

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Memorandum of Conversation

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE
OFFICE OF
AMERICAN REPUBLIC AFFAIRS
MAR 24 1947
DIVISION OF SPECIAL
INTER-AMERICAN AFFAIRS

SUBJECT: GENERAL PEREZ' CALL ON MR. BRADEN

PARTICIPANTS: General Genovevo Perez, Chief of Staff, Cuban Army
Señor Guillermo Belt, Ambassador of Cuba
Assistant Secretary of State Spruille Braden
Mr. William W. Walker, Department of State (CRB)

COPIES TO: CRB - Mr. Barber
ARA - Mr. Briggs
A-Br- Mr. Wright
 Mr. Braden
IA - Mr. Dreier
FC - Mr. Barger
American Embassy, Habana (informally)

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DIRECTOR

837.20/3-1747

General Perez, accompanied by Ambassador Belt, called upon Mr. Braden this afternoon. After the usual exchange of pleasantries, the General referred to the Communist menace in Cuba and mentioned that it was of great importance to strengthen the Army in order to meet this threat. The United States, he stated, has more interests in Cuba than any other of the American republics. It is therefore of great importance, he added, that the Cuban Army be fully prepared to carry out its functions of maintaining order and security.

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The General expressed some apprehension over the recent arms-smuggling attempt at Gulfport, Miss., and the fact that four P-38 fighter planes were involved. These planes, he explained, were faster and more powerful than any planes in the possession of the Cuban armed forces. He said that it would even be possible to purchase in the black market better and more modern military equipment than the Cuban Army now has. The Army, he stated, is well trained but is very deficient in modern equipment. The arms and equipment to be furnished under the interim arms program will, he stated, be of considerable help, but some additional equipment will be needed, such as B-25 airplanes, some anti-aircraft batteries, and some additional ground equipment

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for the infantry. The General stated that he had explained this situation to officers of the War Department and that they had informed him that any additional allocation of military equipment would require the approval of the State Department. Mr. Braden stated that while the interim arms allocation would be made available as soon as possible, the request for additional equipment would have to be studied by the Department. He mentioned that Mr. Dreier of IA was handling the interim arms program for the Department.

Both the General and the Ambassador seemed to feel that Tabernilla, Faget, Benitez, and other political exiles in Miami were involved with Eugenio de Sosa in this arms-smuggling plot in Mississippi. They inquired whether any significant information had been disclosed as a result of the investigations being conducted by agencies of this Government, and what action had been taken with respect to the LST's, the arms, and the four P-38 airplanes. Mr. Braden stated that the investigation was still going on and that no information had yet been received which would indicate that any of the political exiles in Miami were involved. He also stated that the planes, as well as the ships and the arms, had been embargoed. The General seemed to be unusually concerned over the planes and to feel that they were to be used in a revolutionary attempt in Cuba. Mr. Walker explained that there had been many rumors but that we had received no definitive information to the effect that the planes were to be used in an attempted coup d'etat.

During the course of the conversation, Mr. Braden inquired whether there had been any Communist infiltration in the Cuban Army through the corporals and sergeants. General Pérez stated emphatically that there had been absolutely none. He went on to say that the intelligence authorities of the Army were exercising careful vigilance in order to prevent the Communists from working their way into the Army.

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