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(UNCLAS) Summary of Counter-Revolutionary Plot

Forwarded herewith is a summary of best available information concerning the recent plot against the CASTRO government, its organization and development, the penetration by CASTRO agents and the successful exposition and suppression of the plot by revolutionary forces. Particular emphasis is given to the extent in which FAR personnel were involved in the plot and the resulting effects on the FAR of the mass arrests and discharges.

AIR COM (Miami) (Main Fidel) CASTRO has been provided with dramatic opportunity to show himself as a savior of Cuba in the face of aggressive action by "capitalistic imperialists," both Cuban and foreign, and thus to rally public support on the one issue in which all Cubans are in agreement: the danger of a Dominican invasion. Whether or not, however, the aftermath of CASTRO's defeat of the plotters in this particular action will prove to strengthen his government in a long-range view is a question many persons are asking. The publicity given CASTRO's theatrical duping of the conspirators, particularly of TRUJILLO and his agents, has been most favorable to the government, but it has also revealed for the first time the extent of the opposition and the resources on which they might count. Undoubtedly this coup has alerted the government to the possibility of further conspiracies, and particularly to the danger of some retaliatory move by TRUJILLO's "foreign legion." It is to be hoped that it has also shown CASTRO's opponents that any effort on the part of BATISTA's supporters to regain control of Cuba would meet with the strongest opposition on the part of the majority of Cubans. Regarding the FAR, the mass arrests and discharges have further weakened the Cuban Air Force, leaving it without any nucleus of trained technical personnel in the fields of maintenance, communications and administration.

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ERICKSON S. NICHOLS 25 1959  
Colonel, USAF  
Air Attache

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1. Over the past 1-10 Aug 59 reports began to circulate in Havana and other parts of Cuba by various news agencies to the effect that the Cuban government was making mass arrests of persons involved in a counter-revolutionary conspiracy. The reports also included exaggerated accounts of invasions in various parts of the island and the Isle of Pines, the assassination or wounding of Fidel CASTRO and an imminent invasion from the Dominican Republic. AIRA was able to obtain information to disprove most of these reports as well as to verify mass arrests of military personnel who had remained in the armed forces from the Batista regime. However, no one was able to obtain any official explanation of what was going on in Cuba. The newspapers published pictures and stories of some arrests, namely of prominent businessmen and businessmen, but were unable to confirm any information officially. AIRA obtained information on basic details of the situation, reported in messages C-73 and C-78. For a week the country awaited the report of the true situation from its "maximum leader" Prime Minister Fidel CASTRO.

2. On Friday, 15 Aug 59, Dr. CASTRO appeared on television, complete with a cast of heroes and villains, to give the nation a five-hour account of the plots, counter plots and under-the-counter plots in which he and his followers had been engaged. The narrative was as follows: Several months ago various groups of ex-military, ill-disaffected civilians, began to organize against CASTRO. One of these groups had the support of BATISTA and TRUJILLO through ex-Gen PEDRAZA, who moved between Miami and Ciudad Trujillo to consolidate the various groups and organize the opposition. AIRA reports indicate that he also was in Cuba on at least one occasion. The Dominican consul in Miami as well as many ex-BATISTA supporters in exile there, were active in the conspiracy, furnishing money and purchasing arms. Meanwhile, TRUJILLO began to accept and to recruit ex-military personnel from Europe as well as Cuba into a "foreign legion" for possible use against CASTRO. The BATISTA supporters exiled in the Dominican Republic supposedly helped TRUJILLO to a great extent financially in this project. CASTRO, alerted to some of these plots, instructed his military intelligence to penetrate the conspiracy. William MORGAN, an American adventurer from Toledo, Ohio, who had fought with the rebel forces in the Escambray district of Las Villas Province during the last months of 55 and who had remained in CASTRO's army with the rank of Major, was the leader of the "counter spies" and was ably assisted by Major Roy CUTLER, known as MORGAN, also of Escambray fame. MORGAN, either approached, or was approached by, the group of ex-military conspirators and pretended to join them, both for financial and political (anti-Communist) reasons. MORGAN and his group were completely accepted by the conspirators, according to CASTRO, that TRUJILLO named him as Commander-in-Chief, displacing PEDRAZA and other prominent leaders. MORGAN was given the nom de guerre of "HENRY", obviously in memory of another famous Caribbean adventurer with the same surname. MORGAN's house, intervened from one of the BATISTA group, was used as a headquarters for meetings of the conspirators and some were even lodged there. CASTRO appointed MORGAN to a post in Las Villas, where the latter proceeded to be organizing a counter-revolutionary army in the hills and building a landing strip for the invading aircraft. Great

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... organized ... and ...  
... planes for taking over the Isle of Pines, ...  
... details. Interviews were held with ...  
... is said to have made 3 trips to the Box Key) and ...  
... in Miami, the latter giving MORGAN a sum of money ...  
... in Cuba, variously reported as being from \$50,000 to \$75,000,  
... arms to be delivered at sea. MORGAN also  
... into the conspiracy and received funds  
... Official newspaper sources report these sums as being  
... \$19,000, unofficial sources, some of whom supposedly numbered  
... estimate that MORGAN received several hundred  
... from the wealthy Cuban civilians involved in the plot.  
... MORGAN delivered \$78,750 to CASTRO for use by the Agrarian  
... Institute, which amount he claimed to be the total collected.  
... has reason to believe MORGAN collected a great deal more and ...  
... keeping it.

The date of 9 August was fixed for the attempt to overthrow  
the government and MORGAN went to meet the arms shipment from the  
Dominican consul in Miami, supposedly planning to return with this to  
Las Villas, where he would receive further arms by a/c drop and there  
could arm his followers in the hills and proceed to cut the island in  
half. Meantime, one group was to free the prisoners on the Isle of  
Pines, making a quantity of trained military pilots available, another  
group was to take over the city of Santiago and still another was to  
immobilize the military bases of Libertad, San Antonio de los Baños  
and Managua near Havana. Some mechanics of the FAR were to sabotage  
FAR a/c to prevent their use in the defense of the city and ex-tail  
instructors were to take over the tanks at Managua and move to control  
Havana. FAR cadets (Jan 59 graduates of USAF pilot training, still in  
the WAR) were to take up the T-33's, B-26's and Sea Fury's and join  
the invaders. In many ways it resembled BATISTA's 10th of March take-  
over except that a great deal more bloodshed was expected. Before  
any of these groups could move, CASTRO ordered mass arrests, based  
on the data furnished him by MORGAN. The arrests were kept as quiet  
as possible, however, and the government refused to verify unofficial  
"leaks" which the newspapers published. Fidel CASTRO dropped out of  
sight and Raul CASTRO furnished only the sparsest of information.  
MORGAN met the boatload of arms from Miami, taking delivery beyond  
U.S. waters and making delivery to Fidel CASTRO in Havana rather than  
to the counter-revolutionaries in Las Villas. MORGAN then went to  
Trinidad, Las Villas Province where he informed TRUJILLO by radio that  
the plot was in motion but that he needed further arms for his group  
who were fighting desperately and that the press notices of arrests,  
etc. were all lies put out by CASTRO in an attempt to dishearten the  
conspirators. On 10 Aug or 11 Aug arms were dropped by parachute in  
the vicinity of CIBAPUECOS, Las Villas, and on the night of 12 Aug  
a C-46 arrived from the Dominican Republic in order to deliver arms  
and learn the true situation. This a/c was met by CASTRO forces,  
pretending to be counter-revolutionaries and shouting "Down with Castro  
Long Live Trujillo", etc. The personnel on board the C-46, including  
a mysterious armed priest named VELASCO, were apparently satisfied  
that the conspirators had the area around Trinidad under control,  
delivered their load of arms, and promised to return the next day with  
additional arms and personnel. One reporter taken by CASTRO to the  
scene states that another a/c approached the same night but did not  
land. During the day of 13 Aug MORGAN sent frequent radio messages

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... and stating that the...  
... was still in firm control of the govern-  
... all time. That night the C-46 returned, piloted by Lt  
... Lt Col Antonio... co-pilot ex-CAF Lt Carlos... and  
... 5 passengers who were either to instruct the counter-revol-  
... in the use of arms or to make further investigations of the  
... and military situation. Again they were met by soldiers  
... and again the arms were unloaded. However, their sus-  
... were arrested and a fight broke out in which 2 CASTRO followers  
... were killed and 5 wounded and 2 of the conspirators killed and Lt Col  
... wounded. The remainder of the personnel aboard the a/o were  
... arrested, interrogated and brought to Havana along with the C-46.  
... Presumably this a/o is one of the CAF C-46's taken out by BATISTA  
... on the morning of 1 Jan 59 and which the Dem Rep had refused to return

3. CASTRO appeared on TV to relate the above fantastic story and brought with him MORGAN AND GUTIERREZ MENDOZA, as well as 3 of the prisoners captured aboard the C-96. Newspapermen were permitted to interrogate the prisoners and CASTRO entered the fray, asking particularly about the size, location and training of the "foreign legion". One of the prisoners stated he believed TRUJILLO would send the legion on some invasion despite the recent failure in order to get them off his hands. Two of the prisoners were Cubans and to them the crowd showed something of the typical Cuban sympathy for the... CASTRO stated that all conspirators would be brought... military to military courts martial and the civilians... courts. No date has been set as yet for these trials.

4. Prominent among CASTRO's many accusations against foreign interests conspiring against Cuba's freedom was his bitter indictment of the U.S. authorities in Miami for permitting arms shipments to leave there destined for counter-revolutionary groups. He stated that during his own revolution such smuggling had been much more difficult.

5. Reliable FAR sources have informed AIRA that all ex-CAF personnel remaining in FAR (largely technical enlisted personnel, estimated about 300-400) have now been kicked out and are expecting their permanent discharges. The men would not return even if they were ordered to do so in view of their arrest and inhuman treatment (see our msg C-77). This leaves the FAR in an even more desperate state than before --- without any trained personnel except the group of pilots imprisoned by BATISTA. There are literally no mechanics, instrument technicians, or trained office, finance or communications personnel. Of the enlisted personnel remaining the majority can not read or write intelligently and have no knowledge of or inclination for military discipline, much less for applying themselves to daily routine of office or flight line work. As a number of FAR personnel were admittedly involved in the conspiracy, CASTRO was forced to remove them, but the mass arrest and removal of all ex-CAF personnel, many of whom were in no way involved, has been another serious blow to the FAR. Since 1 Jan 59 practically all Air Force personnel have been arrested and/or discharged and no serious efforts have been made to train replacements. AIRA is completely unable to comprehend how... any air force capable of defending Cuba... at the rate it is going.

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