

Part IV

Presidential Resurgence

The previous section of this volume has examined the activities that occurred during the period from the early fall through November of 1960, with the shift away from what was to be exclusively a guerrilla warfare type operation to a new concept emphasizing amphibious invasion. During this period most of the discussion and the decisions, aside from those within CIA, were at the level of the Special Group. The principals involved from the Department of State were at the Under Secretary/Assistant Secretary level at the highest, and at the Agency, both the Director of Central Intelligence and the Deputy Director for Plans were involved. On 29 November 1960 the level of involvement of the US Government escalated sharply with the sudden resurgence of interest on the part of President Dwight David Eisenhower. In contrast to the period from July 1960 through the Presidential election of early November -- when, as noted earlier, there was, at most, minimal attention to the developing anti-Castro program at the White House level --

suddenly the President emerged as one of the principal decision makers in the period prior to the take-over by the Kennedy administration.

When asked for an explanation of this sudden resurgence, Jake Esterline, then Chief, WH/4 stated:

I can't explain it ... but I will say this, it probably had a political basis. They [the Republican administration] realized that they had lost, and they realized that they were going to have to brief a new administration along with the British on the things that had been going on. I suspect that they didn't want to brief on something that would emerge that they hadn't been giving anything other than their full support. I am guessing, but I would think that was a pretty good guess. 1/

On 29 November of 1960, the President had a meeting which included Messrs. Dillon and Merchant of State; Gates and Douglas of Defense; Gray and Goodpaster of his own Staff; and Dulles and Bissell of CIA. In his report on the session with the President, Mr. Bissell, the DDP mentioned among other things the following two points of particular interest:

The President made it clear he wanted all done that could be done with all possible urgency and nothing less on the part of any department, ... and the President led a discussion as to how best to organize the total US effort against the target. There was some feeling that an

overall coordinating executive might be desirable, but it was left that the Director would make Mr. Barnes available to work closely with a State Department officer to be designated. It was also felt desirable to use Mr. Pawley's services, initially in connection with assistance. 2/
[24]

The points of view attributed to the President at this time by Mr. Bissell reflect very closely the position of William D. Pawley who had met with the President immediately prior to the President's session with State, DOD, and the Agency's representatives. According to Livingston Merchant, who had a long session with Mr. Pawley on the day prior to Pawley's meeting with President Eisenhower:

Mr. Pawley said that two things are necessary, and I inferred that these would constitute his [Pawley's] principal recommendations to the President.

(1) The President should appoint a single experienced individual (he said he was personally qualified and would be available for the job if asked) to conduct the entire covert operation. In this connection, he cited the role which he had played in the Guatemala case.

(2) We should recruit several thousand good young Cubans in Florida and give them basic training. This could be done in five or six weeks, rather than months, according to him. He was extremely impatient at the thought of moving any Cubans who may now be in Central America, expressing himself

forcefully as being sure their host would object.

I asked if he was proposing overt intervention by US armed forces. He said absolutely not. The essence of his plan would be to land in Cuba, presumably in the next month or two, a force of 600 trained Cubans, following up this landing with additional Cuban elements and then installing a government in the bridgehead which would call on us for financial and logistics support. He mentioned a number of names which were unfamiliar to me of Cubans who he said are politically unblemished in Cuba, neither pinks nor reactionary rightists. * 3/

On 30 November 1960, a Special Group meeting was held at which time Gordon Gray:

* Considering that discussions within the Agency and within the Special Group had only recently arrived at the figure of 600 men for an invasion brigade, plus the fact that this brigade would establish a bridgehead from which a provisional government opposed to Castro might be announced, one might speculate on the source of Pawley's information. Jake Esterline has tended to denigrate the role played by Pawley during the course of the Bay of Pigs operation; but, nonetheless, throughout the course of the operation Jake was charged with maintaining close liaison with Pawley. JMARE records indicate not only the numerous face-to-face meetings between Pawley and Esterline during the course of the operation, but also reflect an amazing number of telephone conversations between the two during the life of the operation. In terms of the operational plan per se, Esterline appeared to be most cagey in handling this subject during the discussions with Pawley. The recorded conversations focus on the potential leadership for the FRD -- with Pawley's "best" leadership choices usually being far to the right.

TOP SECRET

solicited the Group's assistance in arriving at a consensus [sic] of views as to what exactly had been decided as a result of the high level meeting [the meeting with the President] of the day before. u/

According to the memorandum on the meeting, there was agreement that the US would deny its participation in any training activities in Guatemala, that there would continue to be a prohibition on the training of Cubans in the United States, and that evacuation plans should be kept in readiness in case the Cubans in training in Guatemala had to be evacuated -- the plan to evacuate was not clear as to whether the Cubans would be taken into Florida as ordinary refugees or whether the evacuation would call for transporting the troops to **[13-23]** training base.

The problem that apparently created the greatest difficulty at this Special Group meeting was the President's suggestion that a single individual should be placed in charge of the anti-Castro program. The Special Group decided that there should be two individuals with principal responsibilities -- one to handle the overt and the other to handle the covert activities. After reviewing a list of potential candidates:

~~TOP SECRET~~

It was finally decided that, taking all things into consideration, including the aspect of quick availability, Ambassador Willauer would probably be the best choice.

On the CIA side, Mr. Dulles nominated Mr. Barnes. It was recognized that these nominees would have to be checked with Mr. Gray's associates. 5/

When Mr. Mann suggested that Ambassador Willauer might also assume responsibility for contacts with the FRD, Mr. Dulles rejected this out of hand, emphasizing that this liaison must be done covertly, and that it must be done by the Agency. There apparently was unanimous agreement that Mr. Pawley not be given any official status with the US Government, but no one objected to Pawley's plans to visit Argentine President Frondizi in his capacity as a private US citizen. 5s/

Following the President's suggestion of 29 November, Acting Secretary of State Douglas Dillon forwarded a memorandum for President Eisenhower on 2 December 1960 recommending that, because of the differences in responsibilities, two senior officials, rather than one, be charged with managing the anti-Castro Program. Dillon suggested that Ambassador Whiting Willauer be named as a Special Deputy to Assistant Secretary for American Republic Affairs, Thomas Mann, to act as the officer responsible for the US Government's

~~TOP SECRET~~

overt position vis-a-vis Cuba, and with the responsibility of coordinating the covert activities of the Agency into that US position. On the covert side Dillon followed the DCI's suggestion that C. Tracy Barnes should be appointed "to devote full time to the direction of the Agency's program with respect to Cuba, and to concert with Amb. Willauer." 6/

Dillon's memorandum then went on to recommend that the members of the Special Group -- Dulles, Gray, Douglas, and Merchant -- should continue to exercise general supervision over the covert operation and to provide the Agency with general guidance in the operation, and -- now at the tag end of the Eisenhower administration -- went on to say that the Group

should continue and intensify its general supervision of the covert operation ... [and] maintain close and regular liaison with Secretary Anderson of Treasury or his designated representative ... [and] should meet, together with the member's individual principals, with you from time to time as it deemed necessary or as you desire. 7/

In response to this recommendation, the President wrote:

I approve of the suggestions regarding the reorganization of the government's

TOP SECRET

program with respect to that country [Cuba], except that I think Mr. Willauer should have a position directly subordinate to the Secretary of State for so long as Cuba remains a critical problem in our foreign relations. There should be no doubt as to the authority of the Special Assistant to the State Department (Mr. Willauer) to subordinate covert and overt activities, nor as to his responsibility for conveying policy guidance to the operating agencies. In their broad outline, these policies will, of course, be subject to the approval of higher authority. 8/

An interesting aspect of the Eisenhower memorandum is that he elevated the position to be assigned to Mr. Willauer from that of being a Special Deputy to Assistant Secretary Mann, the Assistant Secretary for American Republic Affairs, to that of being directly subordinate to the Secretary of State. When Thomas A. Parrott who acted as secretary for the Special Group meeting transmitted a copy of the draft of ^{Public's program} ~~Pittes~~ memorandum^{to Tracy Barnes}, Parrott had been made aware of the possibility that Eisenhower was in favor of raising the position of Willauer. In an aside to Barnes in his transmittal note, Parrott indicated that even if Eisenhower did want Willauer made directly responsible to the Secretary of State, in fact: "He [Willauer] will be instructed that he

RELEASED PER P.L-102-526(JFK ACT)
NARA JA DATE 6/17/05

darn well works for Mann anyway, regardless of the title."* 9/

Even as the negotiations just mentioned were underway, by early December 1960 the Agency's position on the nature of the PM action decidedly hardened. On 8 December at a meeting of the Special Group, Colonels Hawkins and Egan proposed a military program which combined the use of infiltrated small paramilitary teams as a test to see if the dissident elements would rally round and, also recommend a training program for a force of 600-750 men possessing extremely heavy fire power for amphibious assault. Prior to an amphibious invasion, however, it was agreed that there would be sorties into Cuban air space but the precise nature and number of these was disputable, ranging from possibly 100 a month for a three month period beginning on 15 January 1961 -- and including some B-26 sorties to bomb and strafe military targets -- to an undefined minimum of sorties for a three week period to soften up the opposition.

* The Agency apparently thought that it had a pretty good handle on Willauer because of his long term association as Executive Vice-President, President, and Vice-Chairman of the Board of Civil Air Transport (CAT).

In the course of these discussions of ground and air operations there were some interesting contraindications among Agency spokesmen as to what was needed or what was wanted. Tracy Barnes seemed to have a great deal more to say than was warranted by his knowledge and apparent understanding of the planned action. In one discussion with Secretary Douglas, when Barnes was pushing for the use of an increased number of troops, he stated that the number of anti-Castro dissidents who might rally round the invaders would be no different if the size of the invading force were 600 men or 3,000 men. A rationale such as that and Barnes's comment to Gen. Lansdale when he forwarded one proposal --

Please recognize that this proposal is a draft and is off the top of the head without any detailed knowledge of possible applicable regs and procedures --

help make understandable the consternation within the ranks of the Department of Defense concerning the Agency's understanding of which end was up. * 10/

* There was also an ongoing discussion during this time period regarding the assignment of US Army Special Force trainers to the Guatemala bases. This is discussed in detail in Volume II of this history, *Participation in the Conduct of Foreign Policy*.

~~TOP SECRET~~

In one of the longer and more detailed papers being prepared toward the close of the Eisenhower administration, the State Department drafted the political action recommendations and suggested collective action through the Organization of American States to effect the ouster of Castro. Failing in that, State then outlined a unilateral political action program for the United States. The paramilitary and covert action segments of this paper were prepared by the CIA. Neither the State nor the CIA paper introduced ideas that had not been thoroughly discussed. These recommendations were made just as if the Secretary of State, the Special Group, and the President had approved, or would approve, the courses of action that were being outlined. This being the case, it was suggested that the concurrence of the President-elect should be sought for the proposed Program. In the best of all possible worlds one could hardly find fault with this optimistic approach -- in the pragmatic world it is difficult to understand that anyone would go on record with the expectation that such recommendations might be followed

RELEASED PER P.L. 102-526 (FFK ACT)
DATE 6/17/95
NARA J A

~~TOP SECRET~~

across changing political and administrative lines.* 11/

With WH/4 in the throes of revising the anti-

Castro program on the basis of the increased efficiency of the Castro military forces, an SNE, *Prospects for the Castro Regime*, was issued, belaboring the obvious -- that Castro was firmly in control of Cuba. The

SNE also proceeded to make the following observation about Castro's military forces:

The militia's overall combat efficiency is low; many units are still on a part time training basis. However, there appears to be emerging a nucleus of well organized, well equipped, and well trained units loyal to Castro and strongly Communist-influenced; we believe that within the next 12 months or so, these units will develop into a reasonably effective security force. 13/

The estimate continued, noting that the Cuban Army was still disrupted and "combat effectiveness of the Air Force is virtually nil." 9/ The concept for Project JMATE, however, had shifted from small unit guerrilla warfare to invasion because of evidence of

* President Eisenhower wrote that on 6 December 1960, "Senator Kennedy" came to the White House for a briefing and that among the subjects discussed was Cuba, this being one of the first three items that Kennedy wished to talk about and that: "He [JFK] had previously been briefed by Allen Dulles a number of times and had some familiarity with the details." 12/

increased efficiency of Castro's forces and it would appear that the operators and the estimators were not making evaluations from the same intelligence information.

Despite his promotion early in the month, it was not until 23 December 1960 that Ambassador Willauer called a meeting with the Agency's principals to explain both his role and some of the problems that he anticipated the President wanted him to handle. Apparently it was an inauspicious beginning, for according to a memorandum of the meeting:

Mr. Willauer stated that his role, as explained to him by Secretary Herter, was to be that of the chairman and major shareholder of a corporate board with Mr. Tracy Barnes, the executive director for operations and minority shareholder. Col. King asked for clarification on this point, noting that Mr. Esterline is the director for operations for CIA with the chain of command going from the Director to Bissell to Col. King to Mr. Esterline. Mr. Barnes is a coordinator with the other interested agencies. Mr. Willauer agreed that this was the case, noting that he had used the term operations in the looser sense of overall coordination. 14/

Once having had the pecking order set straight, Ambassador Willauer then proceeded to a discussion of various problem areas, indicating his very strong bias in favor of Agency positions as opposed to

positions being taken by the Department of State. For example, Willauer noted that there was a strong aversion to attempts to set a firm date for D-Day, with the opponents basing their arguments on the fact that the OAS would be sure to get in on the act and, moreover, that military planning should be deferred until it could be determined if the economic sanctions would work to Castro's disadvantage. On the question of economic sanctions Willauer pointed out to the people in State that since the Soviet Union was so strongly committed to support the Castro government, economic sanctions would have little or no impact on Castro's position. Willauer also argued that there was going to be revolutionary activity in Cuba, whether the US had a hand in it or not; and he emphasized that, in any event, the US would be blamed for it.

Both Jake Esterline and Col. Jack Hawkins pointed out that another reason for firming up the D-Day date concerned the logistics of the troop movement; and both urged as early a date as possible because of the already mentioned improvement in the military capability, equipment, and training of Castro's

forces. Esterline also emphasized that most of the arguments urging delay of PM planning, particularly concern re the OAS, had been debated with State for months, and the time had come for direct action.

The WH/4 representatives also stressed that the period of training for many of the Cubans had been extended and re-extended, and that to hold them beyond 1 March 1961 increased the problem of maintaining high morale among the troops. Esterline took the position that the Cubans the Agency was training knew that the US had the force to throw Castro out any time that it so desired, but the months and months of training was indicative, to them at least, that the US was not really interested in the welfare of the anti-Castro Cubans.

During the 23 December 1960 meeting, Willauer's expertise and familiarity with air operations led him to ask almost immediately "why the project is 'so thin in the air'." Willauer was told that the rules of the game were that only Cuban air crews could be used, and this was the reason for the Agency's efforts to obtain permission to use contract American

RELEASED PER P.L. 102-526 (JFK ACT)
NARA J2 DATE 6/17/05

~~TOP SECRET~~

crews for both resupply and combat.* The air operations were the subject of considerable discussion. Concerning the possibility of launching air strikes for three days before the invading force landed, Willauer objected, pointing out that this would give the OAS ample time to get involved in the act. Willauer then raised the question of whether all of the tactical bombing could be done on D-Day. The answer to that from Col. Hawkins was "no," but Hawkins said that it could be done on D-2, if permission were given for dawn airstrikes to take out Castro's air force and military targets, with additional sorties during the course of D-1 and follow-up raids on D-Day prior to the landings. Moreover, Hawkins pointed out that if an attempt were made to withhold the airstrikes until D-Day, the Castro air force would have an opportunity to attack the ships which would be carrying the invasion troops.

In a similar manner, a strong case was made for the use of the Puerto Cabezas, Nicaragua air base to

* Hawkins wanted "pilots who can work over key targets without tearing up installations we will later need."

~~TOP SECRET~~

RELEASED PER P.L.-102-526(JFK ACT)
NARA JA DATE 6/17/95

launch strikes against Cuba. Apparently there was some discussion of limiting use of this base to only two or three days -- at least some of the State Department people pushed this idea -- but WH/4 pointed out that it was inconceivable in view of the nature of the planned air operations, that the air support operation could be in and out of Nicaragua in this period. It was pointed out to Willauer that efforts had been made to get permission to use US bases, or other closer bases to Cuba than Nicaragua, but without success. Willauer, himself was positive that no US bases would be made available for the strike against Castro.

One other interesting aspect of this initial meeting with Willauer, concerned the transition between the Eisenhower and Kennedy administrations. Willauer stressed that the ground rule at the Department of State was that the Kennedy people could not be sought out to discuss specific problems unless they initiated requests for information, and it was Willauer's opinion:

"That the only practical way to get decisions on the project before 20 January would be to have the Director [the DCI],

RELEASED PER P.L.-102-526(JFK ACT)
NARA JA DATE 4/17/05

whose position re the new administration is different than Mr. Herter's, to go to Mr. Kennedy in person and seek to get him committed. It would be very difficult for State people to try to approach Mr. Kennedy via Mr. Rusk and Mr. Bowles. 15/

During the 21 December 1960 meeting of the Special Group, Allen Dulles briefed the attendees on a meeting that he had participated in the previous day in New York, with a group of American businessmen. The meeting had been called by Henry Holland, who was one of the principal fund raisers for the FRD, and in attendance at this meeting were the Vice President for Latin America of Standard Oil of New Jersey, the Chairman of the Cuban-American Sugar Company, the President of the American Sugar Domino Refining Company, the President of the American & Foreign Power Company, the Chairman of the Freeport Sulphur Company, and representatives from Texaco, International Telephone and Telegraph, and other American companies with business interests in Cuba. The tenor of the conversation was that it was time for the US to get off of dead center and take some direct action against Castro.

Suggestions were made to sabotage the sugar crop -- the question being whether to burn the cane

fields or ruin the refineries; to interrupt the electric power supply; and to put an embargo on food, drugs, and spare parts for machinery. Dulles opposed the embargo on food and drugs, but the feeling of the business group was that it was time to get tough and, hopefully, the blame for an embargo would be laid on Castro. Another interesting suggestion volunteered was that the US Navy should blow up a ship in Levisa Bay in order to force the shutdown of the nickel plant at Nicaro which formerly had been owned and operated by the US Government. 16/ In his usual cautious manner, Gordon Gray suggested that the Special Group not authorize any action until he had cleared the matter with his "associate."

This group of businessmen also indicated that they were going to undertake the publication of specific papers on issues and programs related to the post-Castro Cuba, which would be designed to help US policy planners. Mr. Dulles, of course, emphasized that policy planning was not his responsibility; this was the responsibility of the Department of State. He did comment that "what he was interested in was getting rid of Castro as quickly

~~TOP SECRET~~

as possible and in this field he had direct responsibility and would welcome any ideas or suggestions on how this might be achieved." 17/

The high-level business group which Dulles met with was also extremely concerned about the possible orientation of any anti-Castro government in exile, particularly that it should not be left-oriented.

Michael Haider, Standard of Jersey's Vice President for Latin America, for example, forwarded a memorandum to Col. J. C. King in early January 1961 identifying as members of an extreme leftist group which had formed in Miami to oppose Castro, Manolo Ray, Aureliano Sanchez Arango, Rufo López Fresquet, and Dr. Raul Chibás among others. Mr. Haider worried that unless more positive steps were taken to force the conservative Cuban exiles into a cohesive organization, that any post-Castro government would automatically be in the hands of the leftists.* 18/

In addition to strong positive suggestions from US businessmen, Brigadier General Lansdale, Office of

* Haider was consistent at any rate -- "leftists" with Fidel or "Fidelistas sin Fidel" were held to be equally bad for US business interests.

~~TOP SECRET~~

RELEASED PER P.L-102-526(JFK ACT)
NARA JA DATE 6/17/05