

Air Priority
PRIORITY

FOREIGN SERVICE

CONFIDENTIAL
SECURITY INFORMATION
UNCLASSIFIED

DO NOT TYPE IN THIS SPACE

737.00(W)/7-3153

E.T. LONG - ARPA 9/20/78
FOI 820723 Robasa

FROM : AMEMBASSY, HABANA 193

DESP. NO.

TO : THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON.

July 31, 1953
DATE

REF : F780011-0233

Action Assigned to Vincellette

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|------------------------------------|----------------|------------------|--------------|------|-----|-----|-----|-------|--------------------------|-----|----|
| 24 For Dept. Use Only hsf | ACTION | DEPT. | Action Taken | | | | | | DC/R Central Files | | |
| | OLI | I N F O | ARA | I | IBS | IFI | IPS | S/MSA | | UNA | OP |
| | REC'D AUG 1 | OTHER | ARMY | NAVY | AIR | OSD | CIA | | | | |

SUBJECT: Joint Weeka No. 31 for State, Army, Navy and Air Departments from SANA
Date of Action 8-5-53

Action Office Symbol IAD

Part I

Name of Officer Vincellette

Direction to DC/R file

Political

(UNCLASSIFIED) Attacks on Armed Forces in Oriente Province (see despatch No. 165 of July 28, 1953). Early on Sunday the 26th an unknown number of civilians, reportedly dressed so as to pass as Army personnel, attacked the military barracks at Santiago de Cuba in Oriente Province. From positions gained in part of the barracks and in nearby buildings the attackers battled with the garrison for some hours before being driven off. At the same time an attack was made on the armed forces at Bayamo, also in Oriente Province, but this did not develop into large scale fighting and the attackers were quickly dispersed. The Army has continued mopping-up operations in both the Santiago and Bayamo areas. Unofficial reports put casualties to date at about 77 killed, of which 18 were members of the armed forces, and 36 wounded, of which three were not members of the armed forces.

The Government described the attacks as "insane" attempts, inspired by ex-President PRIO and his associates, and carried out by OCHOA Ortodoxo and Prio Autentico elements with Communist assistance. The Santiago Urgency Court is reported to have included Prio, Aureliano SANCHEZ Arango, Ortodoxo leader Millo OCHOA, and Communist leaders Juan MARINELLO and Blas ROCA among those charged with sedition. Ochoa is reported to be under arrest and Marinello, Roca, José PARDO Llada and student leader Fidel CASTRO (accused of leading the Santiago attack) are reportedly in hiding. Arrests of persons suspected of complicity in the attacks are said to have reached the hundreds. Many of those arrested, such as Roberto AGRAMONTE, Ramon ZAYDIN, Pelayo CUERVO, and others, were released after interrogation.

FCFornes, Jr.:rc
REPORTER

CONFIDENTIAL
SECURITY INFORMATION
UNCLASSIFIED

ACTION COPY - DEPARTMENT OF STATE

The action office must return this permanent record copy to DC/R files with an endorsement of action taken.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
RECEIVED
AUG 4 1953
OLI - IAD
MESSAGE CENTER

737.00(W)/7-3153

This Document Must Be Returned To

CONFIDENTIAL FILE

F780011-0234

Today's press reports that many of the attackers whose identity has been established have been found to have long criminal records.

(CONFIDENTIAL) Comment. The attacks indicated considerable preparation and determination on the part of the attackers, as well as loyalty and determination on the part of the armed forces in repulsing them. The failure of the people of Santiago to rally around the insurgents may be taken as an indication that Cubans generally were not prepared to engage in violence as a solution of their political problems. The conduct of the armed forces would appear to reinforce Batista's claim to their loyalty and unwavering support, although there has been no mention of participation by naval forces in Santiago in the action. Conditions have been quiet except for the mopping-up operations but Santiago de Cuba and Bayamo have been placed under martial law and apprehension of further attempts has not been completely allayed.

(UNCLASSIFIED) Batista Speech Re Attacks (see despatch No. 165 of July 28, 1953). On July 27 President Batista delivered a speech at Camp Columbia before assembled military personnel. The President reviewed the events of the day before, charging Communist complicity and condemning Communism as not to be permitted to grow in Cuba. He asserted that the past tolerance of his Government had been misinterpreted by his political opponents to the extent that they had fomented the attacks on the armed forces and declared that this tolerance had ended. He said that the Government would be serene and just but must now be more energetic than ever. He revealed that a week before he had personally supervised the seizure of an arms cache on an isolated key off the north coast. He charged that the arms were to have been used in an assassination attempt upon him to coincide with the attacks in Oriente Province.

(UNCLASSIFIED) Suspension of Constitutional Guarantees. An emergency law-decree suspended for 90 days from July 26 the guarantees provided in the Constitutional Statute of April 4, 1952, regarding the rights of arrested persons, freedom of movement, inviolability of communications, freedom of expression without prior censorship, and the rights of petition, congregation, and striking and "locking out". At the same time the law-decree brought into force the 1942 "Law of Security and Public Order", which empowers the authorities to employ such preventive and precautionary

F780011-0235

measures as may be necessary to re-establish and assure order.
(See despatch No. 173 of July 29, 1953.)

(RESTRICTED) Comment. While the country as a whole has not been placed under martial law as a result of the attacks on the armed forces, the coming into force of the Public Order Law enacted a month after Pearl Harbor confers on the Government very broad wartime powers.

(UNCLASSIFIED) Imposition of Censorship. As a result of the suspension of Article 33 of the Constitutional Statute (see above), which guaranteed freedom of expression without prior censorship (subject of course to proper judicial restraint), press, radio and television censorship was imposed (see despatch No. 167 of July 29, 1953). At first censors were named only for those publications apparently considered most anti-government. Later censors were appointed for all Habana newspapers and magazines, while the Minister of Defense was asked to detail army personnel to act as censors in the interior. President Batista is reported to have assured representatives of the Cuban Press Bloc that he deplored the need for censorship and that it would be lifted as soon as possible.

(RESTRICTED) Comment. Censorship has been effective in eliminating any but government-approved factual reports of events in Cuba and in suppressing all analysis and comment except by a handful of writers. Opposition elements have been deprived of means of voicing their views or rebutting charges publicly made against them. Some papers have ceased editorial comment entirely.

(UNCLASSIFIED) Ships Stopped At Sea. According to the Cuban Navy Department, two vessels were intercepted on the morning of July 29 by Cuban planes at sea about a mile and a half off the northwest coast of the island. The ships are claimed to have ignored orders to put into shore, after which machine gun bursts were said to have been fired fore and aft of the craft and then into one vessel. The ships then hove to and were later escorted by surface craft to the nearest Cuban port. There they were found to be cargo vessels on apparently innocent passage and freed to continue their voyage. The Cuban Navy informed the Naval Attaché that they left at 5:30 p.m. on July 30. The ships, the MV Benson and the MV Babe, were of Liberian and Honduran registry but American owned and operated. Three crew members, none of whom were Americans, were reportedly injured or wounded.

F780011-0236

There are conflicting reports both as to the distance of the ships off shore when intercepted and as to the actions of the intercepting planes. (See also under Air)

(RESTRICTED) Comment. It is probable that this incident is a reflection of the tension and exaggerated caution resulting from last Sunday's attacks on the armed forces.

(UNCLASSIFIED) Cabinet Changes. It was announced last night that Marino LOPEZ Blanco is replaced as Minister of the Treasury by Gustavo GUTIERREZ, former head of the National Economy Board. Enrique SALADRIGAS is succeeded as Minister of Health by José Elías OLIVELLA. Pablo CARRERA Jústiz, who has been on leave as Minister of Communications and Transport, resigned and the new Minister is Rafael GUAS Inclán, president of the Liberal Party which has a political pact with Batista's Partido Acción Progresista (see Weeka No. 30). Rafael DIAZ Balart and Raul ACOSTA Rubio were placed in charge of the transport and communications subdivisions of the Ministry of Communications and Transport.

(UNCLASSIFIED) Hearings on Unconstitutionality Appeal. On July 29 Ramón ZAYDIN, after ten days of pleading, finished his presentation of the appellants' case in the hearings on the appeal to declare the Constitutional Statute unconstitutional (see despatch No. 153 of July 24, 1953). He will be followed by another pleader for the appellants. A law-decree of July 26 modified the organic law of the Constitutional and Social Guarantees Court so as to permit it to render a judgment even if the appellants in a constitutional case withdraw and to limit the time during which the presentation of a case may be made.

(RESTRICTED) Comment. The amendment of the Court's organic law suggests that the Government is so confident of a verdict favorable to it in this case that it has enabled the Court to make judgment even if the appellants for any reason try to withdraw the appeal.

(UNCLASSIFIED) Friction Over Reduction in Railroad Payrolls. Railroad labor called "unacceptable" a Government decree of July 25 reorganizing the United Railways. It is expected to involve the dismissal of many employees. Protest action has been deferred, however, apparently because of the suspension of constitutional guarantees.

(UNCLASSIFIED) Uruguayan Minister Presents Credentials as Ambassador. On July 28 Rear Admiral Rivera TRAVIESO, who has been Uruguayan Minister in Habana since 1948, presented his credentials as the first Ambassador of Uruguay to Cuba.

F780011-0237

Psychological

(UNCLASSIFIED) Communist Newspaper Closed. PSP Headquarters Raided. On July 27 the Communist newspaper Hoy was shut down by Government agents (see despatch No. 162 of July 27, 1953). The action was ascribed by the Government to the "complicity" of the paper in the Santiago de Cuba uprising and the impossibility of permitting further attacks on Cuban welfare in "antidemocratic and foreign interests." Hoy's monthly companion "La Ultima Hora" may also be closed. On the same day Government agents raided the Communist PSP headquarters. It was reported that documents and some office equipment had been removed.

(UNCLASSIFIED) Comment. Since all Communist leaders are reported to be in hiding, little activity is expected at the PSP headquarters for some time to come.

(UNCLASSIFIED) Defeat of Simpson Bill. El Mundo editorialized that Latin American countries "noted with satisfaction" that the House of Representatives rejected the Simpson Bill and added that approval of the measure "would have implied the nullification of the program of reciprocal commercial agreements" and would have been interpreted as a "return to the notorious protectionist policy of the Hoover administration." The Diario de la Marina editorially linked the rejection by the House of the protectionist measures of the Bill and the increase in the allocation for technical assistance to Latin America, "in order to emphasize the good judgment that has prevailed in the United States Congress in dealing with these delicate questions which are so closely connected with good hemisphere relations and American solidarity".

(UNCLASSIFIED) Korean Armistice. Most Habana newspaper editorials guardedly hailed the armistice in Korea as only another step toward peace and cautioned that the road ahead is still rocky. Alerta said that the armistice showed the international Communists that the free world will not tolerate any further armed aggression. Información said that a new chapter in the fight for permanent peace has been opened but "we must remain on guard" until the Communists prove by deeds that they really want peace. The paper liked Rhee's "heroic gesture" in defense of the freedom and independence of his country and praised his final agreement to go along with the truce terms. Somewhat less than enthusiastic, international affairs commentator José María CAPO said in the Diario de la Marina that it was astounding that 36 months of fighting and two years of negotiation should end in "such poor results". He believed that a real peace cannot be achieved in Korea until the affairs of Europe are settled since Communist activity in Korea should be viewed not as a local irritant but a world problem.

F780011-0238

ARMY

(UNCLASSIFIED) New Army Organic Law. The new Organic Law of the Army was published this week in the Official Gazette. The major change made is the deletion of the unit Tables of Organization, which were written into the old law, and the substitution therefor of a personnel ceiling by grade for the Army as a whole.

(UNCLASSIFIED) Release of Retired General. Brigadier General (Rtd.) Jorge GARCIA Tuñon and his brother Pedro have been released after having been held under arrest all week in connection with the Santiago uprising.

NAVY

(UNCLASSIFIED) New Naval Attaché at Rio de Janeiro. Lt. Carlos Manuel Porfirio RODRIGUEZ ALONSO, who was recently Asst. Naval Attaché in Washington, has been assigned as Naval Attaché to Rio de Janeiro.

(RESTRICTED) Retirement of Accused Officer. Cdr. Gumersindo FERNANDEZ FEBLES, one of Batista's March 10, 1952 revolutionaries, is credited with disloyalty to Batista during the July 26, 1953 Santiago attack. He is variously accused; some rumors indicate that he was with the Santiago insurgents, others indicate a passive resistance to repel the attack. It is fairly well established that he was wounded, he is under arrest and he is being investigated. A government decree of July 28, believed to have been prepared prior to July 26, announces his retirement with a pension of \$1209 annually.

(CONFIDENTIAL) Naval Attaché at Mexico City. Capt. Nicolás CARTAYA Gómez, Naval Attaché to Mexico City, arrived in Habana during the weekend of the Santiago attack. He is another March 10 revolutionary, believed guilty of pocketing considerable public money during recent assignments as Director of the Arsenal de Casa Blanca (Navy Yard) and Chief of North Naval District (Habana). Reliable sources suspect him of smuggling on a considerable scale and consider that his love of money is greater than loyalty to anything else. It is believed that his primary duty in Mexico City is to check on arms smuggling from Central America to Cuba.

AIR

(CONFIDENTIAL) Air Activities During Uprising. When news reached Habana of the uprising in Santiago on July 26, the Cuban Air Force doubled the number of aerial patrols of waters adjacent to the Provinces of Habana and Pinar del Rio. However, as of the morning of July 31 there appears to be less activity at Camp Columbia, indicating the possibility that patrols by the Cuban Air Force have been reduced in scale.

CONFIDENTIAL
SECURITY INFORMATION
 (Classification)

F780011-0239

(CONFIDENTIAL) Ships Stopped at Sea. Cuban Air Force Liaison Officer informed the Air Attaché that the Cuban Air Attaché to Central America, operating out of Costa Rica, informed the Cuban Government by a radio transmission from his airplane on the evening of July 28 that two ships were departing Puerto Barrios, Guatemala. Before daylight of the morning of July 29 the Cuban Air Force dispatched four fighter planes to search the waters off the western coast of Cuba. The fighter planes discovered two ships which were reported to be within three miles of Cuba. The pilot of the airplane fired on one of the ships after making several attempts to turn the ships towards the coast and to prevent what appeared to him to be an effort by the ships to escape into international waters. The fighter planes succeeded in stopping the ships which were later escorted to the port at La Fe by vessels of the Cuban Navy. Later a Cuban Air Force plane transported three injured or wounded men to the Military Hospital in Habana.

An officer of the Cuban Air Force admitted the possibility that the ships sighted were not those reported by the Cuban Air Attaché to have left Puerto Barrios.

For the Ambassador:



Earl T. Crain
 Acting Counselor of Embassy

Participants:

ETCrain, RGCushing, FCFornes, Jr., BRCrooks,
 EJWilliamson, Elmore (MA), Rakow (NA), Mason (AA)

Copies to: Amembassies Ciudad Trujillo, Port-au-Prince, San José
 MA(4) for USARCARIB and USARFANT Mexico City
 AA (1) Rio de Janeiro
 NA (3) for Guantánamo

CONFIDENTIAL
SECURITY INFORMATION

HAZ