

**Robert A. Hurwitch Oral History Interview – JFK#1, 04/24/1964**  
Administrative Information

**Creator:** Robert A. Hurwitch  
**Interviewer:** John Plank  
**Date of Interview:** April 24, 1964  
**Place of Interview:** Washington, D.C.  
**Length:** 155 pages

**Biographical Note**

Robert A. Hurwitch was the Special Assistant for Cuban Affairs, Department of State (1962 - 1963). This interview focuses on relations with Cuba under the Kennedy Administration, the Bay of Pigs, the Cuban exile community, and the Cold War, among other things.

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**Suggested Citation**

Robert A. Hurwitch, recorded interview by John Plank, April 24, 1964, (page number),  
John F. Kennedy Library Oral History Program.

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Robert A. Hurwitch – JFK #1  
Table of Contents

<u>Page</u>	<u>Topic</u>
1	Robert Hurwitch's background and association with the Kennedy Administration
2	John F. Kennedy [JFK] transitions to the White House: a briefing on Cuba
6	Plans for the Bay of Pigs invasion
12	Preoccupying problems at the Embassy in Cuba: politics under Fidel Castro and staff reduction
19	Fidel Castro comes to power in Cuba
22	United States tries to keep an open door with Cuba
27	United States breaks relations with Cuba
28	Communication amongst United States officials: the Embassy, the inhouse department, top levels of the Kennedy Administration, the Central Intelligence Agency, and the State Department, and others about Cuba
39	Task force for Cuba situation created in 1962
43	United States involvement with Cuban exiles following the Bay of Pigs
50	United States seeks to stay out of Cuban affairs: opinions and briefings
58	Robert Hurwitch's relationship with JFK and the White House
71	Cuban exiles: JFK's interaction with them, the program as a whole, and the Cuban Revolutionary Council
79	Miro Cardona's role in the Cuban Revolutionary Council and resignation
102	End of the Cuban Revolutionary Council and history of the Brigade
107	Bay of Pigs prisoner exchange
108	Cuban exile community and the State Department's plan for future Cuba
117	Cuba's subversion in its hemispheric dimension
134	Cuba, the United States, and the Cold War
153	Economic denial program and other topics for future discussion

Name Index

ROBERT A. HURWITCH

Ball, George 139  
 Batista, Fulgencio 17  
 Berle, Adolph A. 10, 11, 172, 173  
 Bonsal, Philip W. 14  
 Bowdler, William G. 121  
 Braddock, Daniel M. 14, 29, 31, 32  
 Bundy, McGeorge 60, 62, 66, 68, 139, 140, 172, 205  
 Cardona, Miro 44, 46, 71, 72, 73, 80, 83, 85, 88, 89, 91, 92,  
 93, 94, 96, 97, 98, 99, 101, 103, 110  
 Carter, Marshall P. 206  
 Castro, Fidel 13, 14, 15, 16, 21, 22, 24, 25, 26, 30, 31, 33, 48,  
 49, 74, 77, 81, 83, 87, 110, 111, 113, 115, 116, 118, 124, 125,  
 142, 153, 157, 158, 161, 164, 165, 167, 173, 174, 176, 179, 180,  
 182, 183, 184, 185, 187, 188, 193, 194, 201, 204, 205, 207, 208,  
 210, 211, 212, 213, 214, 215, 217  
 Chase, Gordon 60  
 Clay, Lucius D. 217  
 Cushing, Richard Cardinal 218  
 Donovan, James B. 210, 211, 212, 213, 214, 216, 217  
 Dungan, Ralph 60, 66  
 Eisenhower, Dwight D. 3, 5, 6, 7, 25  
 Goodwin, Richard N. 72, 172, 203, 205, 215  
 Goulart, Joao 208  
 Guevara, Ernesto Che 162, 163  
 Hilsman, Roger, Jr. 138, 139  
 Johnson, U. Alexis 62, 139  
 Kennedy, Robert F. 88, 89, 91, 107, 141, 198, 199, 203, 205, 206,  
 212, 217, 218, 220  
 Khrushchev, Nikita S. 213  
 Lansdale, Edward G. 206  
 Maceo, Antonio 102  
 McCone, John A. 141  
 Mann, Thomas C. 9, 10, 11, 197  
 Martin, Edwin M. 2, 61, 66, 138, 139, 141, 145, 146, 203, 205  
 Mikovsky, Milan 205  
 Mikoyan, Anastas I. 160  
 Nixon, Richard M. 6, 25  
 Oberdorfer, Louis F. 107, 206, 220  
 Ray, Manuel 111, 112  
 Reuther, Victor G. 202  
 Rusk, Dean 203, 210  
 Salinger, Pierre <sup>Emile</sup> 63 <sup>1972</sup>  
 Schlesinger, Arthur M., Jr. 60, 72  
 Stevenson, Robert A. 8, 11  
 Vallon, Edwin E. 8, 11, 202  
 Vance, Cyrus R. 66  
 Woodward, Robert F. 172

Oral History Interview

with

ROBERT A. HURWITCH

April 24, 1964  
Washington, D.C.  
By John Plank

For the John F. Kennedy Library

**MR. PLANK:** This interview is taking place in the State Department, April 24, 1964. Mr. Robert Hurwitch of the Department is being interviewed. The interviewer is John Plank. This is Side #1 of Tape #1. Mr. Hurwitch, will you tell us something about your own background and your association with the Kennedy Administration.

**MR. HURWITCH:** John, I am a career Foreign Service officer who went to the Foreign Service in November of 1950 and have

served in Peru, Germany, and Bogota as Labor Attache before being assigned in October of 1960 as the Cuban Desk Officer or the Officer in Charge of Cuban Affairs, a position which I held. . .

MR. PLANK: For how long, Bob?

MR. HURWITCH: Well, until I was made Deputy Office Director of Caribbean and Mexican Affairs in February, 1962 and then Special Assistant for Cuban Affairs when [Edwin M.] Ed Martin became Assistant Secretary of State. This latter position I held until August, 1963 when I left to attend the Senior Seminar in Foreign Policy at the Foreign Service Institute.

MR. PLANK: So your association with the Cuba case overlaps almost precisely President Kennedy's Administration.

MR. HURWITCH: Yes. As a matter of fact, when President Kennedy was elected in November, 1960 some several weeks thereafter he asked for a briefing paper through one of his people who was in liaison with the State Department at that particular time and I had prepared such a paper for him. He had asked for a paper which was two pages long. This paper was for a meeting with President Eisenhower when they were going to discuss Cuba as one of the agenda items of their meeting prior to the takeover at the Inauguration. At that time President Eisenhower also asked for a briefing paper and, as was his wont, he wanted a paper of only one page. So I wrote one of one page for President Eisenhower and one of two pages for



President Kennedy for this meeting that was to take place before President Kennedy took over his responsibilities.

MR. PLANK: To your knowledge, Bob, was this fairly standard practice? That is, did President Kennedy have access during the transitional period to any officer in government -- could he ask for his own briefing paper in this way? Or. . .

MR. HURWITCH: Well, I think, generally speaking, he went through channels established for such a purpose to insure as smooth a transition and takeover by the new administration.

MR. PLANK: Do you remember who his liaison was over here?

MR. HURWITCH: Not specifically, I don't. I think he might have had several people for

different problems. We just received the request at our level through State Department channels. The request, I guess, was made at a fairly high level at that time.

**MR. PLANK:** What sort of questions was President Kennedy asking you to answer, do you remember?

**MR. HURWITCH:** As I recall, I think he wanted a general briefing on the situation in Cuba, a brief review of the policy decisions we had made, the steps we had taken at that time to isolate Cuba. You recall in June of 1960 the Eisenhower Administration had set the Cuban sugar quota at zero. A few months later in October of 1960 the Administration had taken steps to prevent the export of anything from

the United States to Cuba with the exception of foodstuffs and medicine. President-elect Kennedy wanted to have a quick rundown on what we found the Cuban situation to be so that he could discuss with President Eisenhower the problem of Cuba at that time.

MR. PLANK:

Bob, do you remember during this time -- this was, of course, before November. Before the election President Kennedy and Vice President Nixon -- the two candidates -- were in debates. At this time when you were briefing the President were you aware of the plans that Vice President Nixon indicated later that he was not at liberty to discuss, which later eventuated in the Bay of Pigs, as you know?

MR. HURWITCH: Right. John, let me be clear on one point. I did not personally brief President Kennedy, but I did prepare the briefing papers which he used in his discussions, as I say, with President Eisenhower. But, no, I was not aware of the plans that actually were pretty well underway by the time I came to Washington from Bogota which was in October of 1960 which, as you say, became indelibly impressed in history as the Bay of Pigs fiasco. I was not aware of what was afoot although I held the title, Officer in Charge of Cuban Affairs in the State Department. To my knowledge -- I feel I'm on pretty sure ground on this -- neither the Deputy Office Director of Caribbean

and Mexican Affairs who was my immediate superior and who had formerly been the Officer of Cuban Affairs. . .

MR. PLANK: Who was this?

MR. HURWITCH: Robert A. Stevenson, who is presently our Political Consul~~ar~~ in our Embassy at Santiago, Chile -- nor his immediate superior, who was [Edwin E.] Ed Vallon who is the Office Director of Caribbean and Mexican Affairs were at all ~~un~~aware or were certainly, I know, not officially informed by their superiors that there was any plan afoot or the nature of any such enterprise such as the Bay of Pigs invasion.

MR. PLANK: The paper you were asked to prepare, then, had to do exclusively with the domestic situation inside Cuba?

MR. HURWITCH: Inside Cuba, that's right, plus a

review, a brief review, of the major steps that we had taken so far to deal with the Cuban problem. Although those were generally known and had been public, it was useful for a discussion to immediately see in capsule form a summary of what had been done.

**MR. PLANK:** Who do you suppose in the Department, Bob, if anyone, was fully aware of the planning that was going forward for the Bay of Pigs?

**MR. HURWITCH:** I believe the lowest ranking officer at that time who was fully aware of them was then Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs, Mr. Thomas [C.] Mann, who, as you know, has recently come back to that position after having been our

Ambassador to Mexico City, and I believe above him was Mr. Adolph [A.] Berle. I believe he was actively involved in the planning and discussion and decision-making and I believe, beyond him, higher officers in the Department. But as I say, I believe the lowest ranking officer who was fully informed was Assistant Secretary Mann.

**MR. PLANK:** During this period which overlaps the change of administration, you were in regular touch with -- you were certainly in touch with Mr. Mann when he was Assistant Secretary.

**MR. HURWITCH:** Yes.

**MR. PLANK:** He was coming to you regularly for information, but you were not really clear what was the full dimension of

what was afoot, I take it. What were your relationships with Mr. Berle?

**MR. HURWITCH:** I had no relationship with Mr. Berle at all. Actually, while we had some relationship with Mr. Mann and he was an accessible person, there were two officers between me and Mr. Mann and they had somewhat more access. But they, both Mr. Vallon and Mr. Stevenson, were equally unaware -- at least officially and I think to a large extent generally -- of the specific nature of what was being planned. And I think that since the great flow of information regarding Cuba from our Embassy in Havana at the time, from intelligence sources both here and from exiles and elsewhere regarding developments in Cuba came to us in the



normal course of the day, since we were not aware and I specifically was not aware of what was being planned, it was of course impossible for me to be -- to look for pieces of information which might have had a direct bearing on the feasibility, lack of feasibility, of an invasion of Cuba at that time. Therefore, there was, in my judgment, a divorce between the people who daily, or minute by minute, had access to information, to what was going on, and to people who were making plans and policy decisions. This divorce is one which has cost us, as history has shown.

MR. PLANK:

You were charged with operating responsibilities on the desk. What sorts of problems were preoccupying

you during this period, you people at the operating level beneath the Assistant Secretary level?

**MR. HURWITCH:** Well, as you recall, in January of 1961 just a very few months after I took over this responsibility, Fidel Castro in a rather impetuous speech suggested that we cut our Embassy down to about, as I recall, eleven people, including local employees as well, and this was obviously impossible; or if we didn't like that, as far as he was concerned, we could just take them all and go home. And since it was impossible to run an embassy the size of ours, quite apart from the question of our own national dignity, we were certainly not going to accept an ultimatum to reduce within a 48-hour

period, our embassy staff to eleven, we took the second suggestion which was to remove our people altogether, which we did within 48 hours. And as far as we were concerned, we felt really that Castro didn't want diplomatic relations. While we technically broke diplomatic relations, we feel that he really didn't want them at all.

**MR. PLANK:** Was Ambassador [Philip W.] Bonsal down there during this period?

**MR. HURWITCH:** He had been down there until I forget precisely when, but I believe the latter part of 1960 when he came back and did not return. He was called back for consultation and did not return. Mr. Dan Braddock was Charge d'Affaires and he remained Charge

d'Affaires up to and including the time we broke diplomatic relations in 1961.

MR. PLANK:

Was there any inkling coming out of Embassy Havana that a breach was imminent, that Castro was going to lay this kind of demand on us before the fact?

MR. HURWITCH:

No. I recall none whatsoever. As a matter of fact, we were quite surprised and the speech seemed to be an impetuous speech, rather rambling, typical of the kinds of speeches that Castro made. It was questionable really whether he had that specifically in mind at the time he started the speech, but somewhere along in the middle, it apparently occurred to him and as he improvised, he suggested that, as I say, that we cut our embassy down or

remove our people entirely. We had no inkling, and I have a doubt in my mind whether he himself really had thought about that specifically, although undoubtedly it must have been on his mind before he made the speech.

**MR. PLANK:** Would it be your judgment, Bob, on the basis of your review of the Cuban history and your knowledge of Fidel's personality and the personality of those around him that he knew from the day he came into Havana where he wanted to carry this country, that ultimately a breach was inevitable?

**MR. HURWITCH:** Well, John, it was one of the difficult questions that historians will be debating and discussing for many years to come. My personal judgment is that he did not really have a clear-cut and

specific idea of where he wanted to go although I think he did have a general idea in the sense like that of so many Latin American university students that you know, John, and that I have seen in other countries -- sort of a general Marxist orientation, a very keen political sense which led him very quickly to the conviction that one of the ways to gain political popularity was to be anti-American, particularly with the ready-made issue of Batista and United States relationships with Batista.

Those two elements, for example, among others, I think, led him undoubtedly to the general direction of a pro-Soviet, anti-American stance without having, I believe, a specific

idea that this necessarily was going to have to coalesce into his having to ultimately choose between the two. Perhaps he felt he could have the best of both worlds -- be pro-Soviet and have all his sympathies in that direction anti-American, but believing that perhaps since Cuba had been traditionally such a good market for the United States and looking at his relationship with us through Marxian eyes that, business being business, that American business people would continue in one fashion or another as long as money was to be made in trading with Cuba that he might be able to romp along and have the protection of the Soviet Union -- oriented ideologically in that direction -- but still

maintain some relations with the United States. I would be inclined to think from his foreign policy point of view that this is what he had hoped to be able to achieve.

Internally, I don't think -- and I think subsequent events right after his taking over power in January, 1959 indicated that he was not really -- he was not giving too much thought to governing the country. His major efforts before he actually overthrew Batista were just that: to overthrow Batista. He'd been very daring and very romantic. He had been in jail, he lived in the hills, he aroused the populace, not only the peasants to some extent, but I think one must bear in mind that this was a middle-



class revolution in Cuba. It was not a communist proletarian revolution. This was where his great genius, if you like, his leadership ability, his concentration of efforts were. There is little indication other than the platform and program, vague as it was in many instances with some specificity, in his Moncada barracks speech of the kind of social program that he had in mind; and I think that most people who were trying to assess him at that time -- and I speak primarily of the Cubans who overwhelmingly supported him -- supported him to the extent that they were interested in his political and social philosophy on the basis of his Moncada barracks speech.

When he came to power he came to power as a result of a pretty rag-tag military organization with some people who had had some administrative experience -- but by and large, very few people who had. He had no organization as such and it was this vacuum, this absence of an organization with the cadre of people, and, really, absence of a well worked out political and social philosophy which gave the communists -- who, as you recall in earlier days before he had taken over, had not been very enthusiastic about the Castro phenomenon. It was only the latter part of '58, as I recall, that they did become closer and -- but after the takeover they did have a cadre, they did have experienced

people, they had administrators, and they did have not only their general ideology, but they did give some thought to how you implement a general ideology in a country which Castro had not had, and he turned to them. I don't think he at the time he took over, particularly thought in these terms but it developed that way.

**MR. PLANK:** The judgment was firm in the Department when you came into Cuban matters, Bob, that this was flat out, a regime headed toward communism or already taken over by it, was it?

**MR. HURWITCH:** By the time I came in October, 1960 certainly the opinion was that it was headed out that way, that this was a hostile regime, that whatever hopes we had had -- and you recall

for about eighteen months we had a policy of patience and forbearance -- hopeful, and I think rightfully so, that we didn't want to close the doors to any possibility of keeping him within the United States' sphere of influence or, if you like, more properly the influence of the Western World -- free world. For eighteen months we had a policy of patience and forbearance with the thought that we did not want to do anything drastic that would definitively close the door. By November of 1960 the belief was widespread, and I think it was firm United States policy, that he was in that sense beyond redemption, that he did represent the hostile element.

**MR. Plank:** Did you get any feel for Cuban feelings or more specifically Fidel's feeling toward the President-elect over time? What I am really getting at is this question. Was an option open to President Kennedy during the campaign and even more after his election with respect to Cuba or was the die cast so finally and definitively that he was more or less obliged to follow through with the policy line already put in train by the Eisenhower Administration?

**MR. HURWITCH:** Not having been privy to the whole question of the Bay of Pigs, John, it is awfully hard for me to know.

**MR. PLANK:** I was going beyond that stage to the whole posture of the United States toward Cuba. Whether Fidel might

have shifted a bit, might have been more accommodating if he had detected in President Kennedy a more hospitable or more receptive attitude. My memory of the thing is that President Kennedy from the outset during the campaign was as hard in his Cuba line as candidate Nixon was and as the Eisenhower Administration had been.

**MR. HURWITCH:** Yes, I think that is correct. You may recall that the Castro Radio Havana was very virulent in its vilification of President Eisenhower, and the description of the President of our country was in virtually vulgar terms, and that there wasn't much change after President Kennedy came into power. I think there was, as I recall, a very short period

where Radio Havana waited to see what would happen, but, as you recall, President Kennedy was inaugurated in January, 1961. The Bay of Pigs occurred in April of 1961. During that entire interim the Castro regime, particularly his radio broadcast, was warning and complaining that invasion of that country was imminent, and I don't think there was anything in the attitude of the Castro regime which indicated that they on their side hoped for anything different under President Kennedy than under the previous administration.

**MR. PLANK:**

The reporting you got from the Embassy didn't indicate that there was any give on the Cuba side, or did it? I don't mean to ask a leading question.

MR. HURWITCH: Right. Actually we broke relations.

MR. PLANK: In January, 1961?

MR. HURWITCH: Yes.

MR. PLANK: I meant between the time you came aboard in November when the Embassy was still open, did you see. . .

MR. HURWITCH: Oh, no, no, no. There was a buildup, really, in crescendo form to that speech which suggested. . .the January 1st speech was the anniversary of his coming to power, and we broke relations on the 3rd, and we were given 48 hours to remove all our people. That speech, the anniversary speech of his coming to power in 1961, was really sort of the culmination or the crescendo of a series of very harsh speeches against the United States.



MR. PLANK:

Do you think -- you say that you were not properly filled in on the preparation of the Bay of Pigs and you say that you don't believe the Embassy was, as long as the Embassy was down there. What's your feeling about communication among the three points: the Embassy, the inhouse Department, and the top levels of the Administration? Do you think that what the Embassy was reporting was properly assessed up here, that communication lines were open?

MR. HURWITCH:

Well, I think generally speaking, yes, at that time we had quite good communications. Not only a normal cable, but we had a direct teletype line between our embassy in Havana and the Department, telephone

MR. HURWITCH: Yes, we were getting reports of this nature because any good political officer -- and we had a number of good ones -- in the Embassy would be reporting on a periodic basis the temper of the people, the question of disaffection, the question of support, which elements of this society were greatest in the support of Castro, which the least, et cetera. This would be part of the normal support of a political officer's reporting. The significance of this, I must confess, the full significance was lost upon me because of the question of, let us say, whether I remember the report talked about the status of political atmosphere in province by province in Cuba. Well,

certainly, if you were planning invasion, the province which you might pick from a political standpoint of an invasion could very materially be affected by such a report. Well, I read this report and kept clearly in mind which provinces were most disaffected and which least, et cetera, but made no connection between a possible operation. . . I mention this by way of illustration.

**MR. PLANK:**

Anything is important. Does your memory tell you anything about what actually was being reported? That is, I recall that it is standard, conventional wisdom, is it not, that 95 per cent of the populace was for Fidel in 1959. Can you recall what Braddock was saying in effect -- not

Braddock necessarily -- the people,  
about the spirit in Cuba?

**MR. HURWITCH:** As I recall, John, and I would really have to check back, but my recollection is that the reporting generally stated that there was a fair amount of disaffection but that this was cautious reporting, very carefully avoiding getting into the numbers game, of what portion of the population was disaffecting, or wherewith. I say wherewith in regard to numbers as well. But an attempt was made to, I think, carefully. Elements of the armed services, as you recall, were being replaced by the militia. Information was based on personal contacts and where the newspapers indicated any disaffection, although

the newspapers probably, as I recall, didn't. Let me put it this way, John. The general impression the Embassy gave us was that there were areas of disaffection, that Castro had lost a considerable amount of support from the time that he had, as you say, the 95 per cent support. But the Embassy, as I recall, never indicated that, even to the extent that they were aware of an organized underground, indicated that Castro's hold on the country was really shaky or in jeopardy.

**MR. PLANK:** Did the Central Intelligence Agency send up reports that came across your desk too, or was that . . .

**MR. HURWITCH:** From time to time we saw reports that were put out by Central Intelligence Agency.

**MR. PLANK:** This question: has there been a step-up in the amount of CIA traffic that crosses your desk -- today as against that period? Did you notice any?

**MR. HURWITCH:** Yes, yes, a considerable amount. As a matter of fact, there is a specific classified daily report that the CIA puts out, pulled from all available intelligence sources on developments in regard to Cuba -- which is indicative of the seriousness with which we had regarded Cuba in the past couple of years up until now. So that not only the desk officers, but also the higher policy officers have quick access in a capsule form to 24-hour a day developments.

**MR. PLANK:** I just wondered whether there could have been during that period any

divergence between Embassy reporting -- rather, State Department reporting and CIA reporting. Obviously the CIA did carry the day on this and indicated that the sense of frustration of the vast mass of Cubans had reached the point at which any kind of incident would spark it off.

**MR. HURWITCH:** Yes, yes." I can't really recall specifically a divergence. I would be inclined to say that the Embassy reporting was pretty cautious and pretty careful. My impression is that a great deal of the influence, whether it was on the CIA or on other agencies here in the United States that dealt with these matters, came from the Cuban exiles. And I think they persuaded a number of people

that things were about ready to blow and all that it would require was a little bit of push to get it going. But I think this is traditional on the part of exiles -- not necessarily the Cuban exiles -- who see things of necessity in a particular way. I am inclined, in retrospect particularly, to believe that Cuban exiles and refugees had a disproportionate amount of influence on the assessment the United States Government achieved in this situation.

**MR. PLANK:**

Certainly when you were in the Cuban office here and of course today, under your successor there, communication between you and the Agency is very close. You are back and forth almost constantly, you are on the phone back and forth to one



another all the time and there is very little that you know and they want to know and vice versa. The lines are open. I just wonder whether during this period about which we are talking the same thing held, whether you were in this sort of close contact with your opposite numbers then as you are now?

**MR. HURWITCH:** No, we were not. At least I certainly was not. As a matter of fact, the mechanism within the government is normally at the State Department. Its dealings with the CIA go through a particular group of people and there is very little or comparatively little direct contact. But under the task force concept, which was one of the important contributions to the

streamlining and the efficiency and effectiveness of government that the Kennedy Administration inaugurated in my judgment, brought it about that on the task force CIA, USIA, FBI, if necessary, the Department of Defense representatives under the chairmanship of the State Department officer work together in a task force so that the State Department officer as chief of the task force could literally turn to the CIA representative and quickly get the information that he needed. And the concept was set up in such a fashion that the agency concerned was impressed by the White House and the Kennedy Administration with the importance of working in this fashion and to cooperate rather than

to hinder. And I must say that the task force, as it worked out in the Cuban situation, as inaugurated by the Kennedy Administration, worked well.

MR. PLANK: When did this go into effect, Bob?

MR. HURWITCH: John, the real task force concept in the Cuban situation, as we now know it, went into effect right after the missile crisis of October, 1962. There were some efforts in that direction after the Bay of Pigs fiasco. I think it is noteworthy that there was no task force or task force concept as we now know it at the time of the Bay of Pigs.

MR. PLANK: This is, in other words, just carried around in the heads of a few people?

MR. HURWITCH: This is my impression. It was certainly a very carefully and quietly guarded secret although the State Department, CIA officers, et cetera, of high rank thought together and worked together about the Bay of Pigs. The function of task force was a kind of instrumentality where people work day to day on the problems, working over the information that comes in from day to day and working in a cooperative fashion, each representative of a government agency bringing his particular expertise there in a continuing fashion on the information and developments in a particular problem area. But it is not my impression -- and I don't see how

this would have been possible for this to have happened at the time of the Bay of Pigs because the officers who were involved had so many other things to do that they were not in a position to give this kind of problem the day-to-day care, consideration and analysis that obviously such a serious problem as Cuba required.

MR. PLANK:

I am interested in your statement which you have made before, Bob, that this was a very closely held secret. It wasn't a secret. At least Time Magazine and other public media were talking about this before the fact. The New York Times came out a few days before. Certainly, you here in the Department must have been aware, obviously you were aware of all the

talk on the outside and yet do I understand you to say that inside the Department there was nothing to confirm all sorts of rumors that were rampant outside?

**MR. HURWITCH:** That's right, John. You know, if you are a Department officer and you read the newspapers constantly and when you are in the know, you are quite aware of the great deal of speculation that goes on in the press and you know how often -- because the reporters do not normally have access to classified information -- and how far off they can be. And particularly when their sources or their information are attributed to exiles, you quite readily discount a great deal of what the press carries in stories with sources

like that. Then you combine all that with the fact that here you are working with an organization, and you know nothing about or have not heard, really, specifically or officially that such an operation was planned. Therefore when you read about it in the press you are more likely to, or reasonably can attribute this to further speculation or exile stories, et cetera, which wouldn't perhaps call it a Secret -- which is overstating. . . . It was classified Secret, or, I am sure, Top Secret and we were not informed.

**MR. PLANK:**

When did you first begin to deal seriously with the exiles, Bob, in your particular role?

**MR. HURWITCH:** It was really shortly after the Bay of Pigs fiasco. President Kennedy, I am quite confident, felt a great sense of moral obligation, not only to the families of the men who died or were captured at the Bay of Pigs, but also to the exile community as a whole. Miro Cardona, whose son had been captured, indicated that he was willing to continue and wanted to continue the fight to liberate his country and I believe President Kennedy still hoped in one fashion that Cuba would be liberated. And while perhaps not seeing any easy solution -- he could hardly even in the absence of an easy solution -- he could hardly say to Miro Cardona and the other exile leaders, "Forget about



things and if something develops, we will call you." So a relationship had to be kept for a variety of points of view and I think one of them was the President's own sensitivity to the situation and a sense of moral obligation. While I have nothing firsthand to go on, I think my own appreciation of the situation of the man at that time makes me feel that this is a reasonable judgment.

**MR. PLANK:**

You say that you began dealing with them on a fairly intensive basis soon after the Bay of Pigs. Could you give me any kind of an estimate as to the amount of your time that did go to the exiles between, let us say, June, 1961 through the time you left that job down there on the Cuba operation?

**MR. HURWITCH:** Well, of course, you'd vary, John, depending on the nature of the problems. But I would say I met with Cuban exiles virtually every day for there was a fairly steady stream of people who would come up from Miami. Miro Cardona had his own liaison man -- two or three sometimes -- stationed in Washington who called regularly and came in regularly.

**MR. PLANK:** What sorts of things were they asking you for, Bob, or what kinds of matters did you discuss with them?

**MR. HURWITCH:** Oftentimes it might be some newspaper report of a development in Cuba. What was its significance? How did we assess it? Oftentimes, perhaps even more frequently, it was a voluntary, independent assessment on their part

which tended to color the situation to indicate that once again Cuba was tottering, and all we needed was a little bit more to push to get back the. . . Sometimes they would indicate that they had some little boats and men who they felt were trained who they wanted to infiltrate into Cuba. We would listen to these things, but were careful not to take -- evince any or take any -- official stance on it one way or another. Those were of course the times when it was being done by Cuban exiles on a quiet basis, not as subsequently developed -- the kinds of incidents that the more publicity-seeking groups engaged in, which caused a certain amount of problems with our allies, for example,

when some British ships were shot up. Then of course the Russian ship was shot up and the attempt on the part of Cubans. . . .

And this, I think, should not be lost sight of, John. After the Bay of Pigs I think most thinking Cubans recognized that they could not get back to their country without the military assistance of the United States. And they were also clear that the Kennedy Administration, including the State Department, of course, was not prepared to engage in any military adventures against Castro in the absence of what was a clearcut provocation or a political situation which arose in which military invasion of Cuba by US troops with or without

Cubans, but probably with Cubans. The political costs of such an invasion would not exceed the advantages that would be gained. The Cubans of course would always argue that any advantages were always greater than the cost because from their standpoint the removal of Castro was the. . . They liked to use medical analogies -- the removal of the cancer from the hemisphere, et cetera, et cetera. The most of the Cuban exiles, in my judgment, spent a great deal of their waking hours trying to figure out ways to create incidents that would make it difficult for the United States not to become involved in some kind of military action against Cuba.

**MR. PLANK:** Bob, two questions -- well, maybe three. Presumably this line, that the United States would not become involved without a really adequate provocation, came from the White House? That is, it is understood to be the President's wish and his command -- that would be your understanding? That it was laid on as an instruction? Second, then. Did you find inside the Department a consensus with respect to this? That is, in the meetings that you attended and the conversations that you had with your colleagues, was this a generally accepted position?

**MR. HURWITCH:** Well, I think so, although I think there might almost be a mathematical ratio between the degree of

responsibility an officer had toward the Cuban situation, his responsibility with regard to the Cuban situation, and his belief that this was a very sound policy. The further away from responsibility people had in the Cuban situation, the more likely they were to suggest a more aggressive or, if you like, a more irresponsible policy. But as far as the Secretary of State, down the line of command, the Assistant Secretary for Latin America, my immediate superior, and myself -- those of us who were in the chain of command, who had some responsibility for Cuba, there was very nearly 100 per cent consensus.

**MR. PLANK:**

This is the third question. Was there also consensus in the general community?

That is, as between State, Defense,  
and Central Intelligence Agency.  
Those would be the three principal  
ones?

**MR. HURWITCH:** No, I would say there wasn't a consensus. I would say that in the Defense Department, for example, my own impression is that the Secretary of Defense and the senior officers and civilian officers around him saw very much eye to eye with the State Department on the Cuban situation. I think that whatever divergence there was, and there was divergence, was more on the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the military side, which took a more aggressive, more forceful attitude toward the Cuban situation. In the Central Intelligence Agency, I



would say, generally, that they took a more activist attitude toward it. But after the Bay of Pigs they were quite willing to have policy formulated by others, although when asked, they would give their point of view which usually would be somewhat more aggressive in a sense. And I would like to repeat that the further you get away from responsibility, the less cautious you feel yourself obliged to be. It is not to say that the Central Intelligence officers who I knew, for whom I have a great deal of regard, were irresponsible officers; it just seemed easier for them to be aggressive as long as somebody else had the responsibility of making

the final decision on it. But their major interest was in knowing if they had a role to play -- covert activities, talking about their activities, beyond the collection of intelligence. They just wanted to know what it was and what was to be expected of them rather than having a major voice in the policy formulation during this period.

**MR. PLANK:** Did you yourself get involved in relations with the Hill at all?

**MR. HURWITCH:** Pretty frequently I would go up to the Hill to brief congressmen, administrative assistants, senators. Cuba being so inextricably involved with domestic politics as well as being an international problem, a great many of the members of Congress, both on the Senate and House sides,

felt from the kind of mail they were getting that they had to really know an awful lot more about the Cuban situation than they would normally have to know about a foreign policy issue, which was usually left to the Committees on Foreign Policy in either the House or the Senate because their own constituents were asking them questions which they felt when they went back to the constituents, they had to show some understanding about, as to what was going on. So there was a great deal of demand and pressure upon the Department to send officers to brief these gentlemen so that they could in turn keep their interested constituents informed.

MR. PLANK: Could you generalize at all about your reception up there?

MR. HURWITCH: Well, it varied. There were people who just genuinely wanted to know. . .

MR. PLANK: Who were these, for example?

MR. HURWITCH: There were -- my impression was that some of the younger congressmen from the House, for example, who were new -- some were Republicans and some were Democrats who genuinely wanted to know what the Administration's attitude was, what we saw in Cuba, and what we were doing about it, etc. There were others who had their own ideas and used the opportunity of my presence or some of my colleagues' presences to argue the case, their side versus our side. We didn't really get into polemics and certainly

we didn't get into any bitterness. There were just differences in opinion by and large. These were people who -- well, they ranged for example, some of the members of the Florida delegation who were always under intense pressure or felt they were from their own constituencies in Florida -- pretty activist on the Cuban situation. They felt with Cuba being 90 miles off the coast shore of Florida somehow was a very close danger for the security of the United States, although one can't help but feel that the so-called physical proximity was used for their own political purposes rather than as an objective assessment of the threat to this country since obviously Cuba as such could not really be

conceived of as a threat, a military threat to the United States.

MR. PLANK:

Bob, let's shift away from this for a moment to your relationship with the White House, your relationship with President Kennedy. I take it that you saw him from time to time, that either something you had that was important would go to him through ordinary channels or that he would initiate some sort of communication with you or with your office. Could you just expound or expatiate on that a bit just to tell us how that worked out? What your impression of the President's style was, what was your impression of the way his mind worked? And so forth?

**MR. HURWITCH:** Yes, John. As you might imagine, the question of Cuba was of considerable concern and importance to the White House. You couldn't help having the feeling that President Kennedy took a great deal of interest in the Cuban situation, not only from the standpoint of the security of the United States, not only from the standpoint of the domestic and the political implications, but because he was interested in Cuba as the kind of problem that it presented. It was not at all infrequent that after reading the morning's cables that one of the members of the White House staff in the course of the morning would call.

**MR. PLANK:** Who would this be?

MR. HURWITCH: This could be somebody like Gordon Chase who was the staff assistant for McGeorge Bundy, it could be Ralph Dungan, it could be Bromley Smith. It depended. Sometimes Arthur Schlesinger. It would just depend on who happened to be working on a particular aspect of the Cuban problem who would call and indicate that the President was interested in further information on this particular subject, or that the President had suggested that one or another angle of this particular piece of information be explored, or that he wanted a report, depending on the nature of what we had all read that morning. You got the feeling in the morning's cables that we were all reading



together -- the President, his staff, the Secretary and his staff.

I remember, John, on one such occasion we had received information the night before that a Cuban aircraft had attempted to strafe an American flag vessel sailing in international waters outside the three-mile limit near the coast of Cuba. We received such a report that night and that morning we started drafting a note of protest to be delivered to the Cuban Government through the Swiss, who, as you know, represent us in Havana. And, having drafted the note of protest and showing it to the Assistant Secretary Martin who made some changes that he wanted and okayed it, suggested that I show it

to the Deputy Under Secretary for Political Affairs, Mr. Alexis Johnson, who read it and suggested that the Secretary read it. The Secretary looked at it and approved it and thought that McGeorge Bundy ought to look at it. Since we were protesting to the Cubans, this would have some domestic political effect as well. I went over to the White House and showed the telegram to McGeorge Bundy and he said it looked fine to him. He said, "Come with me." And the next thing I knew I was with the President of the United States, Mr. Kennedy, who greeted me, read the cable through, asked if we planned to make the cable public after we delivered it to the Cuban Government. I said

that this had been our intention.

He said, "Fine," and that it should  
be done. He called in Mr. [Pierre <sup>Emil Blazynski</sup> ~~E.G.~~]  
Salinger and suggested to Mr. Salinger  
that at his briefing that noon he inform  
the press of what we were doing and  
that he intended to take steps with  
the Pentagon to insure the safety of  
our US flagships in international  
waters. It was this kind of style  
and swiftness and personal interest  
on a cable that I had drafted perhaps  
at 9 o'clock in the morning, and some  
two hours later, I was with the  
President of the United States to  
have him read it and ask any questions  
he wanted. I think this gives you a  
little of the flavor and style and  
personal interest the President had  
in such matters.

MR. PLANK: Did you also sit in on larger meetings in which the President was present? I would like to get a feel of the way he handled himself in these meetings?

MR. HURWITCH: Only very rarely I had such an opportunity, John. The higher officers in the State Department, of course, much more frequently, but on the couple of occasions when it was my privilege to attend, really very much as an observer, and since the opportunity to be with the President of the United States is rare, you observe as closely as you can. I certainly have the impression that understandably he was very serious and very purposeful in chairing such meetings. He would ask, I thought, remarkably pertinent questions very succinctly, and he

expected precise answers. I got the impression sometimes that he got a little bit impatient with people who in answering sort of wandered all around and said something just to be saying something rather than really meeting the point. And on one occasion where the decision had to be made at the meeting, certainly there was little question that he was aware that a decision had to be made, and he made the decision, and he was decisive, and people knew exactly what the decision was and that meeting broke up and on he went.

Certainly, also, I got the impression of vitality and vigor on the part of the man, to use an over-worked word; but there was always a

bounce when he walked. He strode with a great deal of life. He conducted his meetings in a fashion. You never got the impression that this was a lackadaisical kind of thing or to pass time. He was obviously a busy man, but also a courteous man -- never so busy that he would't hear people out, but sort of indicating a little impatience when people were not <sup>reaching</sup> ~~reaching~~ the point.

MR. PLANK: Who would be at such a meeting?

MR. HURWITCH: Well, at the meeting that I had in mind at the time there was a Defense Department representative, White House staff people like McGeorge Bundy, Ralph Dungan -- Defense Department, like Army Secretary [Cyrus R.] Vance, now Under Secretary of Defense, Edwin Martin, myself.

**MR. PLANK:** What was the feeling inside the meeting? Was there free discussion there or was everyone just looking at the head of the table?

**MR. HURWITCH:** No, it was my impression that it was a free discussion, that the President encouraged free discussion as long as it didn't become a discursive gabfest. But he would go around the room and ask if anybody had any idea, any opinion, depending on the nature of what the problem was.

**MR. PLANK:** You got the feeling that he was not depending on them so much for information as for guidance?

**MR. HURWITCH:** No, I think on both, although he was pretty decisive. For instance, on one case which we met about, the question of these exile raids on Cuba,

and the problem then was that we had decided we would stop these raids because we didn't think they were in the national interest. And I think it was a wise decision.

**MR. PLANK:** Was this decision taken by the President or was it taken at the . . .

**MR. HURWITCH:** Oh yes, yes. Upon recommendation of the Department of State and others. But it was sent up to the White House to McGeorge Bundy and the President. The question then at that particular moment was that the Coast Guard was charged with the insuring that these vessels, these exile vessels, didn't leave the United States bound for Cuba engaged in these hit-and-run raids. Should the Coast Guard find a vessel heading that way, what should



they do? Should they board it? Should they forcibly detain the people? What should be done? And we had thought in one particular meeting on this subject with the President that the Coast Guard should be allowed to forcibly stop these ships and detain the people, being careful that they ought not to be manhandled in any way. We certainly didn't want the people coming back from the high seas going to the coast of Florida looking as though they had been beaten up by the Coast Guard. It was certainly not our intention that this happen -- or of the Coast Guard. But the President was reluctant to do this. He just didn't like the use of force if it

could be avoided; if the goal that we wanted to achieve or attain at that particular juncture could have been achieved otherwise, he would have preferred that and so he thought the Coast Guard ought not to be authorized to use force. And that was the decision and he was very clear about it. This was not what he had thought at the time, but he felt that he just didn't want to -- not for domestic political reasons or his own intuition. He was a very careful man, Mr. Kennedy, I thought. Not cautious to the point of doing nothing. His whole record shows that he was certainly a very active man, a very decisive man. But when it came to the image and his sensitivity of how

we would look should force be employed against Cuban exiles, he did not want to do it and it wasn't done.

MR. PLANK:

Did he himself have any contact with the exiles after the Bay of Pigs?

Did he receive Miro again?

MR. HURWITCH:

Yes, I think, I would say, on perhaps three or four occasions when Miro felt he wanted to see President Kennedy, he so indicated. And President Kennedy after the Bay of Pigs had indicated to him that any time he, Miro, wanted to see President Kennedy, the door would be open and we -- Miro always checked with us first and indicated that he would like to see the President -- and we so indicated to the White House.

**MR. PLANK:** You tried hard to set up a fairly, well, institutionalized exile organization. How well did that hold together? That is, there are or have been several hundred of these organizations of various kinds. You indicated that Miro saw the President and Miro saw you. Did the CRC, the Cuban Revolutionary Council, actually have pretty much a monopoly of access to the Administration?

**MR. HURWITCH:** Yes, I think so. From time to time -- I can't recall at the time -- a Cuban exile would come up and see, perhaps, Mr. [Richard N.] Goodwin, Mr. [Arthur M., jr.] Schlesinger, but certainly not the President. The only one who had access was Miro and we had hoped in our dealing with the exiles -- and,

as you say, there were hundreds of them. They were a disparate group; they were not unified. The only grouping that did exist was the Cuban Revolutionary Council, and we hoped by dealing with only one instrumentality we would be spared the problem of having to meet with hundreds. Nobody had such time and that this might be a unifying effect by spending time with only one and Miro Cardona, the only one who had access to the President, might serve to coalesce and unify the myriad of groups that were in Miami. It didn't work that way.

**MR. PLANK:**

This thing goes back to a question I asked earlier, Bob. It has puzzled me a bit. <sup>A</sup>side from the feeling of moral responsibility, let us say,

the President felt toward this group, and a generally humanitarian spirit animated the Administration's attitude toward them, what did you expect to get from the Revolutionary Council after the Bay of Pigs? What was your. . .

**MR. HURWITCH:** Well, I think it could be looked at this way, John. Our objective vis-a-vis Cuba was the overthrow of the Castro regime, the removal of the Castro regime and its replacement with one that was friendly to the United States and the Western World. Here in our country we had a group of people who numbered in the thousands, able-bodied men who were dedicated to this purpose. They were, in other words, an asset, not

only an asset from the standpoint of bodies, big men, animated by a great desire and conviction to get back to their country, but also from a political standpoint, should a situation arise as almost did arise in October, 1962, during the missile crisis when an invasion of Cuba that took place by Cubans along with Americans so that the public posture of the United States might easily be that Cubans and Americans fighting side by side for the liberation of Cubans from a political standpoint is much more palatable than, for example, the US Marines landing in Cuba for the liberation of Cuba. So here you have an asset that you couldn't just disregard because you didn't know how the

situation was going to turn out. Certainly right after the Bay of Pigs, nobody contemplated, that I know of at least, that in October of the following year we would be threatened by missiles and that a military invasion of Cuba might have been justified, which, I think, would have been had not the Soviet Union not removed the missiles. I think it was this keeping this asset alive, political and military and physical asset, from various points of view -- keeping it alive, trying to help it to the extent it could from the human, sociological standpoint, to have an organization which could tend to the needs of an exile community in our country, quite apart from their being



Cuba or our relations with Cuba. But they were a group of people who were lost, who were aliens in our country, who had come here under unfortunate conditions. All the things that had to be done for their sake could easily be channeled, we had hoped, through a central organization rather than the United States Government having to deal with a myriad of organizations. So it was that humanitarian problem or question that you mentioned. But I am. . .almost more importantly, from a foreign policy point of view -- here is an asset: here were people who were willing and dedicated to the same objective vis-a-vis Castro-Cuba as we were, which we didn't want to see go down the drain and we wanted to see kept alive.

MR. PLANK:

This prompts two questions, not really related, but they come from your last comment. Let me make them both and then we can handle them separately. The first one is this asset, which fell apart rather disastrously. As you know, the Cuban Revolutionary Council broke up and I would like to ask you to tell us something about how that happened, and why. Secondly, you indicated that this group was dedicated to the same general range of goals in regard to Cuba as we were and I would like to ask you what you meant by that -- the extent to which there were Cubans in the exile community who did understand the kind of Cuba that President

Kennedy was interested in seeing emerge, as against exiles who simply wanted to go back to Cuba. Let's take the first one of those; first, you were very much involved in the breakup of the Cuban Revolutionary Council. Could you fill us in a bit on the history of that and the misunderstandings that surrounded it, et cetera?

MR. HURWITCH: Yes, John. This was around Easter, April of 1962, shortly after the period we were discussing earlier, about the . . .

MR. PLANK: 'Sixty-three, wasn't it?

MR. HURWITCH: I'm sorry, '63, the crackdown on the Cuban exile hit-and-run raids. This action was sort of last in a series of minor things that had happened

vis-a-vis the exiles which made Miro Cardona's life pretty difficult in Miami. I believe he felt that his own position in Miami had eroded so much that unless he were able to obtain some fresh promises, if you like, from the United States, some sort of commitment from the United States, which indicated that the end of exile life was in sight, that his position was . . . .

(Tape ends in the middle of Mr. Hurwitch's statement.)

TAPE #1, SIDE #2

MR. PLANK: You were talking about Miro's own personal involvement in the CRC . . .

MR. HURWITCH: And his political position down in Miami, which had eroded so much that he felt that unless he could see some fresh hope that the United States was

firmly committed and had embarked upon a course that would ultimately result in the removal of Castro, that he could no longer continue in his position as leader of the exile community. It was politically impossible for him to do so, and he of his own convictions felt that since he was in an unenviable position -- exile leaders are never in an enviable position -- that it was really not worth it if there was no real hope of accomplishing ultimately the goal they all sought, which was their return to their country. I think it was with this in mind that he came to Washington. He had from time to time, may I say parenthetically, from time to time indicated that he was

going to resign. He was tired and everybody was after him to resolve all problems and he didn't feel that he had enough authority, had enough resources to even begin to do those things, and he had been discouraged from time to time. And I think it really remarkable that he kept up as long as he did. April, '61, to April, '63.

MR. PLANK: May I interrupt this for just a moment?

MR. HURWITCH: Yes.

MR. PLANK: Just to make sure that we have it all.  
Okay.

MR. HURWITCH: So he did come to Washington and pointed out that he was terribly discouraged, that he didn't see how he could continue and he felt that perhaps there was in existence secret

American plans that would indeed result in the overthrow of the Castro regime, and he felt that if such plans existed, he should be privy to such plans. I told him that while we nearly as much as he wished to see the Castro regime disappear, the kind of plans that he was talking about -- some master plan that would bring about this end -- just didn't exist, couldn't exist.

**MR. PLANK:**

Let me ask you this. Just what was your relationship with Miro on overtime?

**MR. HURWITCH:**

We were very close friends. Actually we understood each other. We spent a lot of time -- we suffered through some of the same problems together. As you recall, I had helped a lot in getting the Bay of Pigs prisoners

back, including his son. He was very grateful for that. The Orange Bowl speech in December of 1962. . . . When the boys came back, President Kennedy addressed them in the Orange Bowl and Miro Cardona was up on the stage with the President. We had helped arrange that for him and he was very grateful. And we had over a period of time. . . . a great deal of. . . . He and I fought some of the problems together and knew each other quite well. I have a great deal of respect for him, I must say.

To get back to the meeting in March of '63 in Washington, I told Miro, and he knew really, that we didn't have a master plan. You can't run international relations, John, as you know, by a master plan, as



though you had a military operation in which you have an objective and you have so many yards of enemy territory to cross before you have obtained your objective, and you took so many feet per day. International politics does not lend itself to this kind of either analysis or operational activity. Miro, indicative of how deeply he felt his position in Miami, I think, to be weak, asked for a commitment from us, from the United States Government, that we would engage in military operations against Cuba. He had asked, incidentally, for a similar commitment in, oh dear, when was it? I would say August, September, October -- in through there -- of 1961, and this was refused. And I recall when he asked for this that he

asked for a similar commitment from the United States at that time, and this was a meeting at the White House with some of the White House staff, this meeting in the fall of 1961, but not with the President, but some of the White House staff and State Department as well. And I said that the situation hadn't changed, and I said that the United States would not and could not, I felt confident, -- although I could certainly be in a position to tell him that as I understood the Administration's point of view that no fixed commitment could be made. . . at which point he became quite excited and said, "Well, if you can't make any such commitment, then I would like 50 million" -- then he said -- "100 million dollars, in

order to equip Cuban exiles and if you are not going to carry on the war against Castro with your military forces, give me the money to equip my people to carry this fight on." Well, this was in a sense tantamount to the same thing because there are not enough Cuban exiles. There is not enough money. You couldn't equip them anyway, given the kind of forces that Castro had. And this would only mean there would be -- if you agreed to the second of his propositions, you were in effect agreeing to the first because once you -- would be tantamount to another Bay of Pigs operation, only by this time it would be supported by American troops. So you were in effect giving him the first commitment and I pointed this

out to him, at which point he became quite discouraged and said he was going to resign.

**MR. PLANK:** I take it from what you are saying, Bob, that you really were deputized by the Administration to deal with this man and that you had pretty much. . .

**MR. HURWITCH:** I was the principal point of contact for the United States Government for the Cuban exiles, yes, that's right. When Miro left, I said that I would be in contact with him. Why didn't he sleep on it, and let me sleep on it, but we never wanted to . . .

But while we both realized that things were going to change, I didn't want to be definite and complete about it.

I informed the Attorney General

of this meeting and that Miro had indicated that he was going to resign. The Attorney General said he would like to see Miro. That was arranged for the next day and Miro went through pretty much the same thing and the Attorney General said pretty much what I had said and the question, then, in everybody's mind was if Miro was indeed going to resign, what would be the terms of this resignation? What public stance would he take? He indicated that he couldn't, in all good conscience, take a stance or stand that he was resigning for health reasons. He felt that this would really be laughable and undignified and because it clearly would be a diplomatic offense, if you like. He said at the time that he had

to give this a great deal of thought as to what the terms of his resignation would be. In other words, his public declaration. But he was quite definite in saying that no matter what he said, it would be fashioned in such a way that it would not be harmful to the Administration -- that he had a great deal of admiration for the President, for the Administration, and had been given privileges to conversations, et cetera, which he would safeguard. But as you know, that didn't turn out to be the case.

I'm personally inclined to believe that when we indicated to Miro that we were rather deeply interested in what the terms of his public statement might be, that he possibly

saw this as an opportunity to gain his other objective, which was either a commitment from us and hoped that he might be able to play one for the other, so he took a more extreme position that he had originally intended to take because, as I say, he told us, both the Attorney General and me together, and me separately, that he would be very careful not to be damaging to the Administration. But then when he drafted this 25-page document, which later was published in the newspapers, this was a more extreme position than he had originally intended to take.

MR. PLANK: How do you explain that, Bob?

MR. HURWITCH: Well, I think since we had asked to see in advance what his public position

was going to be, to which he had agreed, thinking that if he took an extreme position, this would alarm us to the extent that we would say, "Well, all right. If this is really what you are going to say, this would be so damaging to the Administration. . . ." that we would then say, "Well, look. Can't we do something?" . . . Then he would revert to his original request or perhaps some compromise position which would still give him sufficient ground to retain his position down in Miami and he could then go to the exile community and say he had certain commitments and he could be vague about it. My own feeling has always been, although I certainly don't know from Miro



himself whether this is true, that that piece of paper was a tactical piece of paper and more extreme than he originally wanted, thinking that he could use this tactically.

**MR. PLANK:** Did he consult with his other colleagues down there in Miami in drafting this thing?

**MR. HURWITCH:** Not that I know of. The information that I have is that he stayed up most of the night. He was quite distraught and drafted it himself, and it was more extreme than <sup>N</sup>his own confidential secretary, Dr. Arragon, had thought that Miro was going to write.

**MR. PLANK:** It wasn't accurate either, was it?

**MR. HURWITCH:** No, it just wasn't accurate. It was a distorted version of a number of meetings some of which I had attended.

I recall when I saw this copy in advance. Dr. Arragon had brought it to me at the Miami Coordinator's office at about 2 o'clock in the afternoon, 2 or 2:30, and there was to be at 4 a meeting of the Cuban Revolutionary Council on this subject with Dr. Miro at which time this document was to be made public. When I read it through rather hastily, since there wasn't very much time, and saw the general thrust of the document, I asked Dr. Arragon to take me to Dr. Miro, who was sort of incommunicado, at least away from the telephone at an address that no one knew except Dr. Arragon. And I did go there and when Miro saw me, he threw his arms around me in an <sup>abrazo</sup> ~~embrace~~, et cetera, and I can't

help but think that he thought, once having read this and having gone to see him, that I was sort of like the Marines coming in the last reel of a movie to save everybody, that I had really come with a new proposition from Washington which would enable him to retain his position as the leader of the exiles. Instead I told him how shocked I was in the light of all the conversations we had had in which he had indicated that he would not . . . while we recognized that he had a difficult problem in drafting, he was going to draft his public declaration of resignation in such a fashion that it would not be damaging to the Administration and that I thought he had really gone out of his

way to be damaging.

MR. PLANK: Here again you were acting . . . no one else had seen this paper. When you went to see Miro, you had the authority to do this.

MR. HURWITCH: That's all I did.

MR. PLANK: I'm sure you did.

MR. HURWITCH: Yes.

MR. PLANK: It was just a question . . .

MR. HURWITCH: We had exchanged some words, but the net result of our conversation was that he agreed that it should not be made public and we shook hands, and I left despite the newspaper articles that came out at the time which indicated that I had been thrown out of his apartment, as you might recall seeing it.

I might say that it brings me to the one telephone conversation which

I had with President Kennedy, and I think it illustrates once again the type of man he was. There were these newspaper, Miami newspaper reports. I think it was a UP report saying that I had met with Miro Cardona and that we had a very harsh exchange of words and that I had been so insulting to him that he threw me out of the apartment. President Kennedy was vacationing at Palm Beach. This was the Easter vacation and I guess he had seen some of these reports. I had flown back that night to Washington and was in my office that morning and my secretary came in all flustered and said that the President is calling, and I must say I had rather mixed feelings, frankly. Here we hadn't

been very successful with Miro, only successful to the extent that he had agreed not to publish this accusation against the Administration for a . . . he didn't say that he would not, permanently, publish it, but he would not publish it at that time. To that extent we at least gained a little bit of time. But other than that, he had written, as I say, this extreme document. I wasn't sure of what the President felt about all that. I'd say that I had a little bit of trepidation. I was wondering why he had called and his aide answered when I came to the phone and said, "Mr. Hurwitch?". And I said, "Yes." And he said, "What's your first name?" And I said, "Robert." And he

said, "Fine. Just a minute. The President's calling." I heard a click of the phone and he said, "Hello, Bob?" [Laughter] And I said, "Yes, Mr. President." And he said, "This is the President. Is it true, these newspaper reports that Miro Cardona showed you the door?" And I said, "No, Mr. President, that's not true." And he said, "Well, that's good." And then he went on for a few minutes the main import of which was that nobody's going to throw anybody of his Administration out of any apartment. The main import of his call was to show me that I had all his support and sympathy, and so on and he was quite prepared to be rather annoyed if any of the people of his staff had been rather discourteously treated.

He asked me what had happened and I told him and he said that was fine and he said, "Would you write that up? I would like to have it for the record and have it sent over to the White House." And I said, "It was a great deal of pleasure." And he said, "Fine, thank you very much, Bob," and hung up. Rather than having any cause for alarm that perhaps the President was annoyed, the only thing he was annoyed about was the possibility that one of the members of his Administration had been subjected to a certain amount of unpleasantness by somebody who was, from his standpoint, a guest in our country and for whom he had done quite a good deal. So I thought that was illustrative and he had taken the



trouble on his vacation to call and indicate that he was quite prepared to be helpful if necessary. Very reassuring, I must say.

**MR. PLANK:** Right. It didn't stay unpublished for any length of time, did it?

**MR. HURWITCH:** No. I think it was, as I recall, about nine or ten days after that that it was published. I remember Miro saying that he waited about nine or ten days and heard nothing from Washington, once again indicating that he thought we were really discussing back and forth up in Washington what we should do about this document and Miro. And actually we resigned ourselves to the fact that the paper was going to be published some day and we were all working on other problems. He waited

for about nine days, he said, and heard nothing from us and so therefore felt obliged to publish it when he did.

**MR. PLANK:**

Right. Since that time, Bob, have we been in touch -- you know, there is a short interval there during which [Antonio] Maceo took over; then Tony [Varona] took it over. But is there anything in being now, to your knowledge, that looks at all like the old CRC?

**MR. HURWITCH:**

No. John, no. As you recall, the newspaper stories indicated and I think there is substance to it that the CRC was receiving financial assistance from the United States Government. This was terminated in, I believe it was, the 1st of May of 1963 and that really spelled the end of the CRC.

**MR. PLANK:**

How about the Brigade? You remember

there was some thought of training up these people in our own units. In fact some of this was done.

**MR. HURWITCH:** Yes, that's right.

**MR. PLANK:** Then of course at the time that Miro was resigning, there was a lot of talk about these people also resigning their commissions and getting out. Could you fill us in on the history of that?

**MR. HURWITCH:** When the Brigade came back, as you recall, they were after all in prison from April of '61 to Christmas of '62, so it was a little over a year and a half. They had Brigade members in prison of course -- very little else to do but talk and plan what the future was going to be like and never gave up hope that one day they would be free.

And so when they came back to the United States, and particularly the Orange Bowl speech which gave them a lot of heart, seeing in Miami how the exile community was, they regarded themselves as a sort of a unifying unit, a potentially unifying unit, in the exile community. And, as such, if they could be successful in unifying the exile community, they would have the position of leadership in the exile community as opposed to the Cuban Revolutionary Council. This was the hope, the view, the ambition of a few of the leaders of the Brigade. In actuality the Brigade itself was pretty much split. There were followers of Frere<sup>e</sup>, there were followers of Folanda del Tol, et cetera. And

then the usual high percentage of people who had had enough of anything and just wanted to be left alone and go back to their families. The Brigade itself did not represent . . . their only unity, really, was the fact that they engaged in the Bay of Pigs operation and had this experience in prison. But it was a split organization itself. The caliber of people, while good fighting men, were comparably young and there were no real political leaders who could coalesce either the Brigade itself or the exile community around the Brigade so that there could be a unified exile community. Therefore the Brigade as such just never fulfilled this function nor did we particularly want it to fulfill this function, at

least through our assistance. That is, we didn't want to give financial assistance with the hope -- to the Brigade for this purpose because all the intelligence information we had was that the Brigade itself was so badly split that this would not be a useful way to give them financial assistance, or useful purpose. We did give the members financial assistance and opportunities for education and so one like the GI Bill of Rights and offered a number of them the opportunity to go into the armed services, some as soldiers and some as officers in the United States armed services and a great many, a considerable number, took advantage of this opportunity. This was a further splintering

of the Brigade. Some went civilian ways and some went military ways and the Brigade for all intents and purposes is pretty well finished as an entity.

**MR. PLANK:**

I'm sure of course that others will be talking about the prisoner exchange, the whole "tractors for freedom" deal. Were you involved in that at all, Bob?

**MR. HURWITCH:**

Very much, John. As a matter of fact, I think I would like to skip over that for this time because I am going to be getting together with the Attorney General and with Lou Oberdorfer and some of the other people who -- just specifically on that operation, on getting the Bay of Pigs prisoners back.

MR. PLANK: Right.

MR. HURWITCH: They will be available for the history,  
but not on this tape.

MR. PLANK: Let's stop for just a second.

MR. HURWITCH: Sure.

[Tape recorder turned off; resumes.]

MR. PLANK: Bob, is it right to say that you were  
worrying full time exclusively on  
Cuba or in your work were you obliged  
to do as presumably the President did,  
fit Cuba into the broader context?  
Were your responsibilities rather  
narrowly defined, that is?

MR. HURWITCH: Well, narrowly defined in the sense that  
only Cuba as compared to other countries  
of the world but broadly in the sense  
that Cuba had the ramifications of  
being an issue in domestic politics,  
hemispheric politics and, if you like,



in the Cold War. And I at least always saw the problem of Cuba or tried to see the problem of Cuba as its implications for our policy worldwide as well as whatever effects our actions or lack of actions might have on the domestic political scene as well, although as a Foreign Service Officer this was of less concern to me in the sense that I knew that there were others who were very carefully watching that aspect of the Cuban problem. I tried to view the Cuban problem from the perspective of hemispheric relations and the Cold War relations.

**MR. PLANK:**

I want to talk with you, or ask you about both of those things. But let me get back to the second question I

raised earlier. That is, Miro told you that he assumed that there was in Washington a master plan for the liberation of Cuba. First, did you find among the Cuban exile community people who really understood what the New Frontier was all about and the kind of hemisphere or kind of Cuba -- free of <sup>Castro, to be</sup> ~~customs~~, sure, but the kind of Cuba that the President was really looking for? That's one question; and secondly, in the same general direction, as part of your job did you give systematic thought to what you would do inside Cuba in the event that Castro was removed or otherwise brought to . . .

MR. HURWITCH: Yes, John. Well, I think that the overwhelming majority of Cuban refugees

were motivated by one desire and one desire alone and that was to return home. I think that a great number of those who were in the exile community in Miami were anti-Batista and certainly anti-Castro. What they were for was a little bit more difficult to ascertain, but most of the leaders, I felt, were fairly conservative perhaps with the exception of Manuel Ray and the people who surrounded him who I think were more attuned to the aims of what the Kennedy Administration thought might be the type of Cuba that the Cuban people, in the long run, would be most viable for their country. I think that most of the leaders of the CRC and other groups were primarily the old line politicians, to a large

extent opportunists. I don't say this necessarily in deprecation but this is the way they had spent their life and this is what they believed. I think Manuel Ray and some of the others in the younger generation among Cubans, students, for example, the student exile groups -- numbers of young people there who had a vision of a Cuba that was free of the old line and pretty corrupt politics that Cuba had been the victim of for many, many administrations and something more along the vision that the Kennedy Administration had for Cuba. John, I forgot the second part of that question now.

MR. PLANK:

Whether, in fact, in Washington systematic thought had been given to what you were going to do.

**MR. HURWITCH:** Yes, we did have contingency plans and do have, setting up the basic policy lines, what we would think or hope that the Cuban successor government to Castro would find, as I say, in their long-run interests -- the interests of the Cuban people. Since obviously Cuba is not our country, our territory, we are not in a position to impose. Theoretically, at least, if the downfall of the Castro regime were effected with the use of US military troops as the result of some international incident such as the missile crisis, conceivably our influence would be quite considerable and we could make known, hopefully in the fashion acceptable to the Cuban people, the kind of future Cuba that

would be desirable. It is quite conceivable that some day somehow the Castro regime would disappear without US military assistance. I would frankly hope that this would be the case in which case those people who bring about such a change will have a very important voice. Not that our influence would be completely nil because we would assume that such a new government would want to have our friendship and our assistance and we would hope that in the course of supplying this, we would also be asked for advice and could supply that as well.

**MR. PLANK:** This raises a couple of sticky problems. First, you have already indicated that in the exile community as such the human

resources were not too plentiful -- people who were imaginative, far-sighted and aware of the changes that have occurred and must be maintained in Cuba. Secondly, you have the domestic situation here, that is, what the American people in the event that Castro were to go tomorrow -- to the extent that the American people can be talked about as an entity -- would be prepared to accept down there, what they would be prepared to regard as an acceptable regime. I would like to introduce a theoretical thought that the departure of Castro may raise almost as many problems for us as his presence there. That's an exaggeration, to be sure, but I don't want to talk. I would just like to get your reaction to this.

MR. HURWITCH: Yes. Well, it is certainly not going to be easy if you want only rapidly to think of the sugar problem, for example. Even Castro has come sort of full circle now and has recognized the importance of sugar for the Cuban economy and certainly after some knotty problems to wrestle with all up and down the line. There's no question about that. But I'm inclined to believe that the American people would find, hopefully, that what the Cuban people indicated they wanted would also be acceptable to the American people. Even if one had a successor regime to Castro which was pretty left wing, let's say, but not oriented necessarily to the Soviet Union, there might be in the United States some highly vocal



people who might have a few champions in Congress about how all their property had to be returned to them. But I really don't think that in the final analysis that these people would necessarily carry the day if all the American people felt that this is what the Cuban people wanted, we would be able to live with that. That's my own personal belief.

**MR. PLANK:**

Let's go on with these others. You say that you were concerned about Cuba in its hemispheric dimension and also Cuba in the Cold War dimension. This problem of subversion -- when did you first see that thing emerging as a serious one, Bob?

**MR. HURWITCH:**

You know, John, subversive activities in the hemisphere antedates by many

years. For many years we had subversive problems in the hemisphere, many years before Castro came on the scene and I think undoubtedly that when the day comes when he and his regime will have left Cuba, I think probably that we will still have subversive problems in the hemisphere. But I think anybody, any Foreign Service Officer who has worked in Latin American affairs, has really been aware of the fact that the Communists, the Soviet Union, the Chinese and now Castro, have found the social conditions of a type which are exploitable by Communists and for decades they have been a problem. I think President Kennedy was certainly aware of the subversive threat and, being the kind

subversion. Subversion is a hard think<sup>G</sup> to . . . It's not a thing that you sort of pick up like a stick and you know which hand to pick it up with. It is sort of amorphous thing and the word subversion covers such a variety of activities. But certain things, for example, travel of Latin Americans to Cuba. We work with the Central Intelligence Agency, with the Defense Department where necessary, and so on, and we have a subcommittee in the Coordinator's Office of Cuban Affairs to do, to look into and develop those lines of action that we can take to cooperate with other countries to help combat subversion. For example, the question of police training programs. A lot of it is police work, more effective

police work. As I say, restrictions upon travel where the governments concerned would be willing to cooperate . . . We have several meetings with Central American countries and Panama to obtain their cooperation on . . .

MR. PLANK: Did you participate in these?

MR. HURWITCH: I did not go to the meetings themselves. [William G.] Bill Bowdler did, but I worked on some aspects of it up here in Washington. Of course underlying a great deal of the subversive problem is the question of the social conditions in these countries which is the Alliance for Progress and that's another aspect. I think while not directly related to the Cuban problem but certainly of great importance to

countries, the social structure, the political system, the whole cultural set, and each one of these countries is as different from what it is in the other.

MR. HURWITCH: Right.

MR. PLANK: And I think it raises this question. You dealt directly with these Central Americans as to whether, in fact, (a), there is any agreement among them as to what the nature of the threat is, and, (b), as to whether there is much understanding among the heads of these states of what President Kennedy stood for.

MR. HURWITCH: Well, I think there is as much or as little understanding as, as you rightfully say, John, these countries vary. Their governments differ, their

traditions differ and their understanding of the kind of society that President Kennedy believed is best for human beings within a political and economic framework, as he saw it, how much they appreciated it, I think varied. I would be inclined to say that probably Costa Rica was, for example, quite different from perhaps Panama, just to name those two. I don't want to get involved with one versus the other necessarily, but I do think that the two vary. I think all the Central American countries do vary. You are quite right. Different as they are, they regard Castro -- given the geographic proximity, the heavy arms that the Castro regime has, their ease with which he could infiltrate people --

the fragility of these societies, of these varying countries, all add up to them that they, as presidents, and responsible leaders of these countries, would have life a lot easier if Castro and the Castro regime did not exist in Cuba. And I think that they have been for quite a while solid on this and the votes in the OAS meetings and Foreign Ministers meetings in the past on the Cuban issue, the Central American countries and Panama have really taken the lead on the so-called hard line against Cuba, and I think your point is well taken. As diverse as they are, they are well unified on that particular score.

**MR. PLANK:**

Of course. There is a parallel question which I would like to ask.

We talked earlier about whether there was consensus among the general government or the general Washington community with respect to what our Cuban policy ought to be. I would like to ask whether there is consensus among those groups in which you cooperate in this subversive program or anti-subversive program either with respect to the nature of the threat or respect to the nature of the proper response as between Defense, CIA, . . .

**MR. HURWITCH:** I think there are differing points of view based once again, on the different experiences of the members of any task force or subcommittee which deals with this problem. I think that a State Department officer, and I would readily put myself in that category, regards the



subversion phenomenon as a political, social, economic phenomenon that is terribly complex. It occurs for a variety of reasons. If you stop to think for a moment about what makes a particular individual a communist or pro-communist or sympathetic to communism, you realize that you are dealing with a very, very complex phenomenon when you just think of the human mind and the various things that can happen to an individual which at a given moment in his life makes him sympathetic to communist aims. When you start thinking in those terms and how you grapple with it if that particular individual becomes then a subversive -- how do you grapple with it?

You could do it by police measures, let us say, for example, as perhaps a Department of Defense or a Central Intelligence Agency representative might suggest. And then say, "Well, it is really unimportant as to what makes this guy this way. The fact is that he is and we ought to somehow isolate him from society and the police should be trained to watch him, if you can't actually remove him from society by imprisonment or something like that." I think a State Department officer would say, "Well, all right, fine. But this doesn't really get us very far." On the question of travel, you might say readily, prevent him from traveling. Stop his traveling. Well, a State Department officer might say,

"Well, doesn't this infringe upon his rights, an individual's rights? And if, indeed, what we are trying to build in Latin America or in the given Latin American countries is democracy, not necessarily in our image but at least democracy in the sense of the rights of an individual, are we really not sort of losing the game in order to win a point by insisting upon or advocating travel restrictions in a society where -- so many of the Latin American countries there have had dictatorial experiences which we have not had, and therefore aren't you really sort of setting up a groove and advocating a line of action which you may later regret?" It was this kind of consideration, I think,

that a Foreign Service officer dealing with a society, seeing a lot of their complexities, and he is exposed to this sort of thing and his responsibility is such that he is inclined to see the subtleties and complexities of these things perhaps a little bit more sharply than his colleagues in some of the other agencies, as a result of which you will get differing opinions and differing suggestions of courses of actions of what might be taken.

**MR. PLANK:**

Assuming that you come down the agencies involved here, which I take would include not only the three we've been talking about -- Defense, State and CIA -- but also Justice. Coming down to the lowest common denominator which is tucking the fellow away, if he is a subversive threat and can be identified

as such, how do you assess the success of our efforts to curb subversion?

**MR. HURWITCH:** Well, I understand that this past year there have been considerably fewer people from the hemisphere visiting Cuba than the year before. I think it was these visits to Cuba and the training and indoctrination of Latin Americans or citizens of various Latin American nations which caused President Kennedy the greatest concern and he urged and directed that we investigate every possible means that we could utilize, steps that our country could take, diplomatic initiatives that we might take with other countries to see what might be done about curbing this travel. As I say, I understand that perhaps

this has been cut by as much as 50 per cent this year as opposed to the year before. There has been a considerable effort that has been made in the police area, to try to train police, give police greater equipment and so on. Whether or not the discovery of this cache in Venezuela was the result of greater police alertness and greater police training I'm just not sure. It's conceivable. It's better that it was discovered, given the kind of political problems that Venezuela has. I think the degree of communist activity and infiltration in Brazil as, at least from the newspapers I have read, was surprising. I, at least, had not been aware that it had been so widespread

and as would have been indicated, but here I'm on a little bit shaky ground because I really don't have access to the full story there. I do think that probably the most important thing that has been accomplished as a result of President Kennedy's interest in subversion has been the educational aspect, that people up and down the hemisphere are more aware. As I say, the discovery of the arms cache in Venezuela, the actions that have been taken by the present Brazilian government receiving wide publicity, made people more aware of the danger of subversion and I think that's good. Hopefully, first you have to be aware of something before you are willing to do anything about

aware that this was in being and what your reaction here in the Department was to this sequence of events?

**MR. HURWITCH:** We had been receiving for a number of weeks a great deal of intelligence information on the increase in the number of ships coming into Cuba, the debarkation of a number of personnel, unknown military or civilian technicians. If military, were they military technicians or troops? All very difficult to tell, but certainly that something very unusual was going on seemed to be clear. The general consensus at that time was that while something strange was going on, it just didn't seem reasonable to believe that missiles capable of damaging the United States and a good part of the Western



Hemisphere were being placed in Cuba. Some months before when an assessment was being made as to what the probable intentions of the Soviet Government were vis-a-vis Cuba and armaments, the general consensus was that Cuba would continue to receive defensive weapons but the likelihood of Cuba receiving offensive weapons in the nature of missiles, atomic or nuclear warhead-carrying missiles, seemed remote.

**MR. PLANK:** Was your task force in being in August of 1962, let us say?

**MR. HURWITCH:** No. This was set up after the missile crisis. But at any rate when these reports came in of shipments, a great number of ships, the U-2 overflights of Cuba which had been going on for some time were intensified with an

effort to determine what precisely was going on. You may recall, and this has been said better elsewhere, John, by people more competent to say, that there was cloud cover over Cuba at that time and for a variety of reasons we just didn't get that information confirming that missiles had been placed in Cuba until, let's see, a week -- I have to check the calendar again, John. Did the President go on the air on the -- 22nd, was it? It was the week before that. I guess it was somewhere around the 12th, October 12th, in through there. We had a week to decide what to do about this information.

**MR. PLANK:** When you say we -- your situation in this context was rather different than your

situation in the Bay of Pigs incident.

MR. HURWITCH: Oh, yes.

MR. PLANK: Who were the "we"? Who was privy to this?

MR. HURWITCH: Well, at that time Mr. [Roger, Jr.] Hilsman, who was in charge of Intelligence and Research in the State Department, received the information from the people, who read out the aerial photographs, that missiles were seen on the photographs. He called me at 10 o'clock in the evening after having called other people. The only one I know that he said he called was Mr. Martin, the Assistant Secretary. I called Mr. Martin on the phone and indicated to him that I had given this a little bit of thought and would like to chat with him in the morning about

at this particular moment. But there were seven people and Mr. Bundy said that he felt that that was enough and that nobody else should be informed until -- at the President's instructions, I gathered, unless informed otherwise. This was a very small group of people but I think there was great concern about security leaks, great concern that because of security leaks, this would get into the newspapers and then a great deal of pressure would be placed on the Administration to take an action which prudence may not have dictated, that for greater time and reflection would have indicated should not be taken. So for one week there was a great number of meetings. I did not attend those meetings, meetings of

top level inter-agency meetings, the Secretary of Defense, Mr. [John A.] McCone, Secretary of State, of course, and their top level assistants, the Attorney General.

MR. PLANK: Did Mr. Martin get in on them?

MR. HURWITCH: Yes, Mr. Martin was involved in all of these meetings. He kept me informed, kept me briefed as to what was going on so that as I saw things developing, messages coming in and so on, I could select what was important or keep him informed on the process.

MR. PLANK: Was there a factor through him of many of your ideas as to . . .

MR. HURWITCH: Yes, I suggested in the very first meeting that we had, that if for some reason we did not feel that a direct confrontation with the Soviets was in

our interest, although I was not suggesting that this might necessarily be the case, that this would necessarily be the case, but as an alternative to the confrontation with the Soviets, that perhaps it might be useful and feasible to get some unmarked planes which Cuban refugees, exiles, could fly and send them over Cuba on a mission that would ostensibly be to drop bombs on oil refineries but which would have another mission, more important but masked by the more dramatic one of firing on the refineries, if dropping bombs on the missile sites. This as a means of, first, getting the message to Castro that we knew what was going on but keeping it masked if we wanted to -- mask it in that fashion and at

the same time have the double advantage of striking the oil refineries as one method. My feeling was that most of the newspaper publicity, of course, would be about the refineries which would be smoking and at the same time quietly these missile sites would be taken out. This was a suggestion. It was passed on but the decision was taken and rightfully so that what had to be done was that the American people had to be informed of the nature of the threat, what was confronting us, and we would also have to inform the American people of what the United States Government and President Kennedy was going to do. And that was the decision which I personally think was the rightful one, the correct one to

take.

**MR. PLANK:** How this decision was taken, in effect, to go right past Cuba and go direct to the USSR is an interesting one and I'm sure that'll come out in another . . .

**MR. HURWITCH:** Yes, I think others would be more qualified. I might just say one thing I feel might be useful for the record. And that is at the point where we had set up the quarantine and, as you recall, some Soviet ships stopped dead and some had turned back and some had decided to approach. The first one to come up to the line of the quarantine was a Soviet tanker with oil, as far as we knew. When this vessel was several hours away from coming up to the line, I recall having received this information --



this was from our own intelligence people -- that a Soviet tanker was several hours away, and going to Ed Martin and suggesting that perhaps since the Soviets were not, could not be certain as to what we intended to do despite whatever we said, did we intend to use the blockade, for example, merely as a mask for investigation, or perhaps the message or the signal that they might -- let me put it this way. How we treated this first vessel to be intercepted or whether we intercepted it at all might very well be a signal of communication to the Soviets as to what our intentions were. Since this vessel was a tanker and for all intents and purposes the likelihood was that it was carrying oil, petroleum, and nothing

more -- unlikely that it was carrying IL-28's or more missiles -- it seemed to me that it might be useful to handle this one in a -- not force it to stop, not have it, for example, to discharge<sup>HA</sup> all its petroleum all over the ocean, to make sure that down in some secret hold, some place there wasn't something hidden as perhaps some overzealous officer, given the orders to make good on the quarantine line, given orders to make sure that no missiles came in, might force them to do.

Mr. Martin thought this made a certain amount of sense and it was sent up through our channels over to the White House and instructions were radioed out to the officers out there to sort of hail and weigh<sup>AVE</sup> on, and no

interception was made of that first vessel. The benefit of the doubt was given that this was a vessel carrying petroleum. It seemed likely that since the vessels apparently the Soviets knew were carrying contraband were either stopped or ordered to return, the likelihood is that the vessels that were thought to be okay were permitted to go on. And we might have looked a little bit foolish and overly anxious if we took a too harsh attitude, particularly against the vessel which from public point of view, at least, was only carrying, very likely only carrying, petroleum.

MR. PLANK:

Once the President's public pronouncement and this thing became a topic of generalized discussion in the Department,

did you find inside the Department, Bob, a consensus with respect to the policy being pursued and particularly with respect to the termination of it? That is, as it develops along in January the Soviets and we in the United States declared that crisis at an end. On the outside, some people felt that this halting the opportunity for onsig<sup>te</sup>~~te~~ inspection and so on, did provide an opportunity to go ahead and do something a little more drastic inside Cuba. I wondered whether in your conversations inside the Department you were able to, or in the community, you were able to find a generalized feeling that the decision taken was the right one and we ought not to push our advantage farther than we did?

MR. HURWITCH: I think, once again, that there is a difference. There was a consensus, but the consensus among the officers making policy, and dealing directly with the problem, felt like a consensus; that what we did was exactly right. The further you went from people who had the responsibility the more radical suggestions one received. Some people, for example, felt that we should really get tough about these troops in Cuba. Others, such as you suggest, since the Cuban Government refused to permit on-site<sup>te</sup> inspection, therefore, thought we should invade Cuba, if you like. Well, it certainly seems inconsistent here at a time when the United States was threatened with nuclear-carrying missiles, the action we took -- the initial action we took --

was the establishment of a quarantine with the threat that further action might be taken. But even when operational missiles were pointing at us, our first reaction was not an invasion of Cuba. It seemed really rather inconsistent and disproportionate to have then invaded Cuba because they did not agree to ~~onsite~~<sup>Te</sup> inspection. I think we would have lost all the political gains that we obviously made, as a result of showing the restraint, and that maturity that we showed, in taking the steps that we did, in the Cuban missile crisis in that stage. Then to throw it all away by saying, "Well, if the Cubans are not going to permit ~~onsite~~<sup>ON SITE</sup> inspection, therefore we are going to invade with killing and so on," that most people in

the world would have thought was rather disproportionate reaction, considering we didn't invade at the time when we were mortally threatened.

MR. PLANK: This was the consensus at your level?

MR. HURWITCH: Yes, yes.

MR. PLANK: And to the extent that you were talking to people in the Defense Department and in the Central Intelligence Agency at equivalent levels, this too was the feeling there or was it?

MR. HURWITCH: Well, no. I think, particularly my impressions of some of the people at my level in the Defense Department, considered that we had missed the big bet. Here we had the opportunity, if you like, to surgically remove the cancer from the body politic of the hemisphere and all we'd really done was to force

them to take the missiles out and we should have used the placement of the missiles as a pretext, if you like, or as a cause, a justified cause, for an invasion of Cuba then and there. There is no question in my mind that if those missiles had not been removed, we would have taken a much more aggressive military action than the blockade and the quarantine. We would have invaded Cuba, but once the Soviets had agreed to remove them in the face of our mixture of threat of force, quarantine and diplomacy, to have invaded Cuba after that would then have, I think, made us look extremely bad in the world. So I'm inclined to disagree with my military colleagues on that although I can sympathize with their feeling of



frustration in a sense, if you like. Here was an opportunity. Here we had said that our aim, our political aim, was the removal of the Castro regime. Here the Castro regime had been an accomplice in the military or political-military maneuver which had resulted in the placing of missiles, which threatened our own security and if there was ever a reason for removing the regime by force, this was the chance and we didn't take it. Well, it's a rather traditional military standpoint and I can sympathize with it. But I think the decisions that were taken were right.

**MR. PLANK:**

There is one whole range of problems that we haven't had a chance to talk about which has to do with the economic denial program and so on, which began after you

came into this particular slot. Of course there are a great many other things too that we haven't had a chance to talk about. I don't know whether we want to talk about them this afternoon. You're going away now and as you go, you may from time to time think about other things that you would like to get on this record, if it's agreeable to you. I don't think we want to keep you here much longer. We are running out of this tape anyhow. Perhaps we could cut this one off. I think we got a lot down.

**MR. HURWITCH:** Fine, John. I think it has been very useful. It has brought back to my mind, at least, a number of things I thought I had forgotten. Why don't we do that and give me a chance to sort of

think about this a little bit more  
and let's try another one another  
day.

**MR. PLANK:** I think that would make good sense. I  
would want to talk with you about the  
economic side because that has been an  
important part of our policy.

**MR. HURWITZ:** Yes, it has and I think -- and this was  
also a source of difference of opinion  
in the Department and other parts of the  
government and might be useful for  
people who might be trying in future  
years to look at this and what we were  
thinking at the particular time. I'll  
be glad to participate in it.

**MR. PLANK:** Fine.

(end of Tape One)