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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

ASSISTANT SECRETARY

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Three Secret Attachments

March 19, 1958

To: The Secretary
Through: S/S
From: ARA - Mr. Snow
Subject: Sales of Arms to Cuba

Discussion:

The question of the sales of arms to Cuba was referred to you for decision on January 17 (TAB A). At that time you concurred in ARA's recommendation that Ambassador Smith in his discretion inform President Batista that certain pending Cuban requests for purchase of arms, including an order for 20 armored cars, were being approved but delivery would depend on conditions in Cuba at the time the equipment was ready for shipment. The Ambassador was authorized to suggest certain measures to President Batista which might help create an atmosphere conducive to fair elections scheduled for June 1. In line with these suggestions, President Batista restored constitutional guarantees in all but one of six provinces of Cuba on January 25.

Although this created a temporary atmosphere of peace in Cuba, the Government failed to take further constructive steps as suggested by the Ambassador, and intransigent revolutionaries set off a new wave of terrorism. Efforts by the Catholic Episcopate and a subsequent National Harmony Committee to mediate in search of a peaceful solution were unsuccessful and President Batista precipitously announced on March 12 that constitutional guarantees again had been suspended. Simultaneously, he ordered a 35 percent increase in the armed forces and told our Ambassador of his plan to move masses of people out of areas of combat in Oriente Province in a major effort to wipe out the rebels. A similar mass movement failed early last year with unfortunate consequences for the rural population of that province.

The failure of the Batista Government to convince the Cuban people of its intent to hold a fair election with adequate guarantees, and its recourse to intensified "strong arm" measures considerably darken the prospects for a peaceful solution to the Cuban dilemma. A prolonged period of armed conflict, terrorism and counter-terrorism is likely to result from the Government's actions.

ARA believes that these developments require an immediate reexamination of our policy regarding shipment of arms to Cuba. Factors entering into this reexamination are described in TAB B.

Recommendation:

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ARA : MID: TG Lescuyer : lfb

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Three Secret Attachments

To: The Secretary

Through: S/S (rt)
U

From: ARA -- Mr. Snow *wp*

*W.
C.A.H.*

Subject: Sales of Arms to Cuba

March 20, 1958

2240

Discussion:

The question of sales and shipments of arms to Cuba was referred to you for decision on January 17 (TAB A). At that time you concurred in ARA's recommendation that Ambassador Smith, in his discretion, inform President Batista that certain pending Cuban requests for the purchase of arms, ~~including an order for 30 armored cars~~, were being approved, but that delivery would depend on conditions in Cuba at the time the equipment was ready for shipment. The Ambassador was also authorized to suggest certain measures to President Batista which might help to create an atmosphere conducive to ~~fair elections on June 1~~. In line with these suggestions, President Batista restored constitutional guarantees in all but one of the six provinces of Cuba on January 25.

*a peaceful
solution through
elections.*

② Although this temporarily brought an improvement in the Cuban atmosphere, the Government failed to take further constructive steps, and intransigent revolutionaries began a new campaign of terrorism. Efforts by the Catholic Episcopate and a subsequent National Harmony Committee to mediate in search of a peaceful solution were unsuccessful and President Batista suddenly announced on March 12 that constitutional guarantees were again being suspended. Simultaneously, he ordered a 35 percent increase in the armed forces and told our Ambassador of his plan to move masses of people out of areas of combat in Oriente Province in a major effort to wipe out the rebels. (A similar mass movement early last year having unfortunate consequences for the rural population of that province failed to enable the Government to overcome the Castro forces).

The inability or failure of the Batista Government to convince the Cuban people of its intent to hold a fair election with adequate guarantees, and its recourse to intensified police measures have considerably darkened the prospect of a peaceful solution. A period of armed conflict as well as terrorism on both sides seems likely to result. ARA considers that the factors favoring suspension of arms deliveries to Cuba, outweigh those which would favor their continuance at the present time.

④ Factors entering into this opinion are enumerated in TAB B.

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ARA: MID: T.B. Leonard: efb

737.50 / 2056
737.56

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Memorandum of Conversation

CONFIDENTIAL

DATE: March 21, 1958

MID-
MR. Little
RM/R

SUBJECT: Shipment of Arms to Cuba

PARTICIPANTS: Colonel Kieffer
Colonel Ferrer, Cuban Army Attaché
Mr. Leonhardy, MID

COPIES TO: MID - Mr. Wieland
Mr. Stewart
ARA - Mr. Hoyt
REA - Mr. Litsey
MC - Mr. Darby
Embassy, Habana

Colonel Kieffer came in to see Mr. Leonhardy in the company of Colonel Ferrer who announced that he had just been in to see Mr. Hoyt, whom he knew personally, but Mr. Hoyt was out. He said he wanted to make it clear first that his visit was a private one and had nothing to do with the political situation in Cuba. He said he understood from Colonel Ferrer that a shipment of Garand rifles destined for Cuba had been stopped recently and that he had been asked by the Cuban Government, for whom he was a registered agent, to try to obtain from private sources in this country a similar quantity of rifles. He asked whether in the event he was successful in obtaining these rifles, an export license would be granted for them.

Mr. Leonhardy made no comment on the suspension of the shipment of Garand rifles and in response to Colonel Kieffer's inquiry on our attitude on arms purchased from private sources in this country he remarked that the question of licensing of arms was within the province of another division of the Department (Munitions Control) but that so far as he knew export licenses granted by that Division were considered on an individual basis at the time they were presented, and that in so far as Cuba was concerned, the question of approval of such a license from a political standpoint, would have to be determined on the basis of conditions existing at the time the license was presented and that the same criteria would probably be used in the case of exports of arms privately sold as those purchased from the U.S. Government. Mr. Leonhardy made no

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Cat. <i>1400</i>

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to file
1958

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to define the criteria which would be used in arriving at such a decision but did say that he thought that the Cuban Ambassador was aware of our procedure for approving arms shipments. He made this latter statement for the benefit of Colonel Ferrer as well as Colonel Kieffer,

Colonel Kieffer inquired as to whether he should not go to other officials in the Department for such information. Mr. Leonhardy said that he was free to do this if he so desired but he didn't believe he would get any further information. Colonel Kieffer then implied that he probably could do better by talking to Mr. Hoyt, but apparently decided against this move. He then asked if the Department would have any objections to his trying to obtain arms for the Cuban Government in other countries, and Mr. Leonhardy stated that the Department had no control over sales of arms by other countries to Cuba.

Before departing Colonel Kieffer, explained that he did not want to get mixed up in any kind of arms deal personally as he was never involved in the purchase of arms and didn't want to get involved in that business, but was only trying to help out in this single instance.

ARA/MID:TGL *for* Leonhardy:mmm 3/27/58

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

ASSISTANT SECRETARY

Three Secret Attachments

To: The Secretary

Through: S/S

From: ARA - Mr. Snow *WPS*

Subject: Sales of Arms to Cuba

March 24, 1958

2372

Discussion:

The question of sales and shipments of arms to Cuba was referred to you for decision on January 17 (TAB A). At that time you concurred in ARA's recommendation that Ambassador Smith, in his discretion, inform President Batista that certain pending Cuban requests for the purchase of arms were being approved, but that delivery would depend on conditions in Cuba at the time the equipment was ready for shipment. The Ambassador was also authorized to suggest certain measures to President Batista which might help to create an atmosphere conducive to a peaceful solution through elections. In line with these suggestions, President Batista restored constitutional guarantees throughout most of Cuba on January 25.

Although this temporarily brought an improvement in the Cuban atmosphere the Government failed to take further constructive steps, and intransigent revolutionaries began a new campaign of terrorism. Efforts by the Catholic Episcopate and a subsequent National Harmony Committee to mediate in search of a peaceful solution were unsuccessful and President Batista suddenly announced on March 12 that constitutional guarantees were again being suspended. Simultaneously, he ordered a 35 percent increase in the armed forces and told our Ambassador of his plan to move masses of people out of areas of combat in Oriente Province in a major effort to wipe out the rebels. (A similar mass movement early last year having unfortunate consequences for the rural population of that province failed to enable the Government to overcome the Castro forces).

The inability of the Batista Government to convince the Cuban people of its intent to hold a fair election with adequate guarantees, and its recourse to intensified police measures have considerably darkened the prospect of a peaceful solution. A period of armed conflict as well as terrorism on both sides seems likely to ensue. ARA considers that the continued shipment of combat arms to Cuba at this time would bring sharp criticism from both houses of Congress which presently are considering an extension of the Mutual Security Program and might increase bloodshed in Cuba resulting in adverse criticism from both the U.S. and Cuban public and press.

Factors entering into this opinion are enumerated in TAB B.

The Department

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ARA: MID: TE Leubner: efb

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737.56

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Info

Following statement given press today on March 14 suspension shipment
rifles Cuba from New York:

"In authorizing shipments of arms to other countries under
the Mutual Security Program, it has been our consistent practice
to weigh carefully those consigned to areas where political tensions
have developed. We wish to be assured, for example, that the arms
are destined for uses consistent with the objectives of our Mutual
Security legislation. The shipment of 1,950 Garand rifles,
purchased by the Cuban Government, was temporarily suspended to allow
us the opportunity of consulting further with the appropriate Cuban
officials."

"As for the situation in Cuba, it is a matter of sympathetic
concern to all of us as friends and neighbors. It would be entirely
contrary to our policy to intervene in its internal affairs and we do
not intend to become involved. We hope that the Cuban Government and
people themselves will soon find a peaceful and democratic solution.
They are the only ones who can, as well as being the only ones who should,

Drafted by:

ARA:MED:TCLeonard:rev:iefb 3/25/58

Telegraphic transmission and

classification approved by:

William P. Snow

Clearances:

ARA/P - Mr. Anderson

3/5-CP

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MAR 25 1958 P.M.

NIACT verified

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Action

ARA

Info

RMR

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MC

FROM: Habana

TO: Secretary of State

NO: 595, March 26, 11 a.m.

NIACT

Guell informed me this morning that Batista is anxious to cooperate with US and not embarrass US. Therefore he will cancel order for 20 armored cars. However, GOC is in dire need of remaining arms promised by US. Present equipment in hands of GOC is obsolete and deteriorated. In view of friendship and good relations which exist between GOC and US, Batista earnestly hopes for favorable reply to GOC memorandum March 17.

Embassy recommends Department continue shipments necessary for preservation law and order. Embassy's paramount aim is for peaceful solution and avoidance of possible bloodbath in Cuba.

There is strong likelihood church will shortly call on both GOC and revolutionaries for period of truce.

SMITH

LMS:ET/5

NOTE: Mr. Leonhardy (ARA) notified 3/26/1 p.m., GWP

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