

UNITED STATES NAVAL OPERATING BASE
GUANTANAMO BAY, CUBA
NAVY NO. 115
C/O FLEET POST OFFICE
NEW YORK, N. Y.

REFER TO
FILE NO. HE37/114/11
SERIAL NO. -----

28 NOV 1946

From: The Commander.
To : The Chief of Naval Operations.
Via: The Commandant, TENTH Naval District.
Subject: Flag incident in Guantanamo on 15 November 1946.
Enclosure: (A) Copy of signed statement of Elwood L. BOWEN,
SClc, U. S. Navy, dated 16 November 1946.
(B) Translated copy of the Official Report by Cap-
tain Felix PEREZ MONTOYA, dtd. 16 November 1946.

1. On Thursday, 14 November 1946, the pupils of the girls school in Guantanamo City, called "Escuela del Hogar" (domestic science school), decided to occupy public buildings in the City of Guantanamo as a protest against the exclusion of their school from the national budget. Pursuant to this course of action, the students occupied the Municipal building. The army and police authorities, in order to remove the squatters, put out the lights around ten o'clock and severed all telephone communication in that building in the hope that this would cause the squatters to vacate the premises. The girls refused to budge, and, on the other hand, they proceeded to tear out doors and otherwise damage the Municipal building. Whereupon, the army and police authorities resorted to tear gas bombs and successfully ousted them. At approximately 0300, the girls and their leaders went to the Local Tax Collecting Office (Zona Fiscal) for the central government in Havana, taking with them the Cuban flag which they had taken from the Municipal building. On arriving there, they found that the police and the army had posted their men and, therefore, prevented their entry therein. The students congregated on the street, which afterwards turned out to be that they were in this manner attempting to prevent traffic on that street and stop any personnel from entering the said Tax Office. They also strung a Cuban flag from one side of the street to the other, at about a height of 6 feet from the ground.

2. At or about 0605 in the morning, Elwood L. BOWEN, SClc, went to the Rural Guard headquarters to check out a jeep which was used for shore patrol purposes in Guantanamo City.

CONFIDENTIAL

28 NOV 1946

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He drove down Calixto Garcia Street and saw a number of school girls "in a sort of an uproar". Not thinking anything about it, he continued down the street and was not stopped by any one. In his signed statement he states that he passed to the left of this flag in order not to touch it and that his car did not touch the Cuban flag. He then continued his trip to the U.S.O. building and that was all he knew about the incident.

3. Captain PEREZ MONTOYA, Commanding Officer of the 15th Squadron of the Cuban Rural Guard stationed in Guantanamo City, in an oral statement made to the Intelligence Officer stated that he had passed underneath the flag at or about 0530, and was not detained or stopped in any fashion. In his official report, no mention is made of the facts alleged in the foregoing oral remarks.

4. Around ten o'clock in the morning of November 15, 1946, rumors started circulating that the Cuban flag was run down by a jeep driven by Sergeant Louis "J" HOLLOWAY, U. S. Marine Corps, dragging the flag in the mud for around a block and one-half. There is also another version; that HOLLOWAY had torn the flag down with his hands and proceeded to drag it in the mud. Numerous versions and varieties of this story were circulated by radio reports, newspapers, and word of mouth.

5. Luis CORONADA ESTRADA, the owner of Radio Station CMKH, in Guantanamo City, wrote an "editorial" which was broadcast at 7:30 on 15 November 1946 and rebroadcast at the same hour the following day, in which he gave Sergeant HOLLOWAY's name and stated that the marine had torn down the Cuban flag and dragged it in the mud. This editorial was read over the air by a radio announcer whose name is Waldo DOMINGUEZ. On Wednesday, 20 November 1946, at 7:30, another "editorial" was read in which the version of the story as given by BOWEN, SOLE, was read. That particular broadcast also gave the communist version of the affair, but went on to state that it did so in the interest of truth.

6. Confidential informant reveals that Juan MEDINA CAMPOS, who attempted to secure permission to hold a public meeting in order to capitalize on this flag incident, is a Trotskyite and a professional agitator, who has been the leader for quite some time of the radical element in Guantanamo. Our files reveal that MEDINA and his group have caused a considerable

CONFIDENTIAL

28 NOV 1946

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amount of trouble in the past. He has been in the vanguard of any movement which is anti-foreign, anti-American, anti-employer, and any other agitation which is directed against law and order. He was not successful in getting permission to hold a meeting, but, nevertheless, he is responsible for the effort to keep the matter in issue when there is none. Informant also reveals that the communists are directly responsible for the stir and hubbub created by this matter, wishing to fabricate an international incident. There are communist sympathizers among the students, who apparently also aided in circulating these false reports.

7. It may be well to point out that in all Cuban versions of this incident they have Sergeant HOLLOWAY, of the Marine Corps, as a driver of the jeep, whereas BOWEN, sole, was the man who was in reality the driver of the jeep at the time of the alleged incident. This is strong evidence that the whole incident has been fabricated out of whole cloth for the simple reason that HOLLOWAY is well known in Guantanamo and, therefore, they jumped to the conclusion that HOLLOWAY was the driver of the jeep.

8. The American Consul in Santiago received the news of this incident and immediately contacted the Director of the U.S.O. in Guantanamo City for information.

9. In conversation had by the Intelligence Officer with Captain BORGES BADELL, Chief of Police in Guantanamo City, and with Captain PEREZ MONTOYA, head of the Rural Guard for the Guantanamo area, it was revealed that army and police sentries, who were on duty in front of the Tax Collecting Office, reported to their superiors that the version given by BOWEN, sole, is the correct one and that no American sailor or marine damaged or insulted the Cuban flag and it was so stated in the official Cuban report.

10. Attached is a certified copy of the translation of the official report of the investigation made by Captain Felix PEREZ MONTOYA to Colonel E. HERNANDEZ GIL, Commanding Officer of the Cuban Army for the Province of Oriente. The said report was turned over to the American Vice-Consul in Santiago, Harry W. Story, at the Vice-Consul's request.

CONFIDENTIAL

37/ 34/11
serial:

28 NOV 1946

NAVY DEPARTMENT
WASHINGTON, D.C.

Subject: Flag incident in Guantanamo on 15 November 1946.

11. At the time of the incident, liberty was not granted to personnel of this Base in Guantanamo City, but as a consequence of it liberty was stopped in Ceimancera.

12. As of the date of the writing of this report, the entire situation has quieted down. This command feels that if an unauthorized element deliberately creates trouble without justification or fact, that if this should be accepted by representatives of the United States without action it could and would be used as a precedent for similar action in the future.

13. It is the opinion of this command that this case of an American being accused without substantiating facts and who has been completely cleared by Cuban official reports presents the best opportunity for an official objection to certain known people deliberately stirring up anti-American sentiment, and the Commander, Naval Operating Base, therefore recommends an official representation be made.

C. E. BATTLE.

cc:

Assistant

U.S. Naval Attache,

Havana, Cuba.

American Vice-Consul,

Santiago de Cuba.

COMNAV, San Juan, P.R.

CONFIDENTIAL

November 16, 1946

At 0605 in the morning of November 15th, I went to check the jeep out from the Rural Guard headquarters. I came down the street driving the jeep. There was a bunch of school kids on the street in a sort of an uproar. There was a Cuban flag strung across the street on a line which carried from one building on the street to another building on the other side of the street. The flag I estimated to be about 6 ft. off the ground. I passed on the left hand side so as to be sure not to touch the flag. I did not touch the flag. No one spoke to me or said anything. I continued on my way to Hotel Washington.

ELWOOD LEO BOWEN SG 1/c

Enc A(1)

CONFIDENTIAL

AMERICAN CONSULATE
Santiago de Cuba, November 23, 1946

Commodore C. E. Battle, U. S. N.,
Commander, U.S. Naval Operating Base,
Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

Dear Commodore Battle:

I am enclosing a certified copy, with attachments, of a report furnished by the Commanding Officer of the Cuban Army in Santiago de Cuba, in connection with the incident which occurred in Guantanamo, Cuba, on November 15, 1946, in which a member of the U.S. Armed forces was accused of gross disrespect to the Cuban Flag.

In the foregoing connection, I should add that very little publicity was given to this incident in the local newspapers, and that what little publicity was given emanated from Communist factions here.

Assuring you that I am glad to have been of service to you, I remain,

Very truly yours,

Harry W. Story
American Vice Consul

Enclosure:

1. Report with attachments.

Moncada Barracks,
Sgo. de Cuba, 23 Nov. 1946

REGIMENT C. I. "MAESTRO"
Headquarters.

Mr. Harry W. Story,
Vice Consul of the United States of America,
Ciudad.

Sir:

In accordance with the conversation had with you yesterday afternoon in my office at this headquarters, I am pleased to attach certified copy of the despatch and the communication sent by Captain Felix E. Peron and Montoya, M.M., officer in charge of Squadron 15 of the Aerial Guard, of this command, motivated by the acts imputed against a marine of the Navy of your country.

With no other reason, I remain yours with all consideration and respect.

E. Hernandez Gil, M.M.,
COMANDANTE EN JEFE DEL REGIMIENTO NO. 1 "MAESTRO"

plg.

11/23/46
TF poJ

Enclosure

REPUBLIC OF CUBA
MINISTRY OF NATIONAL DEFENSE
ARMY

Headquarters "Gral. Silverio del
Prado", Guantanamo, 16 Nov. 1946.

To the Aide of Regiment No. 1 MACEO,
Headquarters "Moncada",
Santiago de Cuba.

Sir:

I have the honor of informing you that I have practised an ample investigation with regard to the events that appear published in the press of your city, in which there is imputed to a sailor of the Navy of North America, that which results as follows:

First: That on the night of the 14th instant the girl students of the Home School (domestic Science) of this city took possession of the Municipal building in this city as a sign of protest for not having been included in the General Budget of the Republic for the coming year of 1947.

Second: That approximately three o'clock in the morning of the next day, or be it the 15th, they took possession of the portals and sidewalk in front of the Local Tax Office (Zona Fiscal) with the intention of occupying said public office; but they did not succeed in their design because of the measures adopted by the forces of my command.

Third: That from the Municipal building they carried a national flag - a large one - which had a small tear from usage. That said flag was hung between two lighting posts of the city with the object of impeding traffic and at such a height that its lower part was separated from the ground by about a meter.

Fourth: That on that morning, ^Ithere passed by said location about 5.30 a.m. with the object of taking the train for your city and upon noting the interruption I called headquarters in order that they proceed to impede this act and to give a report to the necessary courts.

Fifth: That on arriving at the corner of Calixto Garcia and Paseo or be it two squares from the Local Tax Office, I encountered a Sargent 3rd class of the American Navy (1st class) who drove a jeep towards the U.S.O and not Sgt. Louis HOLLOWAY, as he asserted, inasmuch as this last is well known not only in the city of Guantanamo but in the Guard Headquarters for his gentlemanly and affable conduct.

CONFIDENTIAL

ENCLOSURE B(3)

Sixth: That according to what I have been able to prove with ample details when the Sergeant (the 1st class) arrived in front of the Local Tax Office the girl students made signals and spoke to him in Spanish to impede him capriciously from crossing; but this sailor does not speak Spanish and believed that a fiesta was being held, as it is not normal to use the national ensign for acts of protest, and he crossed beneath the flag without producing any damage to it, saluting smilingly in the belief that he did no harm whatever.

Seventh: That about 9 a.m. the 1st sub-lieutenant Marcelino Zerzabal and Ricardo, M.M., on duty then presented himself before the Tax Office and took down the flag, which had a small tear in it, without indicating in any manner that this was produced by the jeep, which in this case ~~must~~ logically would have torn it to pieces.

Eighth: That dissident elements and reputed as professional agitators in their anti-American campaign and in aid of the Soviet saw an opportunity to avail themselves of patriotic demands and to provoke gatherings and meetings to condemn an act in which they have no interest and which they had not seen for the simple reason they were not eye witnesses.

Ninth: That the most noted promotor and agitator of the campaign is an individual of this locality named JUAN MEDINA CAMPOS, a known anarchist and who in the past year was condemned by the Tribunal of Urgency for disturbing the peace and threatening businessmen.

Tenth: That by reason of all the foregoing the imputation made against the American sailor is unjust and, furthermore, the incident in itself produces embarrassment to the responsible and decent citizenry before the planned aggression made against the subject of a friendly nation.

S/ FELIX E. PEREZ MONTOYA, M.M.,
Captain in Command of Squadron 15 of
the Rural Guard, Regiment No. 1 MAGEO.

Certified a true copy of E. HERNANDEZ GIL, M.M.,
Colonel in Command of Regiment no. 1 MAGEO,
Cuartel "Moneada", Santiago de Cuba, 23 Nov. 1946.

CONFIDENTIAL

ENCLOSURE B(4)

REPUBLIC OF CUBA
MINISTRY OF NATIONAL DEFENSE
ARMY

Radiotelegraphic service of the Signal Corps.

GUANTANAMO NOV. 16, 1946, 3.30 p.m.

Aide Regiment 1, MACEO,
Santiago de Cuba.

I refer to notice appearing press your city relative act imputed to American sailor period. Yesterday morning Home school students placed Cuban banner tied between two posts interrupting traffic period. Corporal American Navy stationed USS passed beneath said flag driving a jeep without doing any damage sovereign flag period. All the manifestations obey communist campaign against so-called yankee imperialists period. Flag was taken down by 1st SubLieutenant Marcelino J. Zarsabal Ricardo as I informed your headquarters yesterday.

S/ PEREZ MONTOYA
Capt. in Command Squadron 15
R. Guard - 4.23 p.m.

Certified a true copy by E. HERNANDEZ GIL, M.M.,
Colonel Commanding Regiment No. 1 MACEO.
dtd. Santiago de Cuba, 22 Nov. 1946.

Tr. 11/26/46
Tr poj

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ENCLOSURE B(5)

Serial 0251P21

Op-21-G/15b Apply refer to Initials

(SC) A14/EF19 nd No.

16 December 1946

NAVY DEPARTMENT
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS
WASHINGTON

17 DEC 1946

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MEMORANDUM FOR: Director, Office of American Republic Affairs,
Department of State

Subject: Flag Incident in Guantanamo, Cuba

Enclosure: (A) Copy of ComNavBase Gtmo, Cuba ltr
Serial 0136 of 28 Nov. 1946, with
enclosures thereto and Com 10 Encl. thereon

1. Enclosure (A) is forwarded herewith for
information.

2. In view of the circumstances described in
enclosure (A), and since it would appear that naval personnel
were not at fault in this affair, the Chief of Naval Operations
will take no further action. The Chief of Naval Operations
considers it appropriate for the Department of State to deter-
mine whether or not representation should be made to the
Cuban Government.

Subj
AA
JAN 22 1947
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The Secretary of State refers to the Navy Department's memorandum of December 17, 1946 enclosing a copy of a report from the Commandant of the Naval Operating Base, Guantanamo, Cuba, reporting an incident involving naval personnel. It is noted that the Chief of Naval Operations considers it appropriate for this Department to determine whether representation should be made to the Cuban Government.

It is noted that the persons responsible for circulating false accusations against naval personnel had no connection with the Cuban Government. It is also noted that investigations conducted by official agencies of the Cuban Government have revealed that the accusations against American personnel were completely without foundation and were inspired by Communist elements. Under the circumstances, this Department does not feel that there exists any basis for making representation to the Cuban Government.

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A true copy of the signed original.

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