



EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

No. 9624

Habana, July 11, 1945

AIR MAIL

Subject: (Work of the United States
(Naval Mission to Cuba)

SECRET

The Honorable
The Secretary of State,
Washington, D. C.

Sir:

I have the honor to enclose a copy of a memorandum dated July 7, 1945 which was delivered to me at my request by John J. McCLELLAND, Lieutenant Commander (Retired), U.S. Navy, who is Chief of the United States Naval Mission to Cuba. This memorandum which was given to me for background purposes, contains data concerning the work of the Naval Mission which may interest the Department.

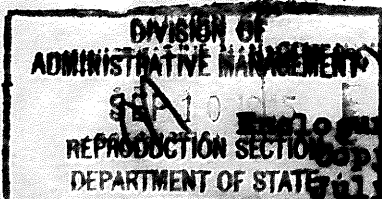
In company with Lt. Com. McClelland, I a few days ago inspected the Cuban Naval Base and shipyard at Habana. I found that great progress had been made there not only in training, discipline and proper naval procedure, but also that there had been vast improvement in ship repair facilities. This stands as a distinct credit to Lt. Com. McClelland and his officers who have labored hard to improve conditions at the Naval Base.

At the invitation of the Commodore of the Cuban Navy and accompanied by Lt. Com. McClelland, the Canadian Minister and his son, Lt. VAILLANCOURT of the Canadian Navy, I visited the Cuban Naval Academy at Mariel on July 9, 1945. We were shown the entire installation and I was impressed, as was the Canadian Minister, with the splendid spirit in which the present administration of the Cuban Navy is attacking the training problem. New buildings and shops are being constructed and the entire academy shows evidence of a distinct rejuvenation.

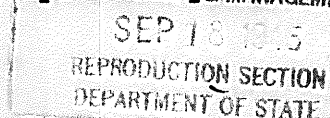
I have found since my arrival in Habana that the United States Naval Mission in general, and Lt. Com. McClelland in particular, are held in very high esteem in Cuban naval and other official circles. Lt. Com. McClelland and his officers are doing a splendid piece of work.

Respectfully yours,

James H. Wright
James H. Wright
Charge d'Affaires ad interim



Enclosure:
of memorandum,
7, 1945
No. 830

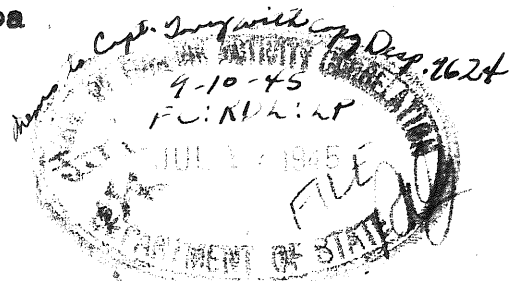


Confidential File

837.30 MISSIONS/7-1145

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Enclosure to despatch No. 9624
of July 11, 1945, from the Embassy at Habana

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SECRET

UNITED STATES NAVAL MISSION TO CUBA
HAVANA, CUBA

7 July 1945

MEMORANDUM FOR THE UNITED STATES
CHARGE D'AFFAIRES IN CUBA

The United States Naval Mission to Cuba was established February 2, 1943 with a dual purpose—to aid the Cuban Navy in an advisory capacity in matters of organization, training, policy, etc., and to act as liaison between the Commander, Gulf Sea Frontier and the Cuban Navy Task Force, which operated as an antisubmarine force under Commander, Gulf Sea Frontier. Until recent months the greater part of the Mission's efforts were devoted to the liaison function, and the technical function was exercised only to the extent necessary to keep the Cuban units operating as an effective force.

From March, 1943 until the end of the war in Europe the Cuban Navy Task Force was composed of two gunboats, the CUBA and the PATRIA, and twelve 83-foot Coast Guard Subchasers acquired from the United States under Lend-Lease. This force escorted approximately 175 convoys in the Caribbean Area, maintained a patrol off the most important Cuban ports when conditions justified it, and performed numerous patrols and searches in the Gulf area under Commander, Gulf Sea Frontier direction.

In its technical capacity the Mission fostered the development of Cuban repair facilities; supervised and assisted in the translation of instruction books and standard procedures, and helped in putting these into effect aboard the ships; assisted in determining internal policy and organization; and arranged for and supervised numerous training trips of Cuban units to United States bases.

When the Mission was established, the Cuban Navy had considerable repair facilities at the main shops in Havana, but these could not be utilized fully, because of the poor condition of much of the equipment and the lack of spare parts and materials. The Mission fostered the reconditioning of equipment on hand and assisted, where possible, in the procurement of necessary material and spare parts. The repair facilities

at

Havana now include a machine shop, foundry, pattern shop, electrical repair shop, blacksmith and metal-smith shop, carpenter shop, and a marine railway of 150 tons capacity. The quality of the work turned out and the ingenuity displayed in overcoming difficulties would do credit to any American yard. These shops now handle the major part of the repair work for Cuban Naval vessels.

Two of the most ambitious projects of the Cuban Navy have been held up by the difficulty of procuring the necessary materials in the States under wartime conditions. The Navy now owns a marine railway capable of handling 2500 tons, which will handle the largest ships in the Cuban Navy. This marine railway, however, was purchased from a civilian concern, and at time of purchase was in such bad shape that it could not be used. Materials for its repair were not available locally, and for this reason repairs were impossible. With the assistance of the Mission, these materials were recently acquired, and within a few months this marine railway should be repaired and the ability of the Cuban Navy to make its own repairs thereby greatly enhanced.

The other project held up by the difficulty of procuring materials is the construction of three 110-foot subchasers. The hulls for these ships were begun in October of 1942 and work proceeded rapidly, until the lack of engines and auxiliary fittings brought it to a halt. The necessary materials have now been procured and work is going rapidly forward under the supervision of an Engineering Officer assigned temporarily to the Mission from the SEVENTH Naval District for that purpose. It is anticipated that these three ships will be completed within the next few months.

Before the establishment of the Mission, Cuban ships had no Watch, Quarters, and Station Bills nor posted procedures for operation of machinery. Operating and Maintenance manuals were practically nonexistent in Spanish and, in many cases, were unavailable in English. The Mission sent officers aboard the ships, where they introduced Watch, Quarters, and Station Bills and various written procedures, such as getting underway procedure and safety precautions. In addition, the Mission procured necessary manuals and caused them to be translated. These measures greatly increased the operating efficiency of the Cuban Units and reduced machinery casualties.

Three factors in which the Naval Mission has been the motivating force, have combined to reduce the cost of repairs to Cuban vessels in U. S. Yards to less than

30% of

30% of former costs. These factors are:

- (1) The improvement of local repair facilities mentioned above.
- (2) The introduction of standard procedures and proper operating manuals as mentioned above.
- (3) The instilling of a spirit of willingness to undertake all repairs within the capacity of local facilities.

When the Cuban Navy acquired 12 subchasers from the United States it was necessary to train crews for them. This training was accomplished chiefly at the Submarine Chaser Training Center, Miami, Florida. During these training periods a Mission officer was always on hand to supervise the Cubans, assist in overcoming the language difficulty in instruction, and in general see that the Cubans received the maximum benefit possible from the training received. Refresher training periods have been arranged from time to time in Miami, Key West, and Guantanamo for the GUBA and PATRIA, as well as for the subchasers. In addition, training aboard ship has been encouraged, and one of the Mission's officers stationed as liaison officer at La Fé has held numerous instruction periods and maneuvering exercises in the bay for the ships stationed there.

The extent to which the Mission has helped in determining policy in the Cuban Navy was strikingly illustrated in the Preliminary Staff Conversations held in Havana in May of this year. One of the Mission's officers worked as an ex-officio member of the Cuban commission appointed to prepare data and determine policy for the Cuban delegation at these conversations, and in the conversations this same officer rendered services so acceptable to the Cubans that they insisted on listing him as a member of the Cuban delegation.

Since November, 1944 the Naval Mission has been administering the Naval Base at La Fé, pending its transfer to the Cuban Government. During this time this base has been manned almost entirely by Cuban personnel; and, consequently, this has been an excellent opportunity to give the Cubans a practical example of administrative methods.

Notwithstanding its accomplishments in the past, it is felt that the greatest opportunities for the Mission to accomplish lasting results lie in the future. Their experiences during the war and their contact with the Mission have brought to many Cuban officers a keen realization of the deficiencies of organization and

training

training of their Navy, and many of them are sincerely anxious to reorganize and improve it. They are relying to a considerable extent on the United States Naval Mission to assist them in accomplishing this.

The Chief of Staff of the Cuban Navy recently issued orders that an enlisted men's training center, modeled after United States Navy training centers, be established, and he has requested the assistance of the Mission in determining courses of instruction, methods of teaching, etc. The Mission is working closely with the officers entrusted with the establishment of this training center. It is believed that this will fill a long felt need in the Cuban Navy and bring about considerable permanent improvement.

It is felt, however, that the most significant development is the recent appointment of a board, including one of the Mission Officers, to completely rewrite the formal organization of the Cuban Navy. Inasmuch as the present organization is the source of many maladjustments and inefficiencies in the Cuban Navy, it is felt that this move presents an opportunity for more far-reaching improvements than have heretofore been possible.

In view of the Cuban officers' experiences in the antisubmarine warfare in Cuban waters and the spirit shown by these officers, it is believed that many sweeping changes are going to be made in the Cuban Navy and that a Naval Mission is very much to be desired to give direction to these changes and to aid in their technical aspects.

In recent Staff Conversations the Cuban Navy indicated its desire to have a permanent Naval Mission to assist in carrying out its plans for the future. The Chief of the Mission concurs in the desirability of this and feels that a Naval Mission established on the same basis as the Naval Missions to other Latin American countries would be in a much better position to render effective aid to the Cubans than the present Mission.

(John J. McClelland)
JOHN J. McCLELLAND
Chief, U. S. Naval Mission to Cuba

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