

~~TOP SECRET~~ (XGDS)

WASHINGTON SPECIAL ACTIONS GROUP MEETING

March 24, 1976

Part I of II

Time and Place: 10:48 a.m. - 11:10 a.m., White House Situation Room

Subject: Cuba

Participants:

Chairman: Henry A. Kissinger

State: Robert Ingersoll

DOD: Donald Rumsfeld  
William Clements

JCS: Gen. George S. Brown

CIA: Lt. Gen. Vernon Walters

NSC Staff: Lt. Gen. Brent Scowcroft  
William G. Hyland  
Michael Hornblow

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Secretary Kissinger: Today we are going to discuss two subjects-- Cuba and Lebanon. Cuba will be first. We want to get planning started in the political, economic and military fields so that we can see what we can do if we want to move against Cuba. We should get a range of options. Later there will be an NSC Meeting to discuss our objectives. Now we have to look at our capabilities so that the President can make a political decision of what to do, and how to plan it. This should be done in such a way as to minimize the danger of leaks. So far in State there has been no planning.

Gen. Brown: In doing this it might be helpful to narrow the alternatives and look at one or two alternative courses.

Secretary Rumsfeld: Are you talking in terms of military planning?

Secretary Kissinger: There are a number of things that we can do which should be looked at. In the military field there is an invasion or blockade.

Secretary Rumsfeld: The other thing that should be considered is the effect this would have on our relations with the Soviet Union.

Secretary Kissinger: Right and that is the reason for our current threatening noises.

Gen. Walters:

Gen. Brown: I don't understand. I thought there already was a working group paper that had looked at a number of options.

Secretary Kissinger: What I am talking about is a planning group with a very restricted number of people. The members of the group would be at a reasonably high level so that we can avoid horrible platitudes in the paper. This is serious business. A blockade could lead us into a confrontation with the USSR.

Secretary Rumsfeld: We should lay out our political goals regarding Cuba, and Africa and then focus in on them. There are an infinite number of things we can list of a political, military  nature which would affect Cuba's position in Africa. How you do these things depends on your goals in Africa.

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Secretary Kissinger: That is not necessarily so. The President may not want to or be able to carry out a plan just because he has one.

Mr. Clements: I am appalled at the way Cuban military forces are being used overseas. Are we just going to sit here and do nothing.

Secretary Kissinger: That is not for this group to decide. Those questions will be discussed at a full meeting of the NSC. Rhodesia is a lousy case but it is not the only problem of its kind in southern Africa. If the Cubans destroy Rhodesia then Namibia is next and then there is South Africa. It might take only five years and the South Africans just won't yield. They are stubborn like the Israelis. The problem is that no matter how we build our policy in southern Africa anything that happens will appear to have resulted from Cuban pressure. We could make it a proposition that it is unacceptable to us to have the Cubans as the shock troops of the revolution. When I saw Yamani a few weeks ago we of course talked about oil but he seemed more concerned about Cuban troops in South Yemen. And then when I saw Bhutto in New York he said to me "When are you going to humiliate the Cubans?" This is a strategic problem regardless of our African policy. During my South American trip the President of Colombia arranged a small private dinner meeting. There were just four of us. We talked about Cuban intervention in Africa and he said he was frightened about the possibility of a race war. This could cause trouble in the Caribbean with the Cubans appealing to disaffected minorities and could then spillover into South America and even into our own country.

Secretary Rumsfeld: How do you prevent Cuba from doing that?

Secretary Kissinger: You deter them from even trying it. We must get it into the heads of the leaders of African countries that they can't have it both ways. They can't have both the Cubans in Africa and our support. It was the same situation we had with Egypt a few years ago. I told them they could not have both the Soviet presence and our support and now the Soviets have left. We have to know what we want to do. We should consider two or three likely courses of action and go into them in detail and see what problems would result. We don't necessarily have to consider an invasion but we should look at various forms of blockade.

Gen. Scowcroft: This would be a two step process. There are a variety of things like an invasion which could be ruled out.



(11:01 a. m. Secretary Rumsfeld left the meeting for another appointment.)

Secretary Kissinger: I would hate to have to implement operations against Cuba as a reaction to some event. It should be well planned. George (Brown), you should pick two or three types of operations. If we decide to use military power it must succeed. There should be no half way measures -- we would get no award for using military power in moderation. If we decide on a blockade it must be ruthless and rapid and efficient.

Gen. Brown: I agree. There is of course the Congressional angle. There is no sense taking a course of action unless it can be completed in less than 60 days. There is no sense in starting an operation unless it can achieve its objectives quickly.

Secretary Kissinger: The President must know what would be involved in a blockade and what impact it would have on Cuba and the USSR.

Gen. Scowcroft: And Congress.

Secretary Kissinger: One thing that might be considered is a selective blockade, a blockade on outgoing stuff from Cuba and not on incoming items, except for purely economic things.

Gen. Brown: That was the sort of thing we did during the Cuban missile crisis. It was a quarantine involving only Soviet ships. One of the problems of just having a blockade on outgoing things is that most of the military equipment they are using in Africa comes directly from the Soviet Union.

Secretary Kissinger: That is the sort of thing we have to study. This is not the place to make a decision. If there is a perception overseas that we are so weakened by our internal debate so that it looks like we can't do anything about a country of 8 million people, then in three or four years we are going to have a real crisis. It is important to get public support. So far there has been a good response from my speech in Dallas.

Mr. Clements: The public is way ahead of us on this Henry. They are mad about the Cubans.



Secretary Kissinger: I have received a lot of favorable mail recently. What we now need are plans. In State we will draw up some economic and political plans. There should be only one person from each Department working on this. There will be one person at State. George, we need military plans.

Gen. Brown: We will have to have more than one person working on this. I could get together a small team.

Gen. Walters:

Gen. Scowcroft: There should be one representative of each principal on a Coordinating Group.

Secretary Kissinger: Yes. Hyland will be the coordinator. There will be two people working on this from State.

Mr. Clements: I want to emphasize the problems of leaks. The leakage of the contingency plans for the Middle East really hurt us. The reporters are like a pack of wolves at Henry's feet asking him all the time what we should do about Cuba.

Secretary Kissinger: That is something also for the Cuban's to worry about. They should know that we plan to do something. We should have another meeting of this group ten days from now in order to review progress. Now let's have an update on Lebanon.

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