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CIA HISTORICAL REVIEW PROGRAM
RELEASE IN FULL 1998

25 April 1977

SUBJECT: AMTRUNK Operation

1. Description:

The proposal for this operation was presented to CIA by Tad SZULC, via Mr. Hurwitch, the State Department Cuban Coordinator, in February 1963. It allegedly originated with Jorge VOLSKY and Dr. Nestor MORENO who referred to it as the "Leonardo Plan." Its objective was to overthrow the Cuban Government by means of a conspiracy among high-level military and civilian leaders of the government culminating in a coup d'etat which would oust both CASTRO and the Communists from power. The CIA supported this activity and encrypted it AMTRUNK. The AMTRUNK cryptonym was changed to AMSTEAMER in the Spring of 1965, several additional infiltration/exfiltration missions were attempted or completed, and the project was terminated in late 1966 due to security problems. In retrospect, the activity appears to have been insecure and doomed to failure from its inception primarily for lack of compartmentation, and loose talk on the part of its principals.

2. Findings:

a. UFGA 11375, dated 30 September 1963:

The wife of AMLEO-3 (Jose Ricardo RABEL Nunez, a JMWAVE Station asset directly involved in the AMTRUNK Operation), reportedly made direct contact with Fidel CASTRO on 7 September 1963 at Santa Maria Beach, Cuba, in which she asked CASTRO's permission for her and her children to leave Cuba to join AMLEO-3 in the U.S. Mrs. AMLEO-3 reportedly expressed fear that AMLEO-3 would find another woman if she didn't join him. CASTRO replied by asking "do you consider yourself a burden to your husband?" Mrs.

AMLEO-3 said "it is possible," and CASTRO then asked "but he calls you every day." This information, according to AMLEO-3, was included in a letter from his wife which he received on 14 September 1963. There is no copy of the letter either in the AMTRUNK Operational file or in AMLEO-3's dossier to confirm that statement. /Comment: AMLEO-3 defected to the U.S. in December 1962, immediately became a JMWAVE Station asset, and was used to screen names for the AMTRUNK Operation. He was terminated in July 1964, reportedly due to conflict with JMWAVE Station for not having exfiltrated his wife and children. He returned to Cuba on his own in 1965, allegedly to exfiltrate his wife and children, was arrested, sentenced to 30 years imprisonment, served two years, and was set free in July or August 1967. There are two firm accusations that he was a CASTRO agent as early as July 1963. /Comment: if true, it appears that AMLEO-3 could have been providing CASTRO information on the AMTRUNK operation from its inception. Also, it perhaps could account for CASTRO's statement that AMLEO-3 called his wife in Cuba every day.7

b. UFGA 11829, dated 18 October 1963:

A newspaper article on changing trends among high-level personnel within the CASTRO Government, written by Tad SZULC, appeared in a major daily newspaper. SZULC reportedly told a high-level U.S. Government official that Dr. MORENO, the AMTRUNK team leader, was the source of his information. A debriefing of MORENO produced information at considerable variance to that in SZULC's article. Confronted with the article, MORENO admitted talking to SZULC but denied that most of the information in the article was based on anything which MORENO had said. The article created considerable furor in Washington, D.C. /Comment: specifics concerning the content of the article and name of the paper in which it appeared were not cited in the dispatch. There is no copy of the article either in the AMTRUNK operational file or in SZULC's dossier. If true, SZULC's article(s) could have been used as a channel for providing information to the Cuban Government, wittingly or unwittingly.7

c. WAVE Cable 7300 (IN 58037) dated 9 November 1963:

Transmission of a One Way Voice Link radio message #6 to the AMTRUNK's in Cuba on 9 November 1963, asked if they had developed any leads into the higher echelons of the Rebel Army, and who at higher levels appeared to be good prospects for recruitment. It cited rumors that persons

in top positions of the army were dissatisfied to the point that they may have been thinking of plotting against Fidel. /Comment: There is no proof that the message came to the attention of Fidel CASTRO. However, if the operation was penetrated, as it appears to have been, this information could have reached him.7

d. WAVE Cable 9630 (IN 87039) dated 25 December 1963, Report Number UFG 4313:

The following information was contained in a Secret Writing message from AMTRUNK-9 (Modesto OROZCO) dated 6 November, postmarked 22 November, and received on 2 December 1963. AMTRUNK-9 allegedly received the information from two other sources. AMTRUNK-9 reported that during the early part of November 1963 Fidel CASTRO Ruz, during the course of a private conversation, expressed fear of the possibility of "Commando Insurrections" which might take place on a large scale in Cuba, as the Cuban economy was such that he could not maintain a state of military alert for a long time. He indicated that any prolonged period of military alert might cause discontent among the troops, a situation which would be dangerous and create irreparable consequences. So as to negate this possibility, CASTRO was undertaking an intensive propaganda campaign to give confidence to his troops and to limit the occurrence of any internal uprising. /AMTRUNK-9 made an unauthorized trip to Cuba following his termination by JMWAVE Station. The files do not reflect his subsequent whereabouts.7

e. WAVE Cable 0952 (IN 03920) dated 23 January 1964:

In a debriefing of AMTRUNK-9 (Modesto OROZCO) on 17 January 1964, he provided rather sensational statements that the Government of Cuba was ready to fall at any moment, that enormous quantities of weapons were in Cuba, and that the Soviets were out to get Fidel. However, AMTRUNK-9 was unable to substantiate such stories with sources, dates and facts. It was learned that Dr. MORENO planned to introduce AMTRUNK-9 to VOLSKY. It was pointed out that SZULC, personally or through VOLSKY, may obtain information for a sensational-type article such as he wrote last September /1963/ following the MORENO interview.

Chris Hopkins
LAD/JFK Task Force

Attachment: Addendum/References

ADDENDUM

- a. UFGA 11375, dated 30 September 1963, Operational Progress Report on AMEEO-3, from Station JMWAVE to Headquarters, Special Affairs Staff. Filed in AMTRUNK Operational folder 19-6-84/3, Folder 2, Job # 68-496/16.
- b. UFGA 11829, dated 18 October 1963, Progress Report AMTRUNK Team, Period 1-30 September 1963, from Station JMWAVE to Headquarters Special Affairs Staff. Filed in AMTRUNK Operational folder 19-6-84/3, Folder 2, Job # 68-496/16.
- c. WAVE Cable 7300 (IN 58037) dated 9 November 1963, to Headquarters. CIA radio message to AMTRUNK agent in Cuba. Filed in AMTRUNK Project 19-6-84/3, Folder 3, Job # 68-179/40.
- d. WAVE Cable 9630 (IN 87039) dated 25 December 1963, Report No. UFG 4313, from JMWAVE Station to Headquarters. Filed in AMTRUNK Reports folder 19-6-84/4, Folder 3, Job # 68-179/40.
- e. WAVE Cable 0952 (IN 03920) dated 23 January 1964, from JMWAVE Station to Headquarters. Operational cable concerning the debriefing of AMTRUNK-9. Filed in AMTRUNK Operational folder 19-6-84/3, Folder 3, Job # 68-496/16.