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FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH

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August 9, 1955
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Action Assigned to [unclear] noted
 Action taken 90-2 JCA-10 MC-1
 8-11-55
 Army-35 Navy-39 Air-24
 State-16
 Office of Action Symbol
 OCB-2 OSD-2

SUBJECT: Joint Weeks No. 32 for State, Army, Navy and Air Departments from SANA.

(UNCLASSIFIED) ARMS SEIZURES. On August 4, and again on August 5, the authorities seized substantial caches of clandestine arms in Havana. Between the two caches the arms included the following: 44 M-1 carbines; 33 assorted rifles; 31 Johnson automatic rifles; 22 submachine guns; 34 machine guns, including three of 50 caliber; 11 antitank rifles; three trench mortars; some pistols; hand grenades; blasting powder and caps; and ammunition for the weapons. Between 20 and 25 persons were arrested in connection with the seizures. Search for possible additional caches continues.

The authorities charged that the arms were intended for immediate use by supporters of ex-President Carlos PRIO Secarrás, headed by Aureliano SANCHEZ Arango, Eufemio FERNANDEZ Ortega, and Jesús GONZALEZ Cartas ("El Extraño"). According to the official version, attempts were to be made against President BATISTA and other government figures, as well as against opposition elements, including even Prió himself with whose scheduled return from exile some of his insurrectionary followers were not in agreement.

(OFFICIAL USE ONLY) Comment. These two arms seizures coincided most opportunely with the date (August 6) on which Prió was to have arrived in Havana. Hence, they might be regarded as a frameup to create tension facilitating repressive measures in connection with his arrival. However, it is the Embassy's impression that the finds were legitimate. Their existence is no cause for surprise in view of the practical certainty of the introduction of clandestine arms into the country.

The official charge regarding the plans of Sánchez Arango et al. may of course be true but the Embassy has no independent information to confirm it.

(UNCLASSIFIED) Ex-President Prió Postpones Return
 Cubans received with surprise the news that ex-President Carlos Prió Secarrás, only a few hours before his scheduled arrival

FCPomes Jr/mgw
REPORTER

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in Habana on August 6, had postponed his return from exile. The announcement of his decision to remain in Miami for the present, as released by "Tony" VARONA, the head of the Prío Auténticos, blamed "the tension existing in the country as a consequence of the finding of arms and the continuous persecutions and searches" which created an atmosphere "unpropitious" for the ex-President's return. Prío was also reported as saying that he wished to avoid the "violence and bloodshed" which might develop upon his arrival in Cuba. He insisted that his return was only postponed and not abandoned.

After his first incredulity, President Batista expressed regret at Prío's decision, saying that in Cuba under his government Prío would have "greater security and guarantees" than anywhere else in the world. Batista also suggested that, had Prío actually come back, he might have reason to fear not the government so much as his own associates who were dissatisfied with his announced decision to return and abandon insurrection for peaceful political activities.

(LIMITED OFFICIAL USE) Comment. Right up to his eleventh-hour change of mind, Prío had repeatedly insisted on his determination to return, spurning "government guarantees", proclaiming his reliance solely on the "guarantees of public backing", reportedly declaring himself willing to return even "under gunfire", and building up his imminent presence in Cuba as an important factor in reestablishing democracy. There is no doubt that the fanfare attending his proposal placed him more prominently before the public than at any time since his overthrow in 1952.

Now, however, he is open to the accusation of cowardice, of having perpetrated a vast hoax on the Cuban people, or at least of indecision and vacillation. His brave words came to nothing and his eventual return, if he does come back in the near future, will be in the nature of an anticlimax.

Prío's announced reasons for changing his mind are not entirely impressive. The finding of arms caches just prior to his scheduled arrival and increased activity by the authorities arising therefrom do not substantially change the status quo ante. The presence of clandestine arms in the country surprises no one. Furthermore, with or without arms finds and arrests, it should have been as obvious to Prío as to anyone else that it was quite possible for trouble to develop out of his return, from either over-enthusiastic or hot-headed followers. It is hard not to suspect that the arms seizures brought home forcibly to Prío the unabated insurrectionary determination of some of

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his associates or other elements and made him realize that he might run a greater risk than he thought in returning to Cuba.

(UNCLASSIFIED) PRIO FOLLOWER COMES OUT OF HIDING. On August 1, Diego Vicente TEJERA Rescalvo, accused with others of complicity in a Prío-inspired terroristic plot (see Weeka No. 26), came out of hiding and presented himself to the Chief of the Military Intelligence Service (SIM). According to reports the interview between the two was more cordial than otherwise. Thereafter Tejera visited the Urgency Court where he was informed that there was no arrest order out against him and where he placed himself at the disposition of the Court to appear when called to testify in any case in which he is involved.

Tejera told reporters that he had returned clandestinely to Cuba in February 1955, disguised as a sailor. He also said that he had abandoned revolutionary activity as a failure and that he had come out in the open as an act of party discipline in view of Prío's announced intention of abandoning exile and returning to Cuba.

(OFFICIAL USE ONLY) GOVERNMENT NOT TO ACT ON CTC BAN AGAINST SUGAR SHIPMENTS IN SYMPATHY WITH STRUCK LOUISIANA REFINERIES. Officials of the Cuban-American Sugar Mills Company were informed by the Minister of Labor that he was closing his eyes to the ban declared by the Confederation of Cuban Workers (CTC) against shipment of raw sugar to the Company's United States refineries (see Weeka No. 30). The CTC action was taken in support of strikers at the Godchauz and Colonial refineries of the Company in Louisiana. The Minister said the ban had been imposed at the request of the CIO and that the government was following this policy out of gratitude for CIO and AFL cooperation with Cuba in the matter of sugar legislation in the United States Congress.

Army

(CONFIDENTIAL) FURTHER DATA ON MAGAZINE EXPLOSION. A reliable source stated that the magazine explosion in Habana harbor on August 1 completely destroyed or rendered useless the entire contents (see Weeka No. 31). A previous report stating that the magazine had contained explosives and grenades confiscated from subversives apparently was in error. In addition to powder, there were 55 barrels of potassium perchlorate stored in the magazine which reportedly had been confiscated from the foreign registry vessel in Havana some time during World War II. Source stated that the age of the potassium

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perchlorate, coupled with improper storage, probably caused the explosion. The U. S. Army Mission to Cuba also lost a small quantity of demolition materials which were stored in the same magazine.

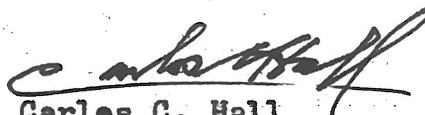
Navy

(UNCLASSIFIED) MIDSHIPMAN CRUISE "CHARLIE". Thirteen vessels participating in midshipman cruise "Charlie" for 1955 arrived in Havana on August 5 for a visit to last until August 9. The flotilla was headed by the light cruiser, USS Roanoke, carrying the flag of Rear Admiral E. R. McLean, Jr. The heavy cruiser, USS Newport News, ten destroyers, destroyer escorts and transports, and a fleet oiler made up the balance of the vessels on the cruise. There were about 6,000 officers, enlisted men and midshipmen embarked.

The visit was well received and no significant incidents were reported. Two receptions and an official luncheon were held on board ship. Various official and unofficial entertainment was offered the visitors by the Cubans and American residents.

Air

Negative.



Charles C. Hall
Chargé d'Affaires ad interim

Participants: CCHall, CABeenstra, CFPick, Jr., FCFernes, Jr., JdeZengotita, ACertesimo, WBCaldwell, FJDonahue, CAnderson, Treadway (Army), Krisel (Navy) and Slaten (Air).

cc: Amembassies Ciudad Trujillo and Port-au-Prince
MA(4), NA(4), and AA(2).

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