

1962: Plans to Create Pretexts for War with Cuba

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In 1997, the Assassination Records Review Board, an agency created by Congress to declassify documents relating to the 1963 assassination of President John F. Kennedy, released documents drafted by the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) for the Kennedy White House related to contingency planning for a U.S. invasion of Cuba.

What is extraordinary about these declassified Pentagon papers is the rare glimpse they provide of the covert methods that the U.S. government has employed, and continues to employ, to prepare military aggression around the world.

The documents show how the Defense Department and the White House drafted detailed plans to stage a provocation to serve as the pretext for a full-scale U.S. assault on Cuba.

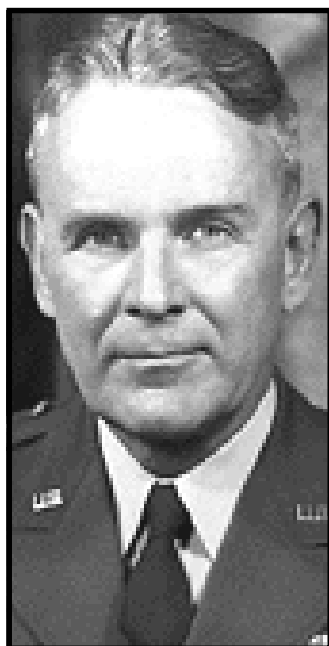
The planning was carried out

1959: CIA Plots Soviet Arms Deal with Cuba

In a declassified telegram from the UK ambassador in the U.S. to the British Foreign Office, we learn of a plan by CIA Director Allen Dulles to create a pretext for U.S. action against Cuba:

He [Dulles] said he greatly hoped that we would decide not to go ahead with the Hunter [warplane] deal. His main reason was that this might lead the Cubans to ask for Soviet or Soviet bloc arms.... It was, of course, a fact that *in the case of Guatemala it had been the shipment of Soviet arms that brought opposition elements together and created the occasion for what is done.* The same might be true in the case of Cuba, and the presence, for instance, of MiGs would have a tremendous effect, not only in the U.S., but with other Latin-American countries.... *He hoped that any refusal by us to supply arms would directly lead to a Soviet bloc offer to supply. Then he might be able to do something.*

Source: National Security Archives <www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/bayofpigs/19591124.pdf>



General Maxwell Taylor

- He directed the UN forces and was the commanding general of the U.S. 8th Army in Korea (1953)
- Chief of Staff, U.S. Army (1955-59)
- Chair, Joint Chiefs of Staff (1962-64)
- U.S. Ambassador, S. Vietnam (1964-65)
- Special Consultant to the President and Chairman, Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board (1965-1969)
- As the key military advisor to President Johnson, Taylor played a very pivotal role in escalating the Vietnam War.

General Taylor asked his staff to prepare a report on how "to plan and incite a revolt in Cuba." He wanted plans drawn up for "engineering an incident as a cause for invasion."

in the wake of the failed 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion, in which a 1,500-strong Cuban exile force had been organized and trained by the CIA. In response to this fiasco, the Kennedy administration launched Operation Mongoose, directed by the president's brother, Attorney General Robert Kennedy. This covert operation was aimed at assassinating Castro and bringing down his radical nationalist regime.

A memo dated April 1962, written by JCS chairman General Lyman Lemnitzer, was addressed to Defense Secretary Robert McNamara. It stated that "the Cuban problem must be solved in the near future," adding that "military intervention by the U.S. will be required to overthrow the present communist regime."

A CIA report drafted in the same month dealt with "probable reactions to a U.S. military intervention in Cuba." It warned that the Castro regime had made extensive preparations to resist any U.S. assault, and cautioned that while some Cubans might welcome a U.S. intervention, "at least as many more would regard it as designed to reimpose upon the Cuban people the yoke of 'Yankee imperialism.'" Therefore, the CIA concluded, "a prolonged U.S. military occupation of Cuba would probably be necessary" following a successful invasion. During this period, Brig. Gen. Edward Lansdale, appointed by the Kennedys

to direct Operation Mongoose, asked the JCS to review top secret plans for creating a pretext to invade Cuba.

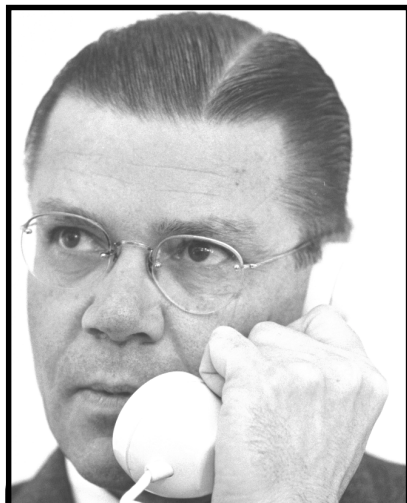
In March 1963, the new chairman of the JCS, General Maxwell Taylor, asked his staff to prepare a report on how "to plan and incite a revolt in Cuba." Taylor wanted plans drawn up for "engineering an incident as a cause for invasion."

Many of the documents deal with scenarios, prepared by military intelligence, for just such engineered pretexts. For the most part the media has ignored this declassified material. To the extent that they have covered the story, they have treated the Pentagon's plans for provocation as far-fetched inventions of low-level intelligence operatives. In reality, the documents carried the endorsement of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and were certified by the military command as "suitable for planning purposes."

Among the proposals hatched more than 30 years ago were flights over Cuban airspace to harass Cuban planes and ground control. Cuba's downing of just such a flight served as the pretext for Washington's imposition of the Helms-Burton Act in 1996, bringing sanctions against foreign companies doing business in Cuba.

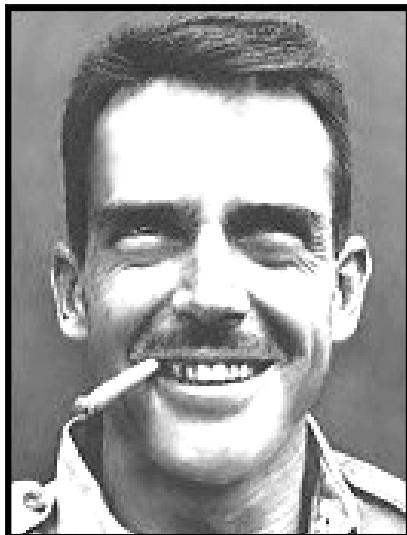
Source: "Pentagon documents detail provocations against Cuba," December 8, 1997. <www.wsws.org/public_html/iwb12-8/cuba.htm>

Operation Northwoods - the Top Secret Documents



Robert McNamara

- U.S. Air Force (1943-46)
- Exec., Ford Motor Co. (1946-61)
- Secretary of Defense (1961-68)
- Pres., World Bank (1968-81)
- has served on boards of Royal Dutch Petroleum, the Bank of America, *The Washington Post* and Corning Inc.
- member, Council on Foreign Relations and the Trilateral Commission



Colonel Edward Lansdale

- U.S. Air Force, World War II
- worked for the CIA and military intelligence and led "counter-insurgency" operations in:
 - Philippines (1950-54)
 - Vietnam (1954-68)
 - Cuba (1962)
 - Nicaragua (1985)
 - Honduras (1985)
- depicted by Graham Greene in his novel "The Quiet American"

Reprinted below is a declassified "Top Secret" memo called "Justification for U.S. Military Intervention in Cuba." It was originally attached to another "Top Secret" document ("Pretexts to Justify Military Intervention in Cuba," see pages 18-19), that proposed pretext incidents that the U.S. could create in order to justify invading Cuba.

These plans revealed in documents were key components of Operation Northwoods. They were written in response to a request from Colonel Edward Lansdale, Chief of the "Cuba Project." Operation Northwoods was part of a covert U.S. destabilization/terrorist program known as Operation Mongoose (1961-1964).

These documents were pre-

pared by the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS). The JCS delivered these documents to the U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara on March 13, 1962.

The JCS "consist of the Chairman, the Vice Chairman, the Chief of Staff of the Army, the Chief of Naval Operations, the Chief of Staff of the Air Force and the Commandant of the Marine Corps.... Responsibilities as members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff take precedence over duties as the Chiefs of Military Services. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff is the principal military adviser to the President, Secretary of Defense and the National Security Council" (Defense Technical Information Center, U.S. Department of Defense).

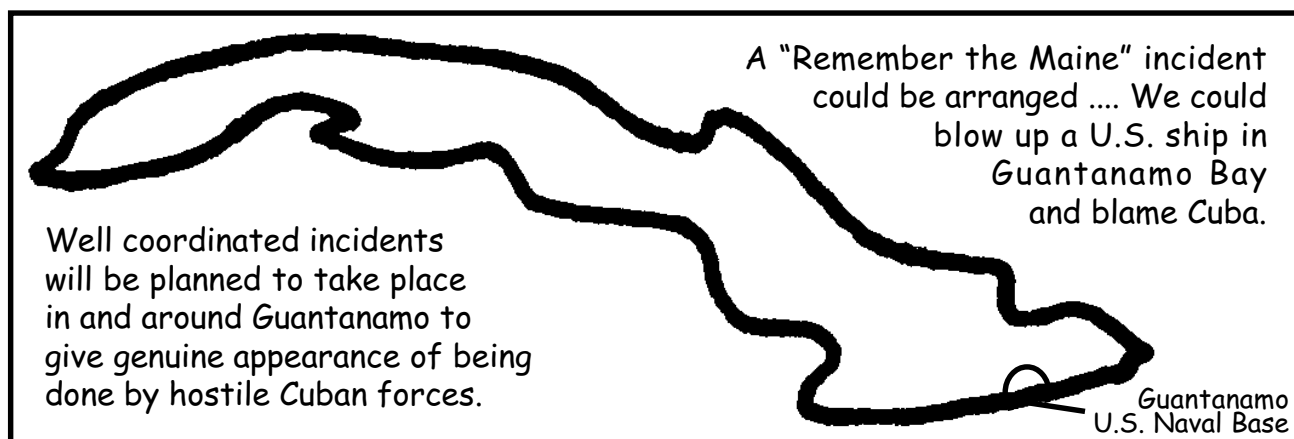
Justification for U.S. Military Intervention in Cuba

1. Reference is made to memorandum from Chief of Operations, Cuba Project, for General Craig, subject: "Operation Mongoose," dated 5 March 1962, which requested brief but precise description of pretexts which the Joint Chiefs of Staff consider would provide justification for U.S. military intervention in Cuba.
2. The projects listed in the enclosure hereto ["Pretexts to Justify Military Intervention in Cuba"] are forwarded as a preliminary submission suitable for planning purposes.
3. This plan, incorporating projects selected from the attached suggestions, or from other sources, should be developed to focus all efforts on a specific ultimate objective which would provide adequate justification for U.S. military intervention. Such a plan would enable a logical build-up of incidents to be combined with other seemingly unrelated events to camouflage the ultimate objective and create the necessary impression of Cuban rashness and irresponsibility on a large scale, directed at other countries as well as the U.S. The plan would also properly integrate and time phase the courses of action to be pursued. The desired resultant from the execution of this plan would be to place the United

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- States in the apparent position of suffering defensible grievances from a rash and irresponsible government of Cuba and to develop an international image of a Cuban threat to peace in the Western Hemisphere.
4. Time is an important factor in resolution of the Cuban problem. Therefore, the plan should be so time-phased that projects would be operable within the next few months.
 5. It is recommended that primary responsibility for developing military and paramilitary aspects of the plan for both overt and covert military operations be assigned the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Pretexts to Justify Military Intervention in Cuba



The courses of action which follow are a preliminary submission suitable only for planning purposes.... Together with similar inputs from other agencies, they are intended to provide a point of departure for the development of a single, integrated, time-phased plan. Such a plan would permit the evaluation of individual projects within the context of cumulative, correlated actions designed to lead inexorably to the objective of adequate justification for U.S. military intervention in Cuba.

1. Since it would seem desirable to use legitimate provocation as the basis for U.S. military intervention in Cuba a cover and deception plan, to include requisite preliminary actions... could be executed as an initial effort to provoke Cuban reactions. Harassment plus deceptive actions to convince the Cubans of imminent invasion would be emphasized. Our military posture throughout execution of the plan will allow a rapid change from exercise to intervention if Cuban response justifies.

2. A series of well coordinated incidents will be planned to take place in and around Guantanamo to give genuine appearance of being done by hostile Cuban forces. Incidents to establish a credible attack (not in chronological order):

- (1) Start rumours (many). Use clandestine radio.
- (2) Land friendly Cubans in uniform "over the fence" to stage attack on U.S. base.
- (3) Capture Cuban (friendly) saboteurs inside the base.
- (4) Start riots near the base main gate (friendly Cubans)
- (5) Blow up ammunition inside the base; start fires.
- (6) Burn aircraft on air base (sabotage)
- (7) Lob mortar shells from outside of base into base. Some damage to installations.
- (8) Capture assault teams approaching from the sea or vicinity of Guantanamo City.
- (9) Capture militia group which storms the base
- (10) Sabotage ship in harbour; large fires – naphthalene
- (11) Sink ship near harbour entrance. Conduct funerals for mock victims.

3. A "Remember the Maine" incident could be arranged in several forms:

(a) We could blow up a U.S. ship in Guantanamo Bay and blame Cuba.

(b) We could blow up a drone (unmanned) vessel anywhere in the Cuban waters. We could arrange to cause such incident in the vicinity of Havana or Santiago as a spectacular result of Cuban attack from the air or sea, or both. The presence of Cuban planes or ships merely investigating the intent of the vessel could be fairly compelling evidence that the ship was under attack.

We could develop a Communist Cuban terror campaign in the Miami area, in other Florida cities and even in Washington.

The nearness to Havana or Santiago would add credibility especially to those people that might have heard the blast or seen the fire.

4. We could develop a Communist Cuban terror campaign in the Miami area, in other Florida cities and even

in Washington. The terror campaign could be pointed at Cuban refugees seeking haven in the United States. We could sink a boatload of Cubans enroute to Florida (real or simulated). We could foster attempts on lives of Cuban refugees in the United States even to the extent of wounding in instances to be widely publicized. Exploding a few plastic bombs in carefully chosen spots, the arrest of Cuban agents and the release of prepared documents substantiating Cuban involvement also would be helpful in projecting the idea of an irresponsible government.

5. A "Cuban-based, Castro-supported" filibuster could be simulated against a neighboring Caribbean nation (in the vein of the 14th of June invasion of the Dominican Republic). We know that Castro is backing subversive efforts clandestinely against Haiti, Dominican Republic, Guatemala, and Nicaragua at present and possible others. These efforts can be magnified and additional ones contrived for exposure. For example, advantage can be taken of the sensitivity of the Dominican Air Force to intrusions within their national air space. "Cuban" B-26 or C-46 type aircraft could make cane-burning raids at night. Soviet Bloc incendiaries could be found. This could be coupled with "Cuban" mes-

sages to the Communist underground in the Dominican Republic and "Cuban" shipments of arms which could be found, or intercepted, on the beach.

6. Use of MIG type aircraft by U.S. pilots could provide additional provocation. Harassment of civil air, attacks on surface shipping and destruction of U.S. military drone aircraft by MIG type planes would be useful as complementary actions. An F-86 properly painted would convince air passengers that they saw a Cuban MIG, especially if the pilot of the transport were to announce such fact. The primary drawback to this suggestion appears to be the security risk inherent in obtaining or modifying an aircraft. However, reasonable copies of the MIG could be produced from U.S. resources in about three months.

7. Hijacking attempts against civil air and surface craft should appear to continue as harassing measures condoned by the government of Cuba. Concurrently, genuine defections of Cuban civil and military air and surface craft should be encouraged.

8. It is possible to create an incident which will demonstrate convincingly that a Cuban aircraft has attacked and shot down a chartered civil airliner enroute from the U.S. to Jamaica, Guatemala, Panama or Venezuela. The destination would be chosen only to cause the flight plan route to cross Cuba. The passengers could be a group of college students off on a holiday or any grouping of persons with a common interest to support chartering a non-scheduled flight.

(a) An aircraft at Eglin AFB [Air Force Base] would be painted and numbered as an exact duplicate for a civil registered aircraft belonging to a CIA proprietary organization in the Miami area. At a designated time the duplicate would be substituted for the actual aircraft and would be loaded with the selected passengers, all boarded under carefully prepared aliases. The actual registered aircraft would be converted to a drone.

(b) Take off times of the drone aircraft and the actual aircraft will be scheduled to allow a rendezvous south of Florida. From the rendezvous point the passenger-carrying aircraft will descend to minimum altitude and go directly into an auxiliary field at Eglin AFB where arrangements will have been made to evacuate the passengers and return the aircraft to its original status. The drone aircraft meanwhile will continue to fly the filed flight plan. When over Cuba the drone will be transmitting on the interna-

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aircraft which will be triggered by radio signal. This will allow ICAO [International Civil Aviation Organization] radio stations in the Western Hemisphere to tell the U.S. what has happened to the aircraft instead of the U.S. trying to "sell" the incident.

9. It is possible to create an incident to make it appear that Communist Cuban MIGs have destroyed a USAF aircraft over international waters in an unprovoked attack.

(a) Approximately 4 or 5 F-101 aircraft will be dispatched in trail from Homestead AFB, Florida, to the vicinity of Cuba. Their mission will be to reverse course and simulate fakir aircraft for an air defense exercise in southern Florida. These aircraft would conduct variations of these flights at frequent intervals. Crews would be briefed to remain at least 12 miles off the Cuban coast; however, they would be required to carry live ammunition in the event that hostile actions were taken by the Cuban MIGs.

(b) On one such flight, a pre-briefed pilot would fly tail-end Charley at considerable interval between aircraft. While near the Cuban Island this pilot would broadcast that he had been jumped by MIGs and was going down. No other calls would be made. The pilot would then fly directly west at extremely low altitude and land at a secure base, an Eglin auxiliary. The aircraft would be met by the proper people, quickly stored and given a new tail number. The pilot who had performed the mission under an alias, would resume his proper identity and return to his normal place of business. The pilot and aircraft would then have disappeared.

(c) At precisely the same time that the aircraft was presumably shot down, a submarine or small surface craft would disburse F-101 parts, parachute, etc., at approximately 15 to 20 miles off the Cuban coast and depart. The pilots returning to Homestead would have a true story as far as they knew. Search ships and aircraft could be dispatched and parts of aircraft found.

Source: This declassified, "Top Secret" "Project Northwoods" document by the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff was delivered to U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert

It is possible to create an incident which will make it appear that Communist Cuban MIGs have destroyed a USAF aircraft over international waters in an unprovoked attack.

McNamara on Mar. 13, 1962. For images of the originals, see the National Security Archive web site: <www.gwu.edu/%7Eensarchiv/news/20010430/doc1.pdf>