Sierra is obscure.

(362) In an interview with the FBI in June 1963. Sierra said Trull had called him after seeing the March 10 article about Sierra in the Chicago Tribune. (35) Sierra said Trull talked about sponsorship of a unified group of Cuban exiles and vaguely mentioned the owner of the King Ranch and a Mr. "Jarvis," who Trull identified as a millionaire in Texas. (36) Sierra said he was concerned about Trull being involved with "impure" financial sources, and would have nothing further to do with him. (37)

(363) Trull's story is different. A former entertainer from Dallas, Trull said Sierra had first contacted him in March 1963 and proposed that he help Sierra explain Sierra's plan to the Cuban exiles in Miami. (38) Trull said Sierra had wired tickets so that he could join Sierra in Miami for the series of meetings with the exiles. (39) Sierra carefully outlined the proposal Trull was to explain to such Cuban leaders as former Cuban Prime Minister Carlos Prio and Eusebio Mujal, a former Cuban labor leader. (40) Trull reiterated the plan to the Cubans, telling them he represented wealthy American interests who had a business proposition for the Cuban people if they would unify with Carlos Prio as president and Sierra as secretary of a provisional government. (41)

(364) Reports by Cubans who heard Trull lend credence to his tale. Trull was found to be "contradictory" and "vague" about his plan, (42) as might be expected of a person who was just repeating what he had been told.

(365) Trull later told FBI agents that he had dropped names to Sierra such as Cleburg of the King Ranch, but Sierra had told him he did not need Trull's financial influence. (43) Sierra claimed, according to Trull, that representatives of Las Vegas or Cleveland gambling interests had contacted him and offered up to \$14 million in exchange for 50-percent interest in gambling concessions in Cuba, provided Sierra was able to organize a successful ouster of Castro. (44)

(366) Trull told the FBI that because he had frequently performed before Cuban audiences, he felt he had been chosen by Sierra and used as an "actor" to sell the Cubans on Sierra's plans. (45)

(367) Sierra had other assistance at his early meetings that disappeared as quickly as Trull. According to a CIA report, one of the promoters for a meeting in May with exiles was George Franci, a Haitian national who had previously been involved in gambling interests in Havana. (46) Franci's name does not show up as involved in any later activities of Sierra, particularly after the stories of gamblers' backing hit the newsstands.

(368) As late as July 1963, Sierra himself was the source of another report that gamblers were backing him. Miguel A. "Cuco" Leon, a colleague of Manuel Artime Buesa, reported that when Sierra visited Nicaragua that month, he told him he represented U.S. gambling concessions in Cuba. (47)

(369) Another possible basis for the stories about Sierra's "gambler's backing" are separate reports of an actual offer to Chicago Cubans in March 1963.

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Dr. Cesar Blanco of the Chicago-based Cuban Bar Association of Illinois reported a meeting of Cuban exiles on March 11, 1963. (48)He said that a Burt Mold of the American Education League of Los Angeles had asked Blanco how much money the Cubans needed to work out a program to free Cuba. (49) Mold, according to Blanco, stated that the "Nevada group" would help since the U.S. Government could do nothing. (50) Blanco said that Mold even offered Blanco the job of head of police in Cuba when the country had been freed. (51)

(370) A CIA report of March 1963 reported that Blanco and Sierra had been approached by gamblers from the West to work with them. (52) It was reported that Sierra spoke about an offer of \$10 million in backing for guarantees of gambling concessions in Cuba after Castro was overthrown.(53) (371) In his public meetings in Miami in May, Sierra had publicly named the American Educational League of Los Angeles as being in support of his proposal. (54) When that group challenged Sierra's claims, Sierra backed off, indicating he had received assurances of assistance from other sources. (55) But it is not known whether Mold had made the offer at the behest of the American Educational League or for some other party. His affiliation with the league was just as a member. (56)

(372) If an offer from gambling interests was ever made, it appears that Sierra either backed away from such an offer or began to dress it in legitimate clothing after the adverse publicity.

(373) The backers were identified in public in only the most nebulous terms. Sierra claimed several U.S. companies were behind his plans and these at first were only identified as the Lawyer's Corp. and the American Bankers. (57) Later, he frequently named such large corporations as United Fruit, Esso, Standard Oil, Du Pont, and United States Steel, among others. (58)

The Chicago office of the FBI closed its investigation of (374)Sierra's activities in June 1963, concluding that he was involved in a "con job" rather than any real activities, hoodlum or otherwise. (59) The FBI's decision to close the investigation may have been (375)justifiable at the time, since there was no indication either through money spent or by actual group-sponsored operations that Sierra had a viable organization. (60) The activities, however, were just beginning. As soon as the organization was formally set up, Sierra and (376)Felipe Rivero left on a trip to Nicaragua and Colombia to discuss plans for a military base of operations outside the United States (61) They reportedly spoke with Luis Somoza in Nicaragua and also attempted to obtain the use of the Isle of Andres off of Colombia. (62) It was also reported that Sierra and Rivero traveled to New York. Chicago, St. Louis, and Washington, D.C., to meet with backers and make further arrangements. (63) Later, it was learned that Sierra alone had spent a little over \$11,000 on travel expenses by October 1963.(64)

(377) The group was also spending money on arms and equipment by late summer 1963. Rich Lauchli, a well-known arms dealer from Collinsville, Ill., was contacted by Sierra in August to purchase a quantity of guns. (65) Soldier-of-fortune and Gerry Patrick Hemming associate. Steve Wilson, was asked by Sierra to deliver the arms to Miami. (66) Sierra also ordered a two-man submarine from California in October 1963. (67) which was transported to Miami for storage in the garage of Cuban exile Manuel Aguilar. (68)

(378) The FBI received information that Sierra had been on an arms shopping spree in Detroit accompanied by Jose Cardoso, and purchased \$6,000 to \$7,000 worth of weapons to be transported to Miami. (69) Dennis Lynn Harber, another Hemming associate, assisted Sierra in the transport of military equipment. (70)

(379) Sierra was also holding discussions with several "action" groups for assistance in a military operation against Cuba. (71) Among those contacted who reportedly signed "pledges" of support were Aldo Vera Serafin of the militant MAPA group (American Patriotic Action Movement); (72) Eloy Gutierrez Menoyo and Antonio Veciana

Blanch of the SNFE-Alpha 66 alliance; (73) Santiago Alvarez Rodriguez of Comandos L; (74) Eduardo Mor Ruiz, an independent anti-Castro Cuban fighter; (75) and Orlando Bosch of MIRR. (76)

(380) Reports of funds given to those groups indicate Sierra was advancing modest sums from the alleged \$650,000 at his disposal. Aldo Vera Serafin reportedly received \$3,500(77) and Tony Cuesta of Comandos L received \$1,000.(78) Members of the Junta's board of officers also received contributions from Sierra. Carlos Rodriguez Quesada received \$2,800; Felipe Rivero Diaz received \$1,890; and Gilberto Rodriguez got \$1,500.(79)

There are various descriptions of the military operations (381)allegedly being prepared by the Junta. On October 30, 1963, information was received that the Second National Front of Escambray had plans for an operation from a base in the Dominican Republic. (80) The arrangements were allegedly being made by Eloy Gutierrez Menoyo, head of SNFE, and Abel Camacho in Key West. (81) The plan called for action against a bridge in Oriente Province and had been masterminded by Antonio Veciana and one of the engineers who had designed the bridge. (82) Consistent with this information, it was also reported to the FBI that the Junta offered soldier-offortune Joe Garman \$11,000 to lead a raid on Oriente Province. (83) (382)There were other reports that an attack on a Havana oil refinery was planned. (84) Still other reports simply indicated that although all-out war against Castro was the objective, a hit-and-run raid for publicity purposes would be attempted first. (85)

(383) While all these activities were getting underway. Sierra had some conflict with other officers in the Junta. Gilberto Rodriquez Hernandez was replaced as military coordinator in the summer of 1963 because, according to Sierra, Hernandez was feared to be a Castro agent. (86) In turn, Hernandez, who had returned from Cuban prison in April 1963 in the prisoner exchange, called Van Gorkum and Browder at Union Tank Car Co. and complained bitterly about Sierra's lack of leadership. (87)

(384) After Sierra had signed a pact with Alpha 66-SFNE, another member of the Junta, Manuel Lozano Pino, resigned from his position as head of external relations. (88) He objected to the inclusion of such a "left-wing" organization, but also protested Sierra's expenditures. (89)

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(385) These complaints may have had something to do with Sierra's summons to Chicago in early November 1963 for a stormy session with Browder. (90) Sierra was blasted for wasting funds, reportedly totaling up to \$50,000. (91) According to sources of the CIA and FBI. Sierra was accompanied to the Chicago meeting with Armando Fleites of SNFE, and Browder allegedly ordered Sierra to turn over all moneys and supplies to the SNFE-Alpha 66 alliance. (92) Although several of the Junta officers had asked for Sierra's replacement and had specifically named Jose "Pepin" Bosch as an attractive alternative. (93) Sierra remained in place as the "guiding spirit" for the next 2 months: (94) the remainder of the group's existence.

(386) A CIA memorandum reported on November 20, 1963, of the strange activities of Sierra and the Junta:

Although he (Sierra) has been some what ubiquitous among Cuban exile leaders in Miami since March 1963, he still remains somewhat of a mystery man in terms of his means of support, and indeed, his long-range objectives.(95)

(387) The report also raised the question of how Sierra managed to remain in the exile political scene so long. "Perhaps his mysterious backers are providing him with sufficient funds to keep the pot boiling for the present," the writer of the memo conjectured. (96) Indeed, Sierra's activities were not only continuing, but he also soon found himself the subject of interest in a Secret Service investigation into a threat against the President.\*

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(3) Staff summary of FBI file for Paulino Sierra Martinez, House Select Committee on Assassinations, pp. 1 and 2 (J. F. K. Document 012887).

(4) Id. at p. 2 (ref. to FBI LHM re Santiago Alvarez Rodriguez, June 3, 1963).
(5) Id at p. 1; see also staff summary of CIA file, p. 1 (CIA dispatch 12627, Nov. 20, 1963).

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(7) Id. at p. 1 (ref. CIA report, Apr. 30, 1963).

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from SAC, Chicago, May 3, 1977). (9) Staff summary of CIA file, House Select Committee on Assassinations, p. 1 (ref. to dispatch 12627, Nov. 20, 1963, and attachments).

(10) Staff summary of CIA handbook, House Select Committee on Assassinations (J. F. K. Security 020).

(11) Staff summary of FBI file for Carlos Rodriguez Quesada (ref. FBI 94-1-19634, Aug. 28, 1963), House Select Committee on Assassinations, p. 2 (J. F. K. Document 012655).

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(15) Staff summary of CIA handbook, House Select Committee on Assassinations (J. F. K. Security 020).

(16) See ref. 3, p. 4 (ref. FBI memo from Chicago, June 26, 1963, re Paulino Sierra Martinez).

(17) U.S. Secret Service report, Nov. 27, 1963, to Chief from SAIS Martineau, Chicago, re Homer S. Echevarria, pp. 2 and 3. House Select Committee on Assassinations (J. F. K. Document 007601); see also Secret Service Report 1266, file CO-2-34, 104, Dec. 19, 1963, from Tucker and Noonan, pp. 4 and 5.

<sup>\*</sup>See the agency performance section I D 1 of the committee's report for more information about this threat.

(18) Staff summary of CIA file, House Select Committee on Assassinations (rough notes) (ref. CIA report, Nov. 17, 1963).

(19) See ref. 3, p. 1 (ref. FBI Report 105-121010 of departure, Jan. 8, 1963).

(20) Id. at p. 2 (ref. CIA report, May 7, 1963).

(21) Id. at p. 3 (ref. FBI memo, June 3, 1963, re Santiago Alvarez Rodriguez).

(22) Id. at p. 4 (ref. FBI memo, June 26, 1963, re Paulino Sierra Martinez.) (23) Ibid.

(24) Id. at p. 8 (ref. FBI memo, Nov. 2, 1963, from Miami).

(25) News article, Chicago Tribune, Mar. 10, 1963 (J. F. K. Document 013397).

(26) Staff summary of CIA handbook, House Select Committee on Assassinations (J. F. K. Security 020).

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(30) Summary of CIA files, House Select Committee on Assassinations, p. 6, undated report.

(31) Staff summary of FBI file for Carlos Rodriguez Quesada (ref. FBI Rept. 105-1210-31, Jan. 28, 1964, from Chicago, re Paulino Sierra Martinez), House Select Committee on Assassinations, p. 3.

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(33) See ref. 3, p. 1 (ref. news article, May 19, 1963, Miami News, Miami).
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(40) Ibid. (41) Ibid.

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(46) Id. at p. 2 (ref. CIA report, May 7, 1963); see also staff summary of CIA handbook, House Select Committee on Assassinations.

(47) See ref. 3, p. 7 (ref. FBI memo, Sept. 23, 1963, re Paulino Sierra Martinez). (48) Staff summary of CIA undated report, House Select Committee on Assassinations, p. 6.

(49) Ibid.

(50) Ibid.

(51) Ibid.

(52) Id. at p. 3, CIA undated report.

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(54) See ref. 3, p. 7 (ref. FBI memo to Director from SAC, Miami, Dec. 10, 1963, re Americanism Educational League).

(55) Ibid.

(56) Ibid. (Note: Mold was also listed as a member of "Americans for Freedom" at the same address as the American Educational League. There is no evidence that this group was ever investigated by the FBI. See House Select Committee on Assassinations staff summary of CIA file, p. 6, undated CIA report.)

(57) See ref. 3, p. 1 (ref. CIA report, Apr. 30, 1963).

(58) Id. at p. 11 (ref. CIA report, July 5, 1963); see also p. 2 (ref. CIA report, May 7, 1963; and staff summary of CIA file, House Select Committee on Assassinations, p. 6, CIA memorandum, May 9, 1963).

(59) See ref. 3. p. 3 (ref. memo to Director from SA, Chicago, June 26, 1963, re Paulino Sierra Martinez).

(60) This conclusion is based on a review of all documents pertaining to Sierra. (61) See ref. 3, p. 10 (ref. CIA report, Nov. 7, 1963), and p. 11 (ref. report 406, July 5, 1963).

(62) Staff summary of CIA files, House Select Committee on Assassinations, p. 10 (ref. CIA report, Nov. 7, 1963).

(63) See ref. 3, p. 9 (ref. FBI memo, Nov. 2, 1963, from Miami, re JGCE, p. 41). (64) Id. at p. 9 (ref. CIA report, Nov. 14, 1963).

(65) Id. at p. 7 (ref. FBI memo, Nov. 14, 1963, from Miami re INTERPEN), p. 8 (FBI memo, Nov. 2, 1963, from Miami re JGCE, pp. 29-30); see also Gerry Patrick Hemming chronology from FBI files.

(66) See ref. 3, p. 8 (ref. FBI memo, Nov. 2, 1963, from Miami re JGCE, pp. 29-30). (Note: The use of soldiers-of-fortune types such as Wilson and Garman may have been a result of prior contact with Hemming's men by Carlos Rodriguez, Quesada and the MILTN. See FBI notes—Quesada, Hemming chronology).

(67) Id. at p. 10 (ref. CIA report, Oct. 16, 1963).

(68) Ibid. (Note: Aquilar's group affiliation was unknown. However, he was known to be acquainted with Loran Hall, Lawrence Howard and William Seymour, who spent much time at Aquilar's house. See memo, June 5, 1968, of conversation with Aquilar. See also Nov. 1, 1963 memo re Hemming complaint that Hall stole a rifle and that Hall was staying with Aquilar at that time).

(69) See ref. 3, p. 6 (ref. FBI memo, Nov. 1, 1963, from Miami re SNFE).

(70) Id. at p. 7 (ref. CIA report, Nov. 22, 1963); see also staff summary, p. 2 (ref. CIA report 4039, Nov. 14, 1963).

(71) Id. at p. 9 (ref. FBI memo, Nov. 2, 1963, from Miami, JGCE, p. 43) and p. 5 (ref. CIA report, May 17, 1963); see also staff summary of CIA file, House Select Committee on Assassinations, p. 1 (ref. dispatch 12627, Nov. 20, 1963, with attachment).

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(81) Ibid.

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(83) Id. at p. 8 (ref. FBI memo, Nov. 2, 1963, from Miami re JGCE, pp. 29-30).

(84) Id. at p. 10 (ref. CIA report, Oct. 15, 1963); see also staff summary of CIA file. House Select Committee on Assassinations, p. 2 (ref. report, Oct. 15, 1963 extract).

(85) Summary, CIA handbook.

(86) See ref. 3, p. 9 (ref. FBI memo, Nov. 2, 1963, from Miami re JGCE, p. 37). (87) Id. at pp. 10–11 (ref. CIA report. Sept. 13. 1963).

(88) Staff summary, House Select Committee on Assassinations, p. 2 (ref. CIA report, Nov. 14, 1963, extract); see also J. F. K. Document 021887, p. 9 (ref. CIA report, Nov. 14, 1963).

(89) Staff summary of CIA file, House Select Committee on Assassinations, p. 2 (ref. CIA report, Nov. 14, 1963).

(90) See ref. 3, p. 8 (ref. CIA report, Dec. 11, 1963).

(91) Ibid.; see also staff summary of CIA file. House Select Committee on Assassinations, p. 2 (ref. dispatch 12627, Nov. 20, 1963, with attachment).

(92) See ref. 3, p. 8 (ref. CIA report, Dec. 11, 1963).

(93) Id. at p. 11 (ref. CIA report, Sept. 13, 1963).

(94) Staff summary of CIA file. House Select Committee on Assassinations, p. 2 (ref. dispatch 12627, Nov. 20, 1963, with attachment).

(95) Ibid.

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