

What You Probably Haven't Heard about the Bay of Pigs and the Cuban Missile Crisis

The Bay of Pigs operation was lost on US soil, not Cuban shores. It was doomed long before those American-trained and -armed Cuban refugees landed at the Bay of Pigs. They didn't lose the operation. They did their job. They had zero chance of success, thanks to their American allies.

Mario Kohly was a right-wing banker in Cuba before Fidel Castro's rule. By 1960, he had developed what was to become the framework for the Bay of Pigs invasion. His plan consisted of a de facto government in exile who would restore Cuba's 1940 constitution once Castro was toppled. Kohly had established a Cuban-based underground resistance movement. He had also established the Cuban Liberators, which was made up of former Cuban military personnel. Kohly was busy strengthening those groups and positioning them for action in the second phase of his plan to retake control of Cuba. The landing force would be reinforced by Kohly's 300-man guerilla army based in Cuba's Escambray Mountains.

CIA learned about Kohly's plan from his attorney, Marshall Diggs. CIA Agent Tracy Barnes was assigned by his boss, Richard Bissell, to work with Kohly. Barnes, in turn, recruited Robert D Morrow, who was just beginning his

career as a CIA operative. Morrow's main duty was to keep Kohly happy, to advise and counsel him, and to sooth ruffled feathers when things went wrong. Things were going wrong from the very start.

CIA had embraced Kohly's plan, and the Cuban was delighted to learn that his plan for Cuba would have the full support and backing of the US government. What Kohly didn't realize, yet, was that he never had the full support and backing of the US government. For one thing, CIA needed Kohly's help and resources, but they were determined to run the operation their way. They were using Kohly, stringing him along, letting him believe he was in control, and it was Morrow's job to help sell the lie to Kohly, who was never to find out that Morrow was working for CIA. Kohly welcomed CIA's money, but he did not want them interfering with his plans. That's exactly what CIA had in mind.

For another thing, CIA had the support of Vice President Richard Nixon, who was expected to easily win the presidential election in November of 1960. However, the Nixon / CIA alliance was opposed by the State Department. They had their own people in mind for the government that would replace Castro. Kohly expected that he would be in charge of the new government, but State was determined to prevent that from happening. So there was a sort of war within the US federal government.

Why was Nixon so important to Kohly's cause? What about the President? Eisenhower didn't know about Kohly's

plan or CIA's embrace of it. That didn't seem (to CIA) to be a problem, because Nixon would be the president in a few months. They didn't think State opposition was too big a problem, either, for the same reason. CIA just needed to string State and Kohly along until Nixon was in the oval office. Then they would assume full command and control of the Cuban operation.

That was proving difficult, however. The problem was that neither CIA nor Nixon could effectively thwart State's competing plan without blowing the cover on their own operation. It was complicated even more by the fact that Kohly was not to learn anything about the Nixon / State conflict, because Kohly might turn against CIA and withdraw his much-needed resources. The obstacle at State was William Wieland, who was working for Castro. Wieland, seeing Kohly's increasing influence, launched a campaign to undermine and discredit Kohly, who requested the help of Nixon. Kohly was summoned to Washington to meet with Nixon's military advisor, Gen Robert E Cushman. However, Cushman was not at the meeting. Kohly met instead with a CIA operative who claimed to represent both Nixon and Cushman.

Wieland had established the FRD (Cuban Revolutionary Front) by convincing a few liberals within CIA to help install former members of Castro's cabinet as members of Wieland's Cuban government in exile. The unnamed CIA operative tried to convince Kohly to give superficial support to FRD, which was to be chaired by E Howard Hunt, who would actually be supporting Kohly. But

Kohly was not impressed with the CIA representative, and he refused to give even superficial support to FRD, because they were known to be former key players in Castro's government. They were socialists and communist sympathizers, and Kohly wanted no part of that.

Before leaving Washington, Kohly asked Marshall Diggs to arrange a face-to-face meeting with Richard Nixon. Kohly was confident that his good friend Nixon would straighten everything out once he was fully informed of the problems. Kohly then returned to Miami and continued preparing for the invasion of Cuba, quickly forgetting about Wieland. However, Wieland and his liberal CIA cohorts did not forget about Kohly.

Wieland's next move was to convince CIA to accept more leftist leaders in FRD. Those new leftist leaders would assume responsibility for planning the Cuban invasion, and once Castro was deposed, they would become the leaders of Cuba's new government. Wieland had outmaneuvered E Howard Hunt, FRD's coordinator. CIA's liberals formed their own group, the Cuban Revolutionary Council (CRC), composed entirely of the most extreme leftists in the FRD. Their sole mission was to control FRD and sabotage Kohly. The leader of the new CRC was Jose Miro Cardona, Castro's first Prime Minister. Kohly was weakened, and he was isolated from his own plan. There was increased tension between Kohly and CIA. There was also increased tension within CIA between liberal and conservative factions.

Kohly was caught in the middle, and so, therefore, was Morrow. When Kohly realized that both CIA factions were using him, he was understandably furious. He accused Morrow of being a CIA operative. Morrow couldn't deny it, but he couldn't let Kohly know how right he was, either. He had made a promise to Barnes to conceal his CIA affiliation, and he intended to keep it if at all possible. Morrow managed to convince Kohly that, although aligned with CIA, Morrow was and always had been loyal to Kohly's cause. The conservative CIA faction, also, was solidly behind Kohly's plan. They had to be, because they desperately needed Kohly's underground force in Cuba, and his guerilla forces in the Escambray Mountains.

JFK was delighted to exploit the Cuba issue against Nixon in their presidential election campaigns. Nixon couldn't publicly embrace Kohly's plan, so he couldn't effectively defend himself against JFK's criticisms regarding Cuba. CIA and Hunt decided to assist Nixon another way: by killing Castro. Hunt drew up a plan and submitted it to Barnes, who showed it to Morrow right away. It was perhaps the most brief and concise covert plan in CIA history: Assassinate Castro before or coincident with the invasion (a task for Cuban patriots). As the plan made its way through CIA chain of command, it was met with approval at each stop, but nobody wanted to take responsibility for it. It eventually ended up in the lap of James O'Connell, who knew exactly the right persons to call for assistance.

The first call went to Robert A Maheu, an old FBI colleague, a special agent who had worked for Guy Banister when he was in charge of the Chicago field office. His second call went to Las Vegas mafia don, Johnny Roselli, who would make arrangements for the hit. Maheu and Roselli had been friends for years and worked well together. They met at the Brown Derby in Beverly Hills. Roselli was reluctant to take on the assignment. Maheu explained that high-level federal officials needed Roselli's help in recruiting Cubans to eliminate Castro. From that point on, Roselli was all in, because he and his mafia associate Carlos Marcello had both been fighting deportation proceedings initiated by Robert Kennedy. They could both use friends in CIA.

Roselli insisted, however, on meeting face to face with a US government official who would confirm his mission to commit murder. Maheu, Roselli, and O'Connell met at the Plaza Hotel in New York on September 14, 1960. Roselli and O'Connell had met socially, and that meeting sealed the deal. Meanwhile, high-level CIA officials (Richard Bissell, Deputy Director of Plans; Sheffield Edwards, CIA Security Director; Allen Dulles, CIA Director; and Gen Charles Cabell, CIA Deputy Director) were meeting in Washington, officially forming a CIA / mafia partnership. At Maheu's request, Roselli reached out to the mafia's number two guy, Sam Giancana, who reached out to Florida's top mafia figure, Santos Trafficante.

A few days later, Richard Nixon was briefed on the plan by Richard Bissell. In October, Nixon, Cabell, and Kohly met

on the golf course at the Burning Tree Club in suburban Washington. They agreed on a plan called Operation Forty. Under this plan, CIA would apprehend and hold as prisoners all leftist members of CRC and FRD. Once the invasion of Cuba had been secured, the prisoners would be taken to the landing beach, where they would be killed by Kohly's men. The cover story would be that they had become unfortunate casualties of the invasion.

Morrow asked Barnes to confirm to him that Nixon had agreed that Kohly would be installed as the new Cuban leader after the invasion. Both Barnes and Cabell affirmed that Nixon and Kohly had made the deal. Later, Operation Forty would become known as the Bay of Pigs.

In October 1960, British Air Force reconnaissance flights began to notice unusual military construction in Cuba. They increased their surveillance, and by the end of October they had determined that Russian offensive missile installations were being built there. British intelligence shared this information with the US State Department, and CIA began its own research.

Meanwhile, Cuba, Castro, and communism dominated the election year political rhetoric. Behind the scenes, CIA's David Atlee Phillips was using his considerable propaganda skills to make sure Americans became sensitive to the threat of communist domination in general, and the specific threat to American security posed by the Cuban

communist government 90 miles from Florida's shores.

Vice President Nixon decided it was time to try once more to suppress and dislodge the CRC. Nixon informed Bissell, who informed Barnes, who informed Diggs and Morrow. The latter two needed to be aware in case there was some sort of problem along the way, so they could handle Kohly. Problems developed almost immediately.

Allen Dulles briefed JFK on the Cuban missile situation. Dulles didn't take JFK seriously as a threat to Nixon's election. However, JFK was shrewd enough to realize what a political weapon this revelation was. Making the most of it depended on his ability to get accurate current information on developments in Cuba. That was available to him in the form of William Wieland, who introduced CRC's leaders to JFK at the time of the Democratic National Convention. (CIA, Kohly, and Nixon were not aware of this). Wieland was all in for Kennedy.

Nixon fell into a JFK trap when he used an American Legion convention in Miami on October 17 to take a strong stand against Castro. He announced that his patience with Castro was over; it was time to eradicate this "cancer" from the American hemisphere to prevent further Soviet penetration. The government was already planning a number of steps. However, Nixon's words meant little, because the official government policy was no US intervention in Cuba. JFK was well aware of that, and he fully exploited Nixon's weakness by releasing a story

to the New York Times, with headline: *Kennedy asks aid for Cuban rebels to defeat Castro. Urges support of exiles and fighters for freedom.* It was published the day before the final presidential debate.

JFK was elated. Nixon was wounded and furious. There was little he could do. He couldn't announce his plans to invade Cuba and assassinate Castro. He publicly attacked JFK's proposal as the most shockingly reckless proposal ever made by a presidential candidate. Nixon suggested a quarantine of the island of Cuba. It was perceived by voters as weak and non-committal. They favored JFK's tough stance. This may have been a turning point in the election. (Ironically, Nixon's quarantine suggestion was later used by JFK.)

Kennedy, naturally, was supportive of Wieland and the CRC. That weakened Kohly. Neither Diggs nor Morrow could do much to calm the fears of Kohly and his increasingly frantic followers. Morrow considered telling Kohly about his CIA affiliation, but that idea was quashed by Diggs. Morrow never told Kohly about his CIA involvement, but he also never denied it when directly asked by Kohly. Gradually Kohly calmed down with Morrow's repeated assurances that he was loyal to the cause to the very end.

Shortly after JFK's inauguration, Dulles and Bissell met with the new President to inform him of CIA plans regarding Cuba. JFK was told: about the Cuban exile training programs operating in Florida and Guatemala; about the plan to invade Cuba, which included those Cuban exiles, as well as support from

Kohly's guerilla army and his underground resistance force in Cuba; that these plans had been approved by President Eisenhower and by the National Security Council. The new President was not told about: Operation Forty; the secret deal between Nixon and Kohly; the CIA / mafia plan to assassinate Castro; or the Soviet missile sites under construction in Cuba.

JFK ordered CIA to put a temporary hold on the invasion, because he wanted a second opinion. Although the hold was only temporary, it sent a strong signal to the intelligence community that they may no longer be able to operate as they had in the past and wished to in the future. Failing to take decisive measures would be disastrous, according to CIA, but acting directly against the orders of the president would be extremely dangerous and potentially just as disastrous.

Kennedy sent CRC leaders to the training center in Guatemala. His intent was to replace the current Brigade leadership there, leaving JFK in control of the invasion operation. About half of the 500 men quit and left the camp, and the rest were on the verge of mutiny by the end of January, 1961.

Again, Morrow was faced with the almost impossible task of keeping Kohly from withdrawing his support. Assurances of US Government support were not terribly convincing in view of recent developments. CIA came to the rescue by maneuvering to install a new Brigade leader in the Guatemala training camp. Morrow was informed beforehand to ask Kohly for his approval. The new

man in charge would be Manuel Artime, who had once been a Castro officer, but he gained Kohly's trust. Obviously, the CRC leaders were not happy, and they complained bitterly to JFK, who took great offense at CIA's insubordination. The President refused to give approval for the invasion.

Things got even worse when Wieland and his CRC leftist leaders informed JFK of the mafia's involvement in the funding of the Brigade in Guatemala. They explained that Cuba had been a source of great profit for the mafia under Batista's rule. They now wanted to regain control of Cuba's bordellos, gambling houses, and drug operations.

John and Robert Kennedy were both furious. Bobby had been involved in a campaign since 1957 to destroy the mafia in the US. That would now be impossible if it became public that the mafia were operating in partnership with the US government. That relationship also left the Kennedy brothers open to attacks on their credibility by the press and the public. It also meant that the mafia could potentially use the connection as leverage against the federal government to act favorably toward mafia leadership.

CIA was also furious. Wieland and his CRC colleagues were a threat to expose the Castro assassination plot. That could destroy any possibility of an invasion of Cuba. By late February, Dulles warned JFK that any further delay of the Cuban invasion could destroy any chance of success.

JFK wasn't buying it. He and Bobby ordered Dulles to put all Cuban

operations on hold until further notice. The Kennedys wanted time to consult with people they considered much less biased. But by this time, Castro had begun taking counter measures in anticipation of an attack. Kohly's guerilla army in the Escambray Mountains was under attack, according to one of the leaders in Kohly's underground resistance group. Barnes told Morrow that the situation seemed hopeless.

Robert Kennedy decided to take full advantage of the situation. He had been given a golden opportunity to both embarrass the CIA and accelerate his campaign against the mafia. (Neither Kennedy was yet aware of the CIA / mafia plot to assassinate Castro.) Bobby's first target was Carlos Marcello, New Orleans crime boss, who had been identified as the man who controlled the key distribution of drug shipments into the US. Disrupting Marcello's source of funds also meant disrupting his financial support of Cuban exile training operations.

Meanwhile, on March 11, JFK called a meeting in the White House on the subject of Cuba. Present were: Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense, three members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and their assistants, and CIA's Allen Dulles and Richard Bissell. After extensive debate, JFK rejected Trinidad as the landing site. He told those present to search for an alternative site and report their suggestions in two weeks. He wanted a quiet landing at night with no need for American intervention. Two weeks later, three alternative sites were proposed,

and of those the Bay of Pigs was selected.

By this time, Castro had destroyed many of the members of Kohly's underground resistance force, and the 300 guerilla fighters in the Escambray Mountains. However, the resistance leaders had already discovered and transmitted to Kohly hard evidence of Soviet construction of missile sites in Cuba. Kohly immediately relayed the information to Diggs, who requested a meeting between Kohly and Robert Kennedy. Kohly's information was dismissed by RFK. The Attorney General was not interested in anything Kohly had to say.

Less than two weeks before the invasion, on RFK's orders, Carlos Marcello was kidnapped by federal agents as he walked along a street in New Orleans. He was driven to a waiting jet which flew to Guatemala, where the only passenger was dumped in the jungle to fight for his survival. Kohly had just lost his financing for his crippled underground resistance movement in Cuba. His guerilla army had already been decimated, and Kohly was in fear of losing CIA support as well. In desperation, he turned to mafia dons Meyer Lansky and Santos Trafficante. Kohly promised them control over Cuba's casinos once he was installed as Cuba's new president. Lansky and Trafficante accepted the deal in exchange for their immediate financial support. It was finalized in the DC offices of Marshall Diggs.

Trafficante reasoned that to achieve his goals, the Castro regime had to be

replaced by Kohly's men as soon as possible. Trafficante pressured Robert Maheu to use CIA's influence to convince JFK of the urgent need for immediate and decisive action. On April 10, JFK called another meeting with the same people who had gathered on March 11. This time, JFK reversed course and gave consent for the invasion of Cuba. It is not known how much Trafficante's pressure through Maheu (if any at all) contributed to the decision.

Bissell then informed JFK of another part of the invasion plan that had been known only by Dulles, Cabell, and Bissell. The Bay of Pigs landing would serve as cover for a flight into Cuba's Camaguey Province. Its mission was to assess the progress of the Soviet missile sites construction. This required a secondary invasion landing site to divert Cuban forces away from the Bay of Pigs and from the landing in Camaguey Province. This diversionary force would be under the command of Nino Diaz, a young Cuban exile from New Orleans. His men were trained in New Orleans by Sergio Arcacha Smith, who was an associate of both Carlos Marcello and Guy Banister. The pilot would be David Ferrie, Marcello's personal pilot. In the plane with him would be Robert Morrow.

On April 15, 1961, CRC announced the cabinet posts of the Cuban provisional government. The following day, members of the CRC met at the Lexington Hotel in New York. It was supposed to be a long afternoon session, but at 3:30pm they were escorted (by five Americans in plain

clothes) out of the hotel through a back door. They were taken to a waiting plane, which took them to Opa Locka Naval Air Base (in southern Florida). The press in New York was told that the meeting was to be continued at a secret location. But that was a lie. The CRC members were placed under house arrest, in accordance with Operation Forty. If the Cuban invasion was successful, they would be killed on the beaches, apparent casualties of the invasion.

However, the invasion was not successful. The invasion force was wiped out. More than 200,000 people were arrested in Havana alone. CIA blamed JFK. The President had committed to a Naval air strike if Kohly's underground resistance force had been unable to take out Castro's jets. However, JFK changed his mind and refused at the last minute to authorize that air strike. That left the landing force totally at the mercy of Castro's troops. But CIA's Gen Charles Cabell would be blamed by the administration for failing to knock out Castro's air force the first day of the operation. Cabell made repeated appeals to the White House for approval of the second air strike to take out what remained of Castro's air force, but JFK would not budge.

What Kohly didn't know yet was that none of that mattered much. CRC leaders had informed Castro of Kohly's underground resistance group, and they had already been neutralized. Right-wing agents in CIA soon aligned with militant Cuban exile groups, sharing a deep-seated hatred for and hostility toward JFK.

The CRC leaders survived. They had remained under house arrest for three days in Opa Locka while the invasion disaster played out. On April 19, one of them had escaped through a bathroom window, then called the White House. Within hours, they were headed to DC aboard an Air Force plane.

One part of the invasion was a success. Robert Morrow and David Ferrie had returned safely from the mission inside Cuba. Ferrie had been shot, and Morrow had been forced to pilot the plane on the return flight, but Morrow had retrieved the information he was after.

A week after the failed invasion, Morrow learned that the data he retrieved from Cuba provided further evidence that Russia was installing sophisticated missile sites in Cuba. He also learned, from Barnes, that JFK had ordered all intelligence reports, data, and documents relating to the Cuban missiles to be turned over to Robert Kennedy. The President also requested a list of names of all those who had worked on the project. They were to be turned over to the DOD (Department of Defense) for transfer to a new agency. The new agency would become known as DIA (Defense Intelligence Agency). JFK had made an angry vow to eliminate CIA, and he was now making good on that promise. The Kennedys were also, clearly, working to keep a lid on the Cuban missile threat. But why?

CIA surmised that JFK wanted complete control over the missile situation so he could use it later as political leverage. Possibly it could be used to assure

Democrats would do well in the 1962 Congressional elections by using the crisis to prevent voters from switching horses in the middle of the stream. Previous administrations had used that ploy successfully. Since he obviously couldn't control CIA, he would transfer responsibility for intelligence to the new DIA, which he could control.

This information was shared by Tracy Barnes in a meeting with Robert Morrow. Barnes then asked Morrow to meet with Gen Cabell. Morrow asked the general if CIA was willing to defy the President's wishes. In this instance, yes, was the reply. But Morrow needed to understand why. Gen Cabell handed him a large folder to look through. The first document he saw was a memo written from Vice President Lyndon Johnson to Gen Cabell. In it, LBJ told of secret directives that had been issued to Defense Secretary McNamara by JFK. It authorized the transfer of CIA intelligence functions to the new DIA, which was to be activated when Dulles and Bissell were fired. The current CIA charter would be withdrawn. The memo also said that JFK had instructed the Chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee to investigate and find proof of CIA mishandling of funds. That would allow for severe restrictions on CIA's use of unused funds. The memo was not dated, and it ended abruptly with the initials "LBJ".

The next document in the folder was this:

Memorandum to the Attorney General:

If possible, try to apprehend all Cuban and American personnel currently engaged in manufacturing bogus Cuban currency. As you know, in its efforts to overthrow the Castro regime, the CIA has disregarded our direct orders and placed us in a politically embarrassing position. The names of all parties involved in the conspiracy should be in the Agency's file.

Also, you might consider leaking to the Cuban authorities that a massive counterfeiting scheme may be launched against them that could jeopardize the Cuban economy.

Jack

The folder also contained documentation of dirty campaign tricks authorized by JFK, and many reports of JFK's extramarital affairs. After glancing through them, Morrow asked what was next.

The first agenda item was to escort Kohly to a meeting with RFK. Kohly would confront the Attorney General with compelling evidence of the missile sites in Cuba and threaten to expose the story in an interview on national television. That was expected to force JFK's hand and leave him no choice but to come clean with voters.

The second agenda item was for Morrow to undertake a massive peso counterfeiting operation that could destabilize Cuba's economy. Hopefully, that could be achieved before DIA could completely replace CIA. There had been a previous counterfeiting operation, but it had to be shut down because of JFK's

threatening memo to Bobby. It had also encountered technical difficulties, which Morrow would be able to avoid. This new program would be run out of Morrow's Baltimore lab. Morrow had reservations about getting further involved with CIA, but he decided to cooperate because he was enjoying the action and the perks. The plan was to make Kohly think the counterfeiting operation had been his idea.

Still, though, Morrow had some serious concerns. That he would be directly disobeying the express orders of the President of the United States did not sit well. What if the Kennedys found out? Bissell responded sarcastically: **Who's going to tell them?** There was no time for further discussion. Morrow had to rush to get Kohly to his meeting with RFK.

The meeting did not last long. It did not go well. RFK had accused Kohly of making up the whole story, implying that he had faked the photos. Bobby was so furious, he almost hit the Cuban. Kohly told Morrow to get him to the TV studio as quickly as possible. Once there, however, before Kohly went inside, they were met in the parking lot by Barnes, who informed them that RFK had ordered Kohly's arrest even before the meeting had started. Barnes said he would try to hold off the Justice Department dogs long enough for Kohly to complete the TV interview. Kohly then had to get out of town immediately. Arrangements were being made for Morrow to fly Kohly to Florida.

The CIA-provided Buick Morrow was driving was a souped-up hot rod that

didn't look like one. Its speed came in handy when Morrow had to escape his DOJ followers. He lost them in traffic, drove to Montgomery County Airport in Gaithersburg, and pre-flighted a waiting souped-up Comanche. As Morrow and Kohly lifted into the darkening sky, Kohly once again asked how long Morrow had been working with CIA. Even though Kohly knew Morrow was wealthy, he couldn't afford that car and this plane on his own. Morrow finally had to confess, sort of. He said he had signed on just today, because it was the only way he could adequately take care of Kohly's needs and interests. Kohly seemed to buy it, but requested that they continue the charade in the presence of his compadres, because they did not trust anyone connected with the US government, especially after the Bay of Pigs. Morrow completely understood, and announced that their ETA at Opa Locka was 2300 hours. Kohly quipped that he hoped he wouldn't be arrested at Opa Locka like the CRC leaders had been. Over my dead body, Morrow assured him.

By the end of 1961, Morrow's counterfeit program had been put on hold. CIA's top-level management had changed dramatically. During 1962, the Soviet buildup in Cuba continued, and JFK's response (or lack of) seemed to CIA to be incompetent. On February 3, 1962, Kennedy ordered an embargo on US trade with Cuba. On March 21, at a news conference, JFK said there had been no evidence of Soviet-sponsored military build-up around Guantanamo Navy base. But on August 22, JFK confirmed that the Soviets had been shipping substantial quantities of

modern war equipment, supplies, and technicians to Cuba during July and August.

A few days later, the State Department leaked alarming details to the press based on intelligence sources. On August 28, JFK presented a watered-down version at a press conference, denying any evidence of the presence of Nike missiles or Russian troops in Cuba. Details continued to come out, however, requiring Kennedy to continue his denials and obfuscation. He stated on September 5 that if the US ever found it necessary to take military action against communist aggression in Cuba, none of Castro's weapons would change the outcome. One reporter speculated that JFK would take military action if Cuba provided a pretext, and that the President would welcome an opportunity to do so prior to the November 6 Congressional elections.

Kohly agreed with that assessment. Cuba had emerged as the most important issue in the Congressional races, and they were not going well at all for Democrats. Richard Nixon, running for governor of California, suggested a quarantine of Cuba, including a naval blockade. Meanwhile, Morrow was gathering communications gear for Kohly's underground, which had not been completely wiped out by Castro. Kohly was getting information from them that Russia was preparing to build secondary missile sites in addition to the "hard" sites already in place. That intelligence was shared with CIA, who presented it to the White House, where it was dismissed, just as previous information had been ignored.

On October 9, Morrow met with Tracy Barnes for the first time in about a year. Barnes showed him a stack of very recent 11 X 14 photos of various missile sites in Cuba, which painted a picture of a massive build-up over the past year and pointed to a major strike force in the making. They also suggested that the Soviets were so confident that they could knock out the US quickly or intimidate us into submission that they didn't even bother to camouflage the latest installations. It appeared that JFK had waited too late to take any effective counter measures, and he was still disinclined to act.

Barnes could think of one possible solution: have Kohly send in an underground team to take out the computer center that the whole system relies on. Morrow asked what JFK thought of that idea, and Barnes said the President had refused to comment. Kennedy, Barnes said, has his small private group working on the problem, which he calls the Executive Committee (or the Ex Com, as Bobby calls it). They won't do anything, and the Russians have no reason to back down.

Barnes told Morrow that the Castro assassination project is now known as ZR/RIFLE. It is licensed to kill heads of state. Several of its operatives are tasked with recruiting and supervising a pool of assassins from foreign countries. One of those assassins is Thomas Davis, who has been working with Jack Ruby for several years. Ruby has been involved in gun-running operations, getting into Cuba through Mexico City. The Agency has known for some time that Ruby is playing both sides, and may

actually be smuggling drugs as part of his operation. The Agency isn't too concerned about that, as long as it never becomes public knowledge. Davis also helps train anti-Castro Cuban exiles for assassination roles. He is currently working with Clay Shaw and his group in New Orleans, as well as with Carlos Marcello, who is hell-bent on getting rid of both John and Robert Kennedy. If CIA suspicions are correct, the Agency itself is sanctioning a New Orleans-based assassination team involving Davis, Shaw, Marcello, and their associates. It appears that Ruby is openly running a narcotics business with CIA protection, and that David Ferrie, who is supposedly under CIA control, is also working with Shaw and Marcello. Ruby knows that the Agency can't stop him without blowing the lid on ZR/RIFLE. Shaw may not be aware of Ruby's drug activities. We have to make sure Kohly is not involved with any of this. (That would be Morrow's responsibility.)

Who else may be involved, Morrow asked. **Possibly Guy Banister**, was Barnes' response. **He is Shaw's right arm and Ferrie's CIA handler (or one of them). Banister is a former FBI special agent in charge of the Chicago field office. He was Maheu's boss. As you may recall, Maheu is the guy who helped set up Castro assassination attempts with the mafia. The thing is, a lot of the people we used to trust may be getting out of hand because of their affiliations with Banister and Shaw. Shaw may be a loose cannon. We don't know who we can trust any longer. A direct contact had been planted inside**

Banister's group, but he may have drifted too far right. Morrow asked who it is, but Barnes declined to name him. Morrow then asked who was controlling Jack Ruby. **It had long thought to be Guy Banister, but now it could be Clay Shaw or Carlos Marcello. There is no need for you (Morrow) to get directly involved in any of this at this point, except to make sure Kohly isn't involved**, Barnes told him. **I wanted you to be aware in case we need your help later.**

Morrow assured Barnes that he understood. He noted that Banister must have a large crew. **Several dozen, actually**, Barnes replied, **but only a few are in his inner circle. He has been relying more and more on David Ferrie as his personal aide and pilot. Anyway, when JFK is finally forced to admit to all those missiles in Cuba, all hell is going to break loose. We are sitting on a powder keg.** Morrow asked him what he honestly thought would happen when the Cuban missile situation blows up. **I think somebody might try to assassinate the President**, was his frank response. **But you won't let that happen, will you, Tracy? Hell no**, he replied, **but CIA can't stop what CIA doesn't know about.** Morrow understood that he was referring to New Orleans. Barnes proceeded to give Morrow a detailed rundown on the known operatives in the New Orleans area. One of the many names mentioned was that of Lee Harvey Oswald.

Morrow was overwhelmed with all the details he had to remember, and with the gravity of the situation. He called

Kohly and learned that he already had a team ready to go the following day to try to destroy or at least disable the control center in Cuba. As alienated as he was toward the US, he felt it was his duty for the sake of his Cuban countrymen to take action to try to avoid a nuclear conflict with Cuba and Russia.

A few days later Morrow learned from Barnes that Kohly's mission had failed. They had caused extensive damage to the control center, but not enough to render it inoperable. The only survivor of the 12 man team was tortured to death in Havana a few hours later.

Barnes also reported that proof of the missile sites in Cuba had been presented to Sen Keating, who confronted the White House with the information. He received no reply. **Why are the Kennedys still refusing to accept reality**, Morrow wondered aloud. Barnes said **it has to be a political power play. Polls show Democrats losing badly in the elections. Also, polls show that two-thirds of Americans favor military intervention in Asia if the communist threat continues. JFK is on the wrong side of that, which means he's in big political trouble. He seems to be counting on pulling a rabbit out of the hat to turn things around.** Morrow asked if Barnes really believed JFK had let things get this far, bringing the US to the brink of nuclear war, just to keep a Democrat majority in Congress. **Apparently.**

Barnes said **CIA was dedicated to stopping this insanity, whatever it takes. The Agency had just leaked**

the information to a Washington reporter. Robert Kennedy threatened to throw the reporter in prison if he printed the story. Meanwhile, Kohly might be persuaded to make another attempt. So, get ready to build him some specialized communications gear, Barnes instructed Morrow.

Finally, with U2 proof in Robert Kennedy's hands, JFK could no longer deny what most of the world had known for some time. Kennedy publicly admitted that the Soviets had installed hard and portable missile sites throughout Cuba, and their nuclear warheads were trained on the US. That was two weeks prior to election day. He announced a naval blockade of Cuba, just as Nixon had suggested months earlier.

At the last minute, JFK announced that he had reached an agreement with Khrushchev. The missiles and technical advisors would be withdrawn from Cuban soil. A surge of confidence in the President translated to a decisive win for Congressional Democrats, and it may have helped lead to Nixon's defeat in his bid for governor of California.

Democrat euphoria was brief, however. The Kennedys had badly damaged themselves in the eyes of those who were aware of what had been going on behind the scenes. On December 30, Kohly presented to Robert Kennedy ironclad proof that Khrushchev's promises had been hollow rhetoric only. RFK flew into one of his predictable rages and threw Kohly out of his office.

CIA was fully aware that JFK had agreed to remove some of the US

missiles from Turkey, and had further agreed to prevent any further attempts at Cuban invasion. That ruled out any such action sanctioned by the US undertaken by US allies or American-supported groups, even though JFK knew full well that Soviet missiles remained on Cuban soil. The CIA response was to plan another Cuban invasion, this time from Costa Rica.

Barnes gave Morrow the green-light to resume his counterfeiting operation, as requested by Kohly, who would use the bogus bills to bribe Castro's military and buy their support for the exile landing. At first, Morrow took this to mean that JFK had given CIA the nod, but he soon realized that was not the case. In fact, the Kennedys were determined to strictly enforce their "hands-off Cuba" policy. But CIA wasn't the only group defying the strict orders of the administration. Cuban exiles decided to show to the media their proof that Russian missiles were still in Cuba. That, they hoped, would force JFK's hand. But the media wasn't interested in their story.

The administration launched an aggressive campaign of media censorship. Even though the security of the nation was at great risk, the Kennedys' top priority seemed to be preserving and stabilizing their political interests. Actually, this was merely an extension of the administration's censorship campaign that had begun in the autumn just prior to the missile crisis. The facts gradually emerged in the media.

There was no December invasion. The Cuban refugees and the mafia soon abandoned plans to liberate Cuba. They decided to direct their wrath, instead, toward JFK. They, along with key CIA agents, developed a plan to assassinate the US President. Plan A was to murder JFK in Chicago. When that failed, they focused their efforts on Miami. When that failed, they were left with only one more contingency plan: Dallas.

Although JFK's murder was a national disaster and disgrace, an honest assessment of events shows that it was largely of JFK's own doing. His handling of the invasion was totally incompetent. Either approving the invasion plan and following through with his commitments, or flatly refusing to sanction the operation would have been entirely defensible executive decisions. But saying no, then saying yes, only after it was too late, then denying promised support, that was the worst possible course of action JFK could have taken. It was totally incompetent and irresponsible. No wonder Cuban refugees hated him. No wonder CIA resented and distrusted him. Did that justify their own action? I don't think so. But JFK is not without blame.

Placing his own political agenda above the safety and security of the US was tantamount to treason. It was unforgivable. He lied to and misled the American voters for months. His tragic, violent death should not prevent us from seeing his own culpability in this dark episode in American history.

Where does that leave CIA? If they had the moral conviction and courage to admit their leading role in the JFK assassination, they would probably attempt to justify it by claiming they saved us from a chief executive who was surely leading the nation down a path toward self-destruction. However, CIA is in no position to claim the moral high ground. They were motivated in no small part by self-preservation, not the good of the country. They must also be embarrassed and humiliated by the fact that their best men and their best efforts for years failed to take out Fidel Castro. The communist dictator outsmarted and outmaneuvered CIA at every turn. And I don't think there is any clear-minded voter in the nation who believes our nation is well-served by an organization that can secretly murder without consequences to itself. An organization that usurps the President's authority to set foreign policy. Men who never have to stand for election, and who never have to be accountable to the voters, and who feel it is their right or duty to keep secrets from the elected federal officials whose job it is to monitor and control The Agency.

During the JFK administration, our chief executive failed us. Our intelligence community failed us. Our entire federal government failed us in the years that followed, by refusing to tell us the truth of the assassination conspiracy, and by killing dozens of people who threatened to reveal what they knew to be true. In many ways, our federal government continues to fail us. And there is no logical reason to believe that CIA will not once again feel obligated to kill an active President who refuses to march to The

Agency's tune. They got away with it once, and they can most certainly do it again. Who's going to stop them?