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737.00/12-2352

DEC 24 1952

FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH

FROM : AMEMBASSY, HABANA

998
DESP. NO.

TO : THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON.

December 23, 1952

DATE

REF : Embdespatch 938, Dec. 11, 1952; Embtel 316, Dec. 22, 1952

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SUBJECT: Arrest on Conspiracy Charges of Retired Cuban Naval Officers and Reaction to Mamaroneck Arms Seizure

On December 20, 1952, the following former officers in the Cuban navy, who had been retired following the March 10 coup, were arrested on charges of conspiracy and incitement to revolt.

- Capt. José R. A. AGUILA Ruiz, former naval Chief of Staff. (*)
- Capt. Alberto C. CASANOVA González, ex-head of the office of naval operations and personnel. (*)
- Capt. Marcos A. PEREZ Medina, ex-head of the office of inspection and miscellaneous services.
- Lt. Cmdr. Ladislao Onelio PINO Izquierdo. (*)
- Lt. Rodolfo M. SIBLEZ Giraud.
- Lt. Felix Candelario CASTRO Guevara. (*)
- Lt. (j.g.) Juan MARTINEZ Concepción.
- Lt. (j.g.) Ernesto Angel MARQUEZ y Márquez. (*)
- Sergeant Aurelio CUELLAR Sabino.

(*) Mentioned in enclosure to Embassy despatch No. 938.

The arrested men were accused of seeking recruits for subversive groups from among navy personnel on active duty and of undermining the integrity and discipline of the armed forces with the object of armed revolt. The arrests reportedly followed denunciations of the men's activities by some of the navy personnel approached. The accused were first confined in the military prison of La Cabaña fortress but on December 21 were released and placed under house arrest pending completion of investigation. If brought to trial, they will be subject to summary court martial. The Embassy has been informed that the ex-officers were released from prison because of BATISTA's wish that they be able to spend Christmas with their families. On the other hand, it is rumored that they were released because of insufficient evidence to support the charges against them.

The Embassy was today informed that retired Lt. Cmdr. Jorge Felipe AGOSTINI Villasana, former chief of the palace secret

FCFornes, Jr.:rc

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police in the GRAU and PRIO regimes, had been arrested for investigation. Agostini was also mentioned in the enclosure to despatch No. 938 and has a long record of revolutionary activities both in Cuba and abroad (see Confidential Biographic Data report of December 6, 1948). The Cuban navy is said to consider him an active opponent of the Batista Government.

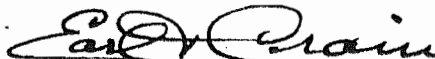
Just before the arrest of the retired naval officers, the local press prominently headlined stories of the discovery of the arms and munitions cache in Mamaroneck, New York. Developments in New York are being followed with intense interest.

Prensa Libre published an interview in which the Minister of Defense was quoted as saying that he did not believe that ex-President Carlos Prio Socarrás was involved in the New York affair but that his associates were. In the published interview the Minister said several nice things about Prio and declared that he did not believe him capable of plotting "the destruction of his country and the death of his fellow citizens". Soon after the publication of this interview, the Minister of Information informed the press that the "Christmas witticism" of the Minister of Defense should not be taken so seriously as to defeat the purpose of the latter's statements. The Minister of Information said that the Minister of Defense, aware of the "madness that those nourish who were removed from power by the 10th of March for their depredations, and of the criminal policy pursued by them up to now, which has not stopped short of spending the fabulous amount of four million pesos with the object of sowing death from the air in our country, meant that such an atrocity seemed incredible because of the magnitude of the plan conceived". The Minister of Defense informed the Embassy that he had been misquoted in the Prensa Libre interview (this he did on his own initiative).

The Minister of Information praised the "magnificent" work of the American police in the Mamaroneck case. He offered congratulations not only because the arms had been prevented from being shipped to Cuba but also because the case demonstrated the policy of neutrality maintained by the United States Government towards the sister American republics.

The situation in Habana continues apparently calm, without subversive repercussions following the local arrests.

For the Ambassador:



Earl T. Crain
Acting Counselor of Embassy

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FROM: Habana
TO: Secretary of State
NO: 316, December 22, 5 p.m.

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 DEPARTMENT OF STATE
 BUREAU OF INTER-AMERICAN AFFAIRS
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 DEC 23 1952
[Handwritten signature]

December 22, 1952

Government on December 20 arrested nine retired naval officers accused of conspiracy. Five of nine were listed in enclosure despatch 938, December 11, 1952. The nine first taken to cabanas but today are under house arrest.

Headlined reports here of arrests in United States. Otherwise situation apparently calm.

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RE:MDG

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