

If you think it's unthinkable that some Americans in high office would kill other Americans to achieve political and policy objectives, read this and think again.

Operation Northwoods

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Operation Northwoods, or **Northwoods**, was a 1962 plan to generate U.S. public support for military action against Cuban government of Fidel Castro, as part of the U.S. government's Operation Mongoose anti-Castro initiative. The plan, which was not implemented*, called for various “false flag” actions, including simulated or real state-sponsored acts of terrorism (such as hijacked planes) on U.S. and Cuban soil. The plan was proposed by senior U. S. Department of Defense leaders, including the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Lyman Louis Lemnitzer..

The proposal was presented in a document entitled "Justification for US Military Intervention in Cuba," a collection of draft memoranda written by the Department of Defense (DoD) and the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) representative to the Caribbean Survey Group. The document was presented by the JCS to the Secretary of Defense, Robert McNamara on March 13 with one paragraph approved, as a preliminary submission for planning purposes.

The previously secret document was originally made public on November 18, 1997 by the John F. Kennedy Assassination Records Review Board, a U.S. federal agency overseeing the release of government records related to the John F. Kennedy assassination. A total of about 1500 pages of once-secret military records covering 1962 to 1964 were concomitantly declassified by said Review Board.

"Appendix to Enclosure A" and "Annex to Appendix to Enclosure A" of the Northwoods document were first published by the National Security Archive on November 6, 1998 in a joint venture with CNN as part of CNN's 1998 *Cold War* documentary series—specifically, as a documentation supplement to "Episode 10: Cuba," which aired on November 29, 1998. "Annex to Appendix to Enclosure A" is the section of the document which contains the proposals to stage terrorist attacks.

The Northwoods document was published online in a more complete form (i.e., including cover) on April 30, 2001.

* While Operation Northwoods was not approved by Kennedy and McNamara, it is cited here as an example of a false-flag operation because of the official nature of the unclassified document itself. Subsequent similar operations that were actually carried out are, for obvious reasons, not so well documented.

Content

In response to a request for pretexts for military intervention by the Chief of Operations, Cuba Project (Col. Edward Lansdale) the document lists methods (with, in some cases, outline plans) the author believed would garner public and international support for US military intervention in Cuba. These are staged attacks purporting to be of Cuban origin, with a number of them having

real casualties. Central to the plan was the use of "friendly Cubans" — Cuban exiles seeking to oust Fidel Castro.

The suggestions included:

- Starting rumors about Cuba by using clandestine radios.
- Staging mock attacks, sabotages and riots at Guantanamo Bay Naval Base and blaming it on Cuban forces.
- Firebombing and sinking an American ship at the Guantanamo Bay American military base — reminiscent of the USS Maine incident at Havana in 1898, which started the Spanish-American War — or destroy American aircraft and blame it on Cuban forces. (The document's first suggestion regarding the sinking of a U.S. ship is to blow up a manned ship and hence would result in U.S. Navy members being killed, with a secondary suggestion of possibly using unmanned drones and fake funerals instead.)
- "Harassment of civil air, attacks on surface shipping and destruction of US military drone aircraft by MIG type planes would be useful as complementary actions."
- Destroying an unmanned drone masquerading as a commercial aircraft supposedly full of "college students off on a holiday". This proposal was the one supported by the Joint Chiefs of Staff.
- Staging a "terror campaign", including the "real or simulated" sinking of Cuban refugees
- "We could develop a Communist Cuban terror campaign in the Miami area, in other Florida cities and even in Washington. The terror campaign could be pointed at Cuban refugees seeking haven in the United States. We could sink a boatload of Cubans en route to Florida (real or simulated). We could foster attempts on lives of Cuban refugees in the United States even to the extent of wounding in instances to be widely publicized."
- Burning crops by dropping incendiary devices in Haiti, the Dominican Republic or elsewhere.

James Bamford summarized Operation Northwoods in his *Body of Secrets* thus:

“Operation Northwoods, which had the written approval of the Chairman and every member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, called for innocent people to be shot on American streets; for boats carrying refugees fleeing Cuba to be sunk on the high seas; for a wave of violent terrorism to be launched in Washington, D.C., Miami, and elsewhere. People would be framed for bombings they did not commit; planes would be hijacked. Using phony evidence, all of it would be blamed on Castro, thus giving Lemnitzer and his cabal the excuse, as well as the public and international backing, they needed to launch their war.”



THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF
WASHINGTON 25, D.C.

UNCLASSIFIED

13 March 1962

MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

Subject: Justification for US Military Intervention
in Cuba (TS)

1. The Joint Chiefs of Staff have considered the attached Memorandum for the Chief of Operations, Cuba Project, which responds to a request of that office for brief but precise description of pretexts which would provide justification for US military intervention in Cuba.

2. The Joint Chiefs of Staff recommend that the proposed memorandum be forwarded as a preliminary submission suitable for planning purposes. It is assumed that there will be similar submissions from other agencies and that these inputs will be used as a basis for developing a time-phased plan. Individual projects can then be considered on a case-by-case basis.

3. Further, it is assumed that a single agency will be given the primary responsibility for developing military and para-military aspects of the basic plan. It is recommended that this responsibility for both overt and covert military operations be assigned the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

For the Joint Chiefs of Staff:

SYSTEMATICALLY REVIEWED
BY JCS ON 21 May 84
CLASSIFICATION CONTINUED

L. L. LEMNITZER
Chairman
Joint Chiefs of Staff

1 Enclosure
Memo for Chief of Operations, Cuba Project

EXCLUDED FROM GDS

EXCLUDED FROM AUTOMATIC
REGRADING; DOD DIR 5200.10
DOES NOT APPLY

APPENDIX TO ENCLOSURE A

DRAFT

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MEMORANDUM FOR CHIEF OF OPERATIONS, CUBA PROJECT

Subject: Justification for US Military Intervention in Cuba (TS)

1. Reference is made to memorandum from Chief of Operations, Cuba Project, for General Craig, subject: "Operation MONGOOSE", dated 5 March 1962, which requested brief but precise description of pretexts which the Joint Chiefs of Staff consider would provide justification for US military intervention in Cuba.

2. The projects listed in the enclosure hereto are forwarded as a preliminary submission suitable for planning purposes. It is assumed that there will be similar submissions from other agencies and that these inputs will be used as a basis for developing a time-phased plan. The individual projects can then be considered on a case-by-case basis.

3. This plan, incorporating projects selected from the attached suggestions, or from other sources, should be developed to focus all efforts on a specific ultimate objective which would provide adequate justification for US military intervention. Such a plan would enable a logical build-up of incidents to be combined with other seemingly unrelated events to camouflage the ultimate objective and create the necessary impression of Cuban rashness and irresponsibility on a large scale, directed at other countries as well as the United States. The plan would also properly integrate and time phase the courses of action to be pursued. The desired resultant from the execution of this plan would be to place the United States in the apparent position of suffering defensible grievances from a rash and irresponsible government of Cuba and to develop an international image of a Cuban threat to peace in the Western Hemisphere.

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- (5) Blow up ammunition inside the base; start fires.
- (6) Burn aircraft on air base (sabotage).
- (7) Lob mortar shells from outside of base into base.
Some damage to installations.
- (8) Capture assault teams approaching from the sea or vicinity of Guantanamo City.
- (9) Capture militia group which storms the base.
- (10) Sabotage ship in harbor; large fires -- naphthalene.
- (11) Sink ship near harbor entrance. Conduct funerals for mock-victims (may be lieu of (10)).

b. United States would respond by executing offensive operations to secure water and power supplies, destroying artillery and mortar emplacements which threaten the base.

c. Commence large scale United States military operations.

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

- a. We could blow up a US ship in Guantanamo Bay and blame Cuba.
- b. We could blow up a drone (unmanned) vessel anywhere in the Cuban waters. We could arrange to cause such incident in the vicinity of Havana or Santiago as a spectacular result of Cuban attack from the air or sea, or both. The presence of Cuban planes or ships merely investigating the intent of the vessel could be fairly compelling evidence that the ship was taken under attack. The nearness to Havana or Santiago would add credibility especially to those people that might have heard the blast or have seen the fire. The US could follow up with an air/sea rescue operation covered by US fighters to "evacuate" remaining members of the non-existent crew. Casualty lists in US newspapers would cause a helpful wave of national indignation.

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

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

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

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