Our Men in Havana:
Washington and Canadian Intelligence on Castro's Cuba, 1959-1963

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Paper presented to the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Association for Security and Intelligence Studies, Ottawa, Ontario, September 2002

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[1] The research for this paper has been supported by funding from the University of Northern British Columbia, and was written in part while the author was a visiting fellow in the Department of International Politics at the University of Wales, Aberystwyth. I am grateful to Len Scott and Guto Thomas at Aber for discussions about their own work in this area and to Gerald Wright and Robert Watt for their engaged hospitality while I burrowed into the National Archives of Canada. The take-off in the title of this paper is by no means entirely original, although the ambiguity in the pronoun "our" seems to be original, and is intended. Allusions to the book "Our Man in Havana" appear to be hard to resist: see, for example, James G. Hershberg, "Their Men in Havana: Anglo-American Intelligence Exchanges and the Cuban Crises, 1961-62," in David Stafford and Rhodri Jeffreys-Jones (eds.), *American-British-Canadian Intelligence Relations, 1939-*2000, (London, Frank Cass, 2000), pp.121-176, and British ambassador Herbert Marchant's despatches from Cuba. In one he noted that "Any record of the story of these first two weeks of the Cuban crisis must necessarily read more like a wildly improbable sequel to 'Our Man in Havana' than a Foreign Office despatch" (Marchant to Home, "The Cuban Crisis, Chapters I and II," Confidential, Despatch No. 52 (1011 / 62), November 10, 1962. British Archives (AK 1261 / 667) FO 371 / 162408). (I am indebted to the work of Guto Thomas for the references to all documents from these archives. See: Thomas, "Trade and Shipping to Cuba, 1961-1963: An Irritant in Anglo-American Relations" Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Wales, Aberystwyth, September 2001.) The earliest similar allusion seems to be: Central Research Unit, Talk no. 1954, Walter Kolarz, "The Soviet Man in Havana" 31 October 1960: National Archives of Canada [hereafter, NAC], RG 25 Box 5073 File 4471-40 Pt 2.

Foreign intelligence work seems inconsistent with the Canadian internationalist tradition. More correctly stated, intelligence operations play no role in Canadian *conceptions* of that postwar tradition. Sunny notions of Canada as the "honest broker," the "helpful fixer," and a mediating middle power rarely if ever extend to or recognize the darker side of international affairs, as represented, in some minds, most notoriously by intelligence activities.[2]

The more naïve of these conceptions, the "boy scout" images of Canadian foreign policy, have not been much challenged even by hard evidence of espionage activities – for example, that Canadian diplomats provided intelligence to the United States while operating under the guise of neutral observers as part of the Indochina truce and supervisory commissions during the 1950s and 1960s.[3] That intelligence work, it is clear, was not a singular exception.

[2] For a review of Canadian conceptions of internationalism, see Don Munton and Tom Keating, "Internationalism and the Canadian Public" *Canadian Journal of Political Science* Volume 34, No. 3 (September 2001), pp 517-549

[3] James Eayrs, *In Defence of Canada, Indochina: Roots of Complicity*, University of Toronto Press, 1983, Chap 8. The little-known fact that Lord Baden Powell, the founder of the boy scouts, had been an intelligence officer, does not seem to have given pause to the clean-cut connotations of the boy scout image.

The present paper documents, for the first time, how the Canadian government provided intelligence on Cuba on a regular basis to the United States and other allies during the years following the Castro revolution.[4] This espionage was carried out not by intelligence agents but by diplomats working out of the Canadian embassy in Havana.[5] This paper also attempts to explain why such activity was carried out.

The extensive intelligence effort by the embassy in the early 1960s may seem surprising for reasons other than an inconsistency between such activity and simplistic notions of Canadian internationalism. Indeed, it may appear almost astonishing given the fact that Ottawa at the time was pursuing, and pursuing quite publicly, a significantly different policy vis-à-vis Cuba than that of its closest ally, the United States. The intelligence cooperation with Washington was thus juxtaposed with and intertwined with one of the more heated Canada-United States political disagreements of the postwar period, namely what to do about Fidel Castro and his government.

The nature of the intelligence relationship between Ottawa and Washington with respect to Cuba will be considered here in terms of the conventional "intelligence cycle" concept. That is, intelligence needs are identified, information is collected and analyzed, and the product is then disseminated and, possibly, acted upon.[6] The major departure here from conventional notions of that cycle is that no real distinction is made between the collection and analysis phases. The Canadian diplomats in Havana were normally both collecting and analyzing the intelligence they provided. This investigation of the Canadian-American "intelligence cycle" regarding Cuba is prefaced by a brief outline of the state of relations between Cuba, the United States and Canada in the early 1960s.

Historical Background: Canada, Cuba and the United States, 1959-63

The defeat in January 1959 of the Batista regime in Cuba at the hand of forces led by Fidel Castro was not immediately greeted with concern in the United States or Canada. Both countries recognized the new government and maintained diplomatic relations with Cuba, as did their allies. Fairly quickly thereafter, however, the alarm bells began to go off, especially in Washington. Nationalizations of American companies, often without compensation, and anti-American rhetoric soon had the Eisenhower administration on edge. As Cuban-American relations soured and Castro moved toward a closer relationship with the Soviet Union, the concerns in Washington rose

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[4] The only known references to this activity in the published literature are very brief and oblique : Peter T. Haydon, *The 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis: Canadian Involvement Reconsidered* Toronto, Canadian Institute of Strategic Studies, 1993, p.120, endnote 9, and Hershberg, "Their Men in Havana" in Stafford and Jeffreys-Jones (eds.), *American-British-Canadian Intelligence Relations, 1939*-2000. A book devoted specifically to intelligence aspects of the Cuban missile crisis also does not mention the Canadian activities, although it does cite suspicions in Cuba at the time that other embassies were involved in intelligence gathering (James Blight and David Welch, *Intelligence and the Cuban Missile Crisis*, London, Cass, 1998). The embassies apparently identified by Soviet advisors to the Cuban intelligence services as worthy of counterintelligence surveillance were those of the United Kingdom, Brazil, Italy and Uruguay (Domingo Amuchastegui, "Cuban Intelligence and the October Crisis" in Blight and Welch, *Intelligence and the Cuban Missile Crisis*, p. 95). Given that the British post was regarded as the one "most actively supporting American intelligence" it is interesting that the Russians apparently did not have similar suspicions about the Canadian embassy. Perhaps they too believed in the myth of Canadian "internationalism."

[5] The Cubans, if they were not already doing so in 1961, soon returned the favour. They turned the Cuban consulate and Trade Commission on Cremazie Boulevard in north Montreal into a significant base for espionage in North America. These offices were used not merely for the gathering of intelligence and for coordinating the movement of agents but also, according to a defector who had headed the trade office, to smuggle goods of U.S. origin to Cuba, through numerous and presumably bulky diplomatic bags, in contravention of the existing Canadian ban on the transhipment of such goods through Canada (Memorandum, "Canadian Policy on Cuba," sections marked "Secret," 19 May 1964, NAC, RG 25, Vol. 10044, File 20-1-2-Cuba, Part 3, p. 2; Draft memorandum, "Meeting between the Prime Minister and the President: Cuba" "Confidential," 23 January 1964; "Activities of the Cuban Trade Office in Montreal," "Secret," 10 March 1965).

[6] Michael Herman, *Intelligence Power in Peace and War*, Cambridge University Press and Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1996, p. 284-5

dramatically. A U.S. trade embargo was put in place in the fall of 1960. Months later Castro accused the United States of using its embassy in Havana for spying, and demanded a drastic reduction in the number of personnel stationed there. President Eisenhower's response was to break diplomatic relations and to close the embassy during the dying days of his administration in January 1961.

The incoming administration of John F. Kennedy did nothing to alter the direction of American policy. The new president approved a plan developed by the Central Intelligence Agency to invade Cuba with a small force of Cuban exiles, a decision that led to the ill-fated "Bay of Pigs" operation. Cuba turned to Moscow for assistance. Nikita Khrushchev in turn decided on a secret deployment of Soviet ballistic missiles to Cuba, the decision that led to the Cuban missile crisis, or "October crisis" of 1962.

By the time of the break in U.S.-Cuban relations in January 1961, a fundamental and public disagreement was evident between Washington and Ottawa over relations with the Castro government. A full year before that break, in January 1960, an official in the Department of State had privately but bluntly set out the American bottom line to a Canadian diplomat. As he explained, "We can't allow the communists to run a regime ninety miles from our shore."[7] Three years later, that bottom line had changed only slightly. As another Canadian diplomat was told by another senior State Department official in mid-1963, the United States was not prepared to co-exist with a communist regime in the western hemisphere. It would thus continue to "follow active not passive policies" to end this threat.[8]

Here was the nub of the disagreement between Canada and the United States. Canada was staunchly opposed to a strong Soviet presence in Cuba. Its leaders felt and on occasion openly expressed dismay at the domestic situation in Cuba.[9] Official Ottawa believed, however, that the nature of the Castro government and its tenure was a matter for Cubans to decide, as best they could. It thus did not believe in efforts to remove Castro by force. It also held, like the government of the United Kingdom, and in accordance with long-standing British practice, that it was appropriate to maintain diplomatic relations with countries whether or not one approved of their internal politics. Similarly, it was deemed appropriate to maintain trade relations with these same countries, subject to restrictions mutually agreed to by the western allies. As a consequence of its stance, Canada was regarded much more warmly by the Cubans than it might have been as a close ally of the United States.[10]

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[7] Telegram, Washington to External Affairs, 22 January 1960; National Archives of Canada [hereafter NAC], RG 25 Box 7258 file 10224-40 Part 7.1

[8] Telegram, Washington to External #2292 18 July 1963. Report on meeting with Ward Allen, Inter-American Regional Affairs, Department of State; NAC, RG 25 Box 5352 File 10224-40 Part 13 (18 November 1962 – 27 August 1963)

[9] For example, in a 3 July 1961 speech in Toronto Prime Minister Diefenbaker expressed concern regarding "the communistic trends of the Cuban government" and noted Canada deplores "various actions and practices of the Cuban government." NAC, RG 25 Vol. 5076 File 4568-40 Part 8

[10] For examples of the positive view of Canada held by the Castro government, see: Letter, Havana to External L- 406, 30 June 1961: NAC, RG 25, Box 2734 File 289-40 Part 1; Telegram, New York to External, 20 July 1961: NAC, RG 25 Vol 5075 File 4568-40 Cuban-Canada Relations Part 6; Telegram Havana to External 23 May

Concerns about the differences in approach to Castro's Cuba boiled over into the public realm fairly often in the early 1960s. To be sure, complaints about Canada's Cuba policies were more often voiced by right-wing American congressional and senatorial figures than by administration spokespersons. The sentiments of those in the executive branch during this period were nevertheless clear, and revealed themselves fairly regularly in private diplomatic discussions. This then is the unlikely backdrop against which Canada began actively to spy on behalf of the United States and other allies from its embassy in Havana.

Intelligence Sharing Western style

At the outset, intelligence cooperation between Ottawa and Washington on Cuba was but part of a regular exchange. Officials of the respective foreign ministries and diplomats of Western allied countries routinely exchange information gleaned from cables and other sources. (A significant exception to this practice amongst the major western allies was the French foreign ministry.[11]) The trade in diplomatic secrets was a parallel activity to longstanding and now well-known cooperation on intelligence matters under the so-called UKUSA agreement.[12]

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[11] When a Canadian diplomat in Paris was given some French telegrams to read by the *Quai d'Orsay* desk officer for Cuba in November 1962, he noted in his report on the meeting that this was "a rare occurrence at Quai" (Telegram, Paris to External, 2 November 1962: NAC, RG 25 Box 4184 File 2444-40 Pt 12).

[12] On the UKUSA arrangements, see Jeffrey Richelson and Desmond Ball, *The Ties that Bind: Intelligence*

This trade was particularly active between the United Kingdom and Canada, and likely Australia and New Zealand, but was also a regular feature of the Canada-United States relationship.[13]

Cooperation Between the UKUSA Countries – the United Kingdom, the United States of America, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, Sydney and Boston, Allen and Unwin, 1990. Representatives of the intelligence organisations of the four commonwealth countries were meeting with American officials in Washington the very week the construction of Soviet missiles sites was discovered in October 1962.

[13] The document files of the Department of External Affairs on Cuba contain numerous copies of Foreign Office dispatches and reports, as well as numerous telegrams from the Canadian High Commission in London that reproduce in their entirety British cables from Havana, provided by the Foreign Office to the High Commission to be forwarded to Ottawa. British archives similarly contain an abundance of Canadian material (personal communication, Guto Thomas to the author, April 2002). The material passed on included despatches, such as a telegram, originating in the Canadian embassy in Moscow speculating on Nikita Khrushchev's motives in deploying Soviet nuclear missiles to Cuba, provided to the State Department through

From an early point in the Castro period, External Affairs was thus receiving intelligence reports on Cuba from the State Department and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).[14] These were provided on a highly select basis to certain officers often under strict guidelines.[15]

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the Canadian embassy in Washington during the Cuban missile crisis (Telegram, Washington to External 8 November 1962: NAC, RG 25 Box 4184 File 2444-40 Pt 12).

[14] Examples of such intelligence reports, including Department of State, Bureau of Intelligence and Research memoranda and Intelligence Information Briefs, CIA Special National Intelligence Estimate (SNIE) reports, the *Weekly Intelligence Review* of the CIA's Office of Current Intelligence, and other CIA material, can be found in External Affairs files for 1959 and 1960 (NAC, RG 25 Box 5073 File 4471-40 Pt 2; RG 25, Vol. 5351, File 10224-40, Part 8; RG 25 Box 5352 File 10224-40 Part 11; RG 25 Vol. 5076 File 4568-40 Part 7; RG 25 Box 7258 file 10224-40 Part 7.1. This intelligence flow often came through the Department of External Affairs' Defence Liaison (II) Division (DL2) and in at least some cases, DL2 indicated to recipients of the SNIEs that comments will be received for transmission to the CIA (DL2 to Latin America Division, 29 December 1961: NAC, RG 25 Box 5352 File 10224-40 Part 12.2 (2 December 1961 – 17 December 1962) and Memo, DL2 to USSEA, 28 December 1961: NAC, RG 25 Box 5352 File 10224-40 Part 12.2 (2 December 1961 – 17 December 1962). One officer provided with a CIA report was prompted to note that "We have no comments on this U.S. paper, which is more objective that some of the CIA material we get from Washington on this subject" Memo, C Hardy, American Division to Defence Liaison (I) Division, 22 January 1960. "Situation in Cuba:" NAC, RG 25 Box 7258 file 10224-40 Part 7.1.

[15] For example, a covering memorandum from Defence Liaison (2), labelled "Intelligence Material" and marked "Confidential – Canadian Eyes Only," identified a 19 May 1960 report as an "extract from the *Weekly Intelligence Review* of the Office of Current Intelligence of the United States Central Intelligence Agency." The cover memo went on to note that the report "may be retained in Divisional files if desired; in such cases the officer must write in the relevant file number in the space above; otherwise, this will be returned to D.L.(2) for

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file. IMPORTANT: This material is NOT to be referred to or quoted in communications to other Departments or to posts abroad without clearance from D.L.(2) Division" [emphasis in original]. The warning about distribution was, in fact, repeated on the cover memo (NAC, DEA, RG 25, Vol. 5351, File 10224-40, Part 8). The extract provided was the part of the CIA's *Weekly Intelligence Review* that pertained to Cuba. It is worthy of note that the two main thrusts of the news items in this particular *Review* were the emerging ties of the then year-old Castro government with the Soviet Union and China and its nationalization of the Cuban economy.

The nature of the intelligence relationship appears to have shifted after January 1961when Washington broke off relations with Cuba. Sometime in early 1961 the State Department requested Ottawa provide information from its own sources, presumably whatever it could, and presumably including reports from the Canadian embassy in Havana.[16] The same request was made of the British, on 3 January. The government of the UK quickly agreed to provide information.[17]

The timing of the State Department requests was no coincidence. It was undoubtedly related to the closing of the U.S. embassy in Havana, which Castro had termed a "nest of spies." With this closure the Americans lost a valuable observation and listening post in Cuba. While the CIA maintained an extensive network of agents in Cuba, and a very large CIA station was established in Miami to deal with intelligence from Cuba, the loss of the embassy was significant. It is unlikely America's allies made up the difference.

It is not clear on the basis of the available evidence exactly when or how the government of John Diefenbaker actually approved the American request and began providing the State Department and the CIA with intelligence on Castro's Cuba under the terms of this special extended agreement.[18] There is no doubt arrangements were in place within months, by the spring of 1961. A new Canadian ambassador, George Kidd, arrived in Havana in July 1961. He may well have been specifically tasked by the Department to perform the enlarged intelligence role in addition to his regular diplomatic duties. His previous experience in External Affairs included a stint in Defence Liaison (II) Division (DL2), the unit responsible for security and intelligence, and for liaison with western intelligence agencies. Kidd also had a reputation of being one of the finest crafters of despatches in the Canadian foreign service.

The intelligence that soon began to flow to Ottawa and Washington came not only from open sources in Havana and careful observation but also from Cuban sources. These included senior government officials as well as members of the anti-Castro forces in Cuba, and such individuals as a released prisoner, a shipping company employee, a government engineer, a senior Cuban civilian pilot (who had flown for the RCAF), and a variety of unnamed sources whose identity the embassy chose not to reveal to Ottawa. The pilot, for example, provided the

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[16] The fact of the Department of State request, which may have been made through the Canadian embassy in Washington, is noted in a letter (classified secret) , G. C. Cook, Embassy of Canada, to J. K. Starnes, D.L.(2), 23 August 1961: NAC, DEA, RG 25, Vol. 5352, File 10224-40, Part II.

[17] Greenhill to HAA Hankey, Confidential, January 13 1961. (AK 10317 / 27) FO 371 / 156176.; Hankey to Greenhill, Confidential, January 16 1961. (AK 103145 / 28) FO 371 / 156176. (Both cited by Thomas.)

[18] None of the available documents are clear on this matter. And two well-placed sources disagree. John Starnes suspects that the decision might have been made by Norman Robertson, without reference to the politicians (interview with author, 30 June 2002). Basil Robinson suspects that Robertson would have spoken to the Secretary of State for External Affairs, Howard Green, and that Green may well have spoken personally to the prime minister (interview with author, 3 July 2002). If so, Robinson, who was then working in Diefenbaker's office, was not in on the discussion.

information for a detailed analysis of the equipment and state of readiness of Cuba's civilian airline fleet.[19] On occasion, information from Canadians living in Cuba was also reported, particularly that provided by Roman Catholic priests and nuns, and from Canadians who had travelled in Cuba, including, for example, the editor of the United Church *Observer*.[20]

[19] Letter Havana to External L- 481, 3 September 1963: NAC, RG 25 Box 10044 File 20-1-2 Vol 1

[20] For example, the comments of A. C. Forrest, editor of the *Observer*, to embassy staff in late 1960 were reported to Ottawa, and perhaps beyond (Telegram Havana to External 8 November 1960: NAC, RG 25 Vol. 5074 File: 4568-40 part 2).

There is no evidence that Canadian intelligence collection in the 1960s included signals intelligence (Sigint) as well as human sources (Humint). And it would seem quite unlikely that the embassy in Havana was at this time engaged in Sigint. According to one of the few books on the operations of the Communications Security Establishment (CSE), the first forays into embassy collection of Sigint came only in the 1970s.[21] While Havana was in fact one of the options for a test of such a program in the early 1980s, it was quickly discovered to be unsuitable as a potential site.[22]

The level of Canada-United States intelligence cooperation on Cuba deepened again after the election of the Liberals under Lester Pearson in April 1963. At a summit meeting in May at the presidential retreat in Hyannis, Massachusetts, President Kennedy asked the new prime minister if Canada could extend further its intelligence efforts in Cuba. Pearson agreed.[23] As a result of this secret agreement, Canadian diplomats were within months being trained by the CIA to perform covert intelligence work, much of it to be of a tasked, military nature. By mid-1963 they were in place in Havana.[24] The tasking included, for example, covertly checking out specific Russian military facilities in Cuba, at the request of the Agency.[25] The communications regarding this work used a special CIA cipher. By late 1963 the number of staff at the embassy had jumped considerably, to 17.[26]

While the focus of the present paper is on the 1959-1963 period, a brief note might be offered on the ensuing years. A memorandum classified "secret" reviewing Canada's basic policies was prepared on 15 April 1963 for the new Liberal government elected the previous week. The maintenance of diplomatic relations with Cuba "serve several important Canadian interests," it stated, including enabling us to "keep ourselves informed on developments in Cuba."[27] There was no explicit mention of the intelligence sharing arrangement here, but Department officials were to become less circumspect, if only in classified internal documents. As the commercial issues in Cuba-Canada relations deriving from the nationalization of Canadian companies were resolved, and as Canadian religious orders there slowly dwindled in strength, the gathering of intelligence for its allies became one of the few "important interests" Canada had in Castro's Cuba, and arguably the dominant one.

A similar review of policy toward Cuba prepared in 1964 for the handbook of the Minister of External Affairs offered a franker statement. In a section specifically marked "secret" Canada's interests in continuing relations with the Castro government were noted to include ensuring "the flow of useful information from our Mission concerning the political, economic, and social developments in Cuba," developments which are "of

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[21] Mike Frost as told to Michel Gratton, *Spyworld: How CSE Spies on Canadians and the World*, Toronto, McClelland-Bantam, 1995.

[22] Three possible sites for an embassy collection test operation were reportedly Mexico City, Havana and Caracas. Mexico City was eliminated because the new embassy building was all glass. Havana presented a different set of problems. According to Frost, the Havana embassy "had a slightly higher status than a straw hut, leaking pipes, not enough space, boxes piled up to the ceiling, [and] no security" (p. 124). Moreover, Frost adds, there was "no good reason to go there just to please NSA" (the United States National Security Agency). This, of course, was the 1980s, not 1961-62. Times change. Cuba was no longer the front lines of the Cold War. The embassy seems to have been in perilous condition as of the 1960s (Memorandum, Canadian Embassy, Havana to Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs. 22 February 1967: NAC, RG 25, Vol. 10044, File 20-1-2-Cuba, Pt 5).

[23] Neither the topic of Cuba nor the agreement reached at this meeting are mentioned in the unusually detailed joint statement released by the two leaders. See: Roger Frank Swanson, *Canadian-American Summit Diplomacy, 1923-1973*, McClelland and Stewart, 1975, pp 224-227.

[24] About this time as well, agents from MI6 may have arrived in Cuba. While Guto Thomas was not able to find any evidence of MI6 operating in Cuba in the 1960-62 period, Canadian sources indicate that they were there as of mid-1963, if not earlier (Anonymous interview, with one of the officers involved).

[25] Anonymous interview, with one of the officers involved.

[26] Letter, Norman Robertson to Commissioner of the RCMP, 11 September 1963: NAC, RG 25 Vol. 2734 File: 289-40 Diplomatic Relations between Canada and Cuba, Part 1

[27] Memorandum, "Canada's Relations with Cuba," "Secret,"15 April 1963. NAC, RG 25 Vol. 10044 File 20-1-2-Cuba, Part 1

considerable importance for the Hemisphere." Much of this information, it added, is passed to the United States, as well as to Australia and New Zealand, which are not represented in Havana."[28]

[28] Memorandum, "Canadian Policy on Cuba," sections marked "Secret," 19 May 1964, NAC, RG 25, Vol. 10044, File 20-1-2-Cuba, Part 3, p. 1. Information was also shared at least as regularly with the United Kingdom. Virtually the same wording appears in the 1965 and 1966 versions of this review document: Memorandum, "Canadian Policy on Cuba," sections marked "Secret," 23 February 1965, NAC, RG 25, Vol. 10044, File 20-1-2-Cuba, Part 4, p. 1; Memorandum, "Canadian Policy on Cuba," sections marked "Secret," 12 March 1966, NAC, RG 25, Vol. 10044, File 20-1-2-Cuba, Part 4, p. 1

The briefing book prepared by the Department of External Affairs' Latin American Division for Prime Minster Pearson's 1964 bilateral summit meeting with President Lyndon Johnson also refers to the intelligence collection and sharing arrangements. "The Canadian government," it notes, "is most willing to maintain the cooperation with the United States that the presence of the Canadian diplomatic mission in Havana has facilitated, such as the provision of general and specific information and assessments of the situation and developments in Cuba."[29] The phrasing of the commitment may have been just slightly wordy, but the intent was clear. Canada was "most willing" to continue to gather and share intelligence on Castro's Cuba. A background paper provided to the Prime Minster was somewhat more succinct. Among the various policies and practices followed by Canada that "have taken account of United States as well as Canadian interests," was "the collection by our Embassy in Havana of information of interest to the United States."

A review of the history of Canada-United States differences over Cuba, likely written in late 1964 or 1965, notes that despite the differing policies, "there was a remarkably free exchange of intelligence material most of the time."[30] Thus, it seems clear from the available documents that the Havana embassy performed an unusually important intelligence function at least into the mid-1960s.

Diplomatic Reporting and Intelligence Product

Most of the embassy's reporting from Havana especially in the earlier years was focused on political and socio-economic reporting. There was also, at the same time, a considerable amount of military intelligence work even prior to 1963.

The two dominant themes of the political reporting were communist influence within, and eventually communist dominance of, the Castro government, on the one hand, and the degree and nature of popular support for the regime, on the other.

Two despatches from the Canadian embassy in Havana in June 1961 spoke to the former theme. (These are of particular interest for reasons that will be explained below.) The despatches were drafted by Malcolm Bow, who was serving as the chargé d'affaires. The newly appointed ambassador, George Kidd, arrived the following month.

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[29] Memorandum, "Talking Points for the Pearson-Johnson Meeting," "Secret," 14 January 1964, NAC, RG 25, Vol. 10044, File 20-1-2-Cuba, Part 2, p. 2-3

[30] Memorandum, "Principles of United States-Canadian Cooperation: Cuban Question," (no date), "Secret," NAC, RG 25, Vol. 10044, File 20-1-2-Cuba, Part 3, p. 6

On 2 June Bow reported on a tour he had made of Cuba's eastern provinces, in an official car apparently provided by the Castro government.[31] He found much change underway. New "desperately needed" housing was being built at a rapid pace, although there were still many *bohios* – bamboo huts for farm workers and their families. State farms and *cooperativas* were increasingly common. He visited the school-city of Camilo Cienfuegos, near the Sierra Maestra mountains, where units that would eventually bring together 20,000 children from the surrounding countryside had been completed or were under construction. The rationale for such a large, centralized school, he was told, was "to give the students a new outlook" and "a better life." Despite being told the children received no indoctrination, Bow also observed in classrooms such revolutionary slogans as "The imperialists wish to return to exploit the Cuban people." He found a distinct "proletarian" emphasis to the reconstruction programs of the government, Bow noted that the coastal area between Cienfuegos and Trinidad was well guarded by militia. Men and machinery working in the Playa Giron area were constructing not defences against another Bay of Pigs invasion but rather luxurious tourist resorts. He speculated that the scale of the investment in new facilities could only "be justified by large-scale tourism from the United States" since countries like Canada could not supply the numbers being anticipated.

While there was much to be impressed by, Bow also found much that was "deeply disturbing." The genuine concern to improve the quality of life for the peasantry, he concluded, was "accompanied by evidence of the evils of authoritarianism, indoctrination and regimentation" and by the establishment of "the Soviet brand of socialism" that would keep the regime in power. He concluded noting the acronyms Cuban agencies that had helped arrange the tour (for example, ICAP, INRA, etc) "are unhappily reminiscent of George Orwell's 1984."[32]

Only days later the Castro government prompted Bow to return to his theme. A new decree unifying the internal security and police agencies was yet "a further phase of the conversion of Cuba to the communist pattern."[33] The new decree seemed to recognize and reward the success of the Cuban security policy (G-2) in preventing internal uprisings at the time of the Bay of Pigs invasion through mass arrests. The country, Bow observed, was now "equipped with all the trappings of a police state: a nationwide network of informers, an efficient and ruthless secret police, and summary trial by Government-established Revolutionary Tribunals." Seeing little in the way of popular support for the Castro government, Bow concluded that it "depends for its very

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[31] Despatch, Canadian Embassy, Havana, "Eastern Exposure," 2 June 1961, "Confidential," NAC, RG 25, Vol. 5352, File 10224-40 Part II.

[32] Presumably such acronyms as PCO, DEA, DND, and CIA, for example, did not have the same 1984 connotations.

[33] Numbered letter, L-386, Canadian Embassy, Havana, "Internal Security and Public Order," 9 June 1961, "Confidential," NAC, RG 25, Vol. 5352, File 10224-40 Part II.

existence on the effective deterrence, discovery and elimination of counter-revolutionary activities and threats to public order."

As early as March 1960 the Canadian ambassador in Havana, Allen Anderson, had been reporting "communist infiltration into many sectors of Cuban life." By mid-1960 he was concluding there was no doubt the then still relatively new Cuban regime had become pro-communist.[34] In this assessment he was in agreement with the views of officials in the British and American governments.[35] In late August 1962, two months before the Cuban missile crisis, George Kidd suggested that the USSR now regards Cuba to be of "strategic" importance."[36]

[34] Letter Havana to External No L-206 25 March 1960: NAC, RG 25 Box 7258 file 10224-40 Part 7.2; Letter Havana to External "Communist Drive in Cuba" 19 July 1960: NAC, RG 25 Box 5351 File 10224-40 Part 8 (7 April 1960 – 31 July 1960);

[35] Telegram London to External 19 July 1960: NAC, RG 25 Box 5351 File 10224-40 Part 8 (7 April 1960 – 31 July 1960); Telegram, NATO-Paris to External 13 July 1960 : NAC, RG 25 Box 5351 File 10224-40 Part 8 (7 April 1960 – 31 July 1960). For a somewhat different British view at this time, see: Central Research Unit, "A Survey of the Cuban Situation" 22 September 1960: NAC, RG 25 Box 5351 File 10224-40 Part 9 (1 August 1960 –27 October 1960)

[36] Letter Havana to External L- 431, 30 August 1962, Periodic Report on Cuba No. 3 –May –August 1962: NAC, RG 25 Box 7059 File 7590-N-40 Pt 3.2

Assessments by the embassy of the viability of the Castro government are of some interest as well, in part because they seem to diverge from at least some of the similarly timed American assessments. Prior to the Bay of Pigs landing, the head of the CIA operation, Richard Bissell, predicted that such an operation would prompt a popular uprising against Castro. (At least two of his senior advisors disagreed, however.) As early as August 1960, the Canadian embassy was reporting that "there is little organized opposition within Cuba to the Fidel Castro government."[37] The following year, and five months prior to the Bay of Pigs, Ambassador Kidd concluded that the break-up of a key opposition group, the MRP, "would seem to indicate that internal opposition can not lead to overthrow of regime in the near future."[38] The British were telling the Americans the same story.

In February and March 1961, Kidd reported on the successful efforts of the Cuban militia to eliminate pockets of anti-Castro rebels in the Escambray Mountains in central Cuba, not far from the Bay of Pigs, and on the redeployment of Cuban forces to the island's south coast to counter a possible invasion.[39] The Escambray Mountains were assumed to be relatively safe territory for rebels, to which the landing force could make their way if the Castro government did not fall immediately, and from which they could wage a guerrilla war.

Following the Bay of Pigs debacle, Kennedy administration official and historian Arthur Schlesinger, who had opposed the invasion plan, suggested that "Fidel Castro turned out to be a far more formidable foe and in command of a far better organized regime than anyone had supposed."[40] Anyone in Washington, perhaps.

The Canadian embassy's reporting did not predict or discover the installation of nuclear missiles in the fall of 1962. It did suggest there were arms shipments arriving from Russia and did report as early as August of that year on the arrival of Russian military forces. On 16 August Kidd noted the embassy had heard numerous rumours and obtained first-hand reports all indicating that "Soviet troops have been landed in Cuba." Some of the stories concerned surreptitious night landings. The actual sightings included "a column of tanks and vehicles with Russian drivers on a highway leading from Mariel"[a major port] and "Russian manned tanks participating in military manoeuvres near Trinidad in central Cuba.[41] An embassy "drive-by" surveillance expedition indicated Slavic men garrisoned at a former Havana school. Kidd assumed the Russians were advisors, and "discounted the rumours" of "actual Soviet units" having arrived. He did note, though, that in this case the rumours "have been more widespread and more specific than usual." Kidd's informants were reporting on the tip of an iceberg that was soon

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[37] Letter Havana to External L-494 "Opposition Activity in Cuba " 1 August 1960: NAC, RG 25 Box 5351 File 10224-40 Part 9 (1 August 1960 – 27 October 1960)

[38] Telegram, Havana to External, "Arrest of Counter-Revolutionary" 7 November 1961: NAC, RG 25 Vol/Box 5352 File 10224-40 Part 11

[39] Letter Havana to External L-239 14 March 1961: NAC, RG 25 Box 5351 File 10224-40 Part 10 (1 November 1960 - 14 March 1961)

[40] Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days*, Houghton-Mifflin, 1965, p. 293

[41] Numbered letter, No. 401, Canadian embassy Havana to External Affairs, 16 August 1962: NAC, RG 25 Box 5352 File 10224-40 Part 12.2

to number over 40,000 Soviet troops. Like the CIA, however, he was not in a position to estimate the true extent of these forces, in part because of the secrecy with which they were deployed.

As the missile crisis worked its way to a resolution, the Canadian mission closely followed the removal of the missiles. On 30 October, only two days after Nikita Khrushchev announced the missile sites would be dismantled, some of the missiles were observed on transports.[42] On 5 November, a week afterward, embassy staff reported heavy traffic on the central highway in Pinaldelrio province near the sites and observed small convoys of heavy trucks moving to Port Mariel, where three Russian ships were docked. The trucks had 50-60 foot long trailers. While these were covered with tarpaulins, the shape of the cargo suggested missiles.[43] At the end of November, the embassy reported that a reliable human source had observed convoys of trucks with construction material and covered equipment, with a Soviet military escort, moving toward San Antonio de los Banos. Their intended purpose was not clear.[44]

Despite the military nature of some of its reporting, at no point during 1959-63 did the Canadian mission in Havana include amongst its officers a military attaché. That was not because the idea had not occurred to some.

[42] Telegram, London to External, #3879, 30 October 1962: NAC, RG 25 Vol/Box 5352 File 10224-40 Part 12.2 (2 December 1961 – 17 December 1962)
[43] Telegram Havana to External 5 November 1962: NAC, RG 25 Box 4184 File 2444-40 Pt 12
[44] Telegram Havana to External 30 November 1962: NAC, RG 25 Box 5049, File 2440-40 Vol 13

Shortly after the closing of the American embassy in Cuba in January 1961 and, of course, the departure of American military attachés, Canada's Joint Intelligence Committee discussed the possible appointment of a military attaché to the Havana embassy. It is not documented if this idea came independently to members of the committee or if it was suggested by others, Canadian or American. The Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff wrote to Norman Robertson, the Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs in February. Some months elapsed before Robertson, sometimes not the most efficient bureaucrat, answered. He was obviously not keen on the proposal. After apologizing for the delay, Robertson then opted for a classic "Killers' Row" reply. "You will appreciate," he said, "there are a number of problems associated with a proposal of this nature, particularly in the light of recent events in Cuba." He indicated, however, that the Department was seeking the views of the ambassador in Cuba.[45]

Kidd did not favour the idea either. He responded with a long and negative appraisal, He argued such a request from Canada might well be regarded with great suspicion by the government of Cuba. Kidd also made some comments about military attachés that led him to mark the letter in his hand, "Not for distribution to DND."[46]

The lack of a military attaché meant the diplomats stepped into the breech. They performed such tasks as taking pictures of and writing detailed reports on the annual January Cuban military parade in Havana.[47]

The Cuba-related intelligence collection efforts of the Department of External Affairs were not limited to Cuba territory. In one curious and presumably unusual case the Department actually arranged for some modest espionage on another agency of the Canadian government.[48]

In the wake of the Cuban missile crisis, External Affairs was uncertain how thoroughly the customs officials of the Department of National Revenue were searching Cuban and Czech aircraft bound for Havana. Indeed, they were quite sceptical that the customs officials had maintained the higher level of inspections that commenced in October 1962. Their curiosity was further aroused when the Cuban government approached Canadian customs officials to propose a more streamlined set of procedures, and when National Revenue turned around and sought approval from External Affairs.

Rather than confront National Revenue directly, External Affairs arranged for DL2 to approach the RCMP, with which it often worked closely. The RCMP was asked to order its officers stationed at the affected airports, Gander and Halifax, to observe unobtrusively what National Revenue inspectors were doing when relevant aircraft landed for refuelling. The Mounties dutifully reported that the Gander customs agent normally selected two boxes

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[45] Letter, Robertson to Air Marshal F.R. Miller, Chairman, Chiefs of Staff, Department of National Defence, 8 May 1961: NAC, RG 25 Vol 5075 File 4568-40 Cuban-Canada Relations Part 6. "Killers' Row" was the not-so-kind phrase used by junior External Affairs officers in reference to the area in the East Block on Parliament Hill that housed the senior officials of their department. The row of offices was where all new policy ideas died.

[46] Personal Letter, Kidd, Havana to Starnes, External, 23 February 1962 and Despatch Havana to External, D-92, 23 February 1962: NAC, RG25 Vol. 5076 File 4568-40 Part 8

[47] Letter Havana to External L-71, 7 February 1963: NAC, RG 25 Vol/Box 5352 File 10224-40 Part 13 (18 November 1962 – 27 August 1963)

[48] This incident is related in: Memo, Economic Division to A. E. Ritchie, 29 August 1963: NAC, RG 25 Vol 5077 File 4568-40 part 12, 19 January 1963 to 11 September 1963

at random from the way-bill, had them removed from the airplanes and inspected these only, a process that involved less than 10% of the average plane's cargo. The Gander agents, however, did not actually enter the aircraft. At Halifax, the agent would enter the aircraft but only look around at the cargo. He would normally not off-load any packages or inspect them closely. Both types of searches were less thorough than those conducted in October 1962, although they amounted to more of an inspection than most aircraft would receive while in transit.

The effort being expended nevertheless seemed to be the degree of diligence External Affairs wanted, or at least that which it was willing to accept. It "appears to be sufficient" the assistant under-secretary was told, "to enable us to say internationally … that the aircraft are searched." In any case, the Department decided not to take corrective action. Discussing this matter further with National Revenue was something which the External Affairs officers realized "would be embarrassing to do … given the source of our information."

External Affairs did arrange for the undersecretary, Robertson, to write to his counterpart at National Revenue, reminding him that the special search procedures instituted by ministers at the time of the Cuban missile crisis had never been revoked.[49] The simplified way-bill process was rejected, however. Such would not allow Canada to claim it was still performing "searches" of the aircraft, and thus could not be approved at this time.

Disseminating the Intelligence

It is not possible to determine precisely which pieces of information were passed on to Washington. It is clear that at least some if not most of the regular telegrams from the Canadian embassy in Havana were part of the flow.[50] A March 1962 message from DL2 instructs the Havana embassy to include Washington as well as London automatically on the distribution list for all telegrams analyzing political or social developments in Cuba.[51] DL2 indicated it would assume the embassy agreed, "as in the past," that these reports could be given to American and British authorities unless they were marked "Canadian eyes only." The purpose in having the telegrams sent directly to Washington and London, of course, was to expedite them being handed on to the respective governments.

It is likely that many if not most of the embassy's numbered letters and despatches were also made available. These came to Ottawa by diplomatic bag, and would have been sent on from there. The exceptions, despatches dealing with matters of bilateral Cuban-Canadian relations such as commercial issues, were provided to the allies in edited form, if at all. In these, material relating, for example, to Canadian trade with Cuba was deleted. It is safe to assume that the sharing arrangements did not include appreciations crafted in Ottawa that underlay Canadian policy on Cuba – not the official arrangements at least.

There is no doubt that a certain category of intelligence reports went as directly as possible to Washington. These were the result of direct requests from Washington. The intelligence collection and analysis efforts of the Havana embassy staff were not solely self directed, even prior to the 1963 Hyannis summit agreement reached by Pearson and Kennedy. Such Washington inquiries were actually far from uncommon during 1961 and 1962. A similar stream of requests was made of the British embassy in Cuba. The requests appear to have been met in most if not all cases.

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[49] Robertson to deputy minister, Customs, 20 November 1963: NAC, RG25 Box 10044 File 20-1-2 Vol 1

[50] Cook letter to J. K. Starnes, loc. cit.

[51] Outgoing message to Canadian embassy Havana, 28 March 1962: NAC, RG 25 Box 5352 File 10224-40 File 12.1

A few examples will suffice. In July 1961 the United States embassy in Ottawa approached External Affairs with a lengthy list of Cuban publications it wanted the Canadian embassy in Havana to obtain and forward on a regular basis. These ranged from newspapers such as *Hoy* (the daily newspaper of the Popular Socialist [ie, Communist] Party and *Revolucion*, the daily paper of the 26th of July Movement, to more technical publications such as the *Cuban Sugar Year Book* and the *Annual Report of the Consolidated Railroads of Cuba*. While this was very much open source intelligence collection, External Affairs none the less forwarded the request to Kidd with a "personal and secret" classification.[52] Ambassador Kidd complied as best he could, but informed Ottawa that many of the items on the U.S. shopping list were no longer published. On 28 March 1962 DL2 passed on to the embassy a State Department request for a report on a television interview Fidel Castro had given two days earlier.[53] U.S. interest seems to have been particularly aroused by Castro's reported criticism of a senior government figure.

The flow of American requests reached a peak during the Cuban missile crisis. On 26 October the State Department asked for reports on Cuban reaction to President Kennedy's speech announcing discovery of the Soviet missiles and imposition of the blockade of Cuba. Three days later it wanted to know, "on an urgent basis," if Voice of America radio broadcasts were currently being received or jammed, and asked again about the latest official and unofficial reactions to recent developments. On 6 November External Affairs relayed a request for a copy of a picture of the downed American U2 spy plane that had appeared in *Revolucion*. In late November the State Department asked for "anything further Mr Kidd might send on internal developments with special respect to Castro's position and to any changes in living conditions and morale."[54]

On 17 December 1962 the State Department Cuban desk made an urgent, special request.[55] The French ambassador to Cuba had sent a sensational report suggesting the emergence of a major crisis within the Castro government. He noted Castro had not made a public speech for an extended period and that various Cuban leadership figures including President Dorticos and Raul Castro were in the process of obtaining Swiss visas or

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[52] Letter ("personal and secret"), AER, External to Kidd, Havana, 17 October 1961, and Memo, Potvin to Beaulne, 21 August 1961: NAC, RG 25 Vol. 5076 File 4568-40 Part 7

[53] Outgoing message to Canadian embassy Havana, 28 March 1962: NAC, RG 25 Box 5352 File 10224-40 File 12.1

[54] See, respectively: Telegram, Washington to External, #3139, 26 October 1962: NAC, RG 25 Box 5352 File 10224-40 Part 12.2 (2 December 1961 – 17 December 1962); telegram, Washington to External 29 October 1962 and telegram External to Havana 29 October 1962: RG 25 Box 5352 File 10224-40 Part 12.2 (2 December 1961 – 17 December 1962); RG 25 Box 4184 File 2444-40 Pt 12; telegram Havana to Washington 30 October 1962: RG 25 Vol/Box 5352 File 10224-40 Part 12.2 (2 December 1961 – 17 December 1962); telegram, Washington embassy to External Affairs 29 November 1962: Box 5049, File 2440-40 Vol 13

[55] Telegram, Washington to External Affairs, #3653, 17 December 1962: NAC, RG 25 Box 5352 File 10224-40 Vol 12.2.

making preparations for a "very long trip." This information, the French ambassador insisted, came from "unimpeachable sources." (A copy of his report was shared by the French foreign ministry with representatives of the Canadian embassy in Paris, and it is likely the State Department heard of it in the same way.)[56]

Ambassador Kidd had already been asked by Ottawa for his views when the American urgent request came in. His response was measured. Kidd said he could neither confirm nor deny reports of "violent argument" amongst the leadership group in Cuba but was clearly very skeptical that there had been an open split as a result of such argument. His analysis suggested three internal factions: one group advocating a strongly intransigent, anti-imperialist, anti-American position; another taking a more traditional communist, pro-Moscow line; and a third group favouring a more flexible, nationalist line. Kidd predicted, correctly, that there would be no major policy shirt in the near future. External Affairs was advised that the French ambassador "had a tendency to push the panic button fairly easily."[57]

[56] Telegram Paris to External #1597, 14 December 1962: NAC, RG 25 Box 5352 File 10224-40 Part 12.2 (2 December 1961 – 17 December 1962)

[57] Letter, Canadian embassy Paris to External Affairs, 20 May 1963: NAC, RG 25 Box 5352 File 10224-40 Part 13 (18 November 1962 – 27 August 1963)

For obvious reasons the American intelligence community was particularly interested in military intelligence. They asked both the British and the Canadians for such reports. In August and September 1962, for example, the British embassy in Washington passed on to its embassy requests from Washington for specific military intelligence, including estimates of the numbers of Soviet bloc personnel, evidence of new aircraft and naval equipment, and even lists of the serial numbers painted on the sides of Cuban army vehicles.[58] The diplomats were even requested to take photographs of television coverage of a Cuban military parade. (Recall that this was in the days before VCRs.)

Despite the success of American photint capabilities during the crisis of October 1962, there were limits to the technology. While reconnaissance allowed the Agency to identify a particular ship in Havana harbour, it could not always determine if personnel or equipment were being loaded or in what numbers. Finding missile installations in open fields was one thing. Determining the numbers of Soviet military in Cuba was quite another. The CIA seriously underestimated these numbers in the period leading up to the missile crisis. These problems, and the advantages of having someone on the ground in Cuba, were shown, for example, in early 1963 when the CIA was meeting with little success trying to gauge the extent of the Soviet military withdrawal from Cuba. Its inability to arrive at solid numbers was evident in the reports it was providing at the time to Kennedy's ExComm.[59]

The CIA was thus particularly interested in one report received from the British embassy in Havana, which overlooked the harbour. The report noted that a ship, the *Baikal*, had departed Havana with about 270 Russians on board. Obviously responding to an inquiry from curious American intelligence officials, the British embassy in Washington cabled its counterpart in Cuba. Were the men in uniform, he asked? Did they have Russian tags on their bags? In short, *how* did the embassy know they were Russians? Havana replied, perhaps with a sense of satisfaction. The men had arrived on unmarked military type trucks. They wore similar, distinctive shirts. They were mostly young and fair haired. Presumably, therefore, they were not Cubans. Moreover, the ambassador noted, he had himself spoken with a group of them near the docks – in Russian.[60]

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[58] Thomas, ibid., based on I.J.M. Sutherland to AD Parsons, Air Bag Telegram 11921 / 62G, Top Secret, September 17 1962. (AK 1201 / 22 / G) FO 371 / 162374

[59] John F. Kennedy Library: National Security Files, Countries, Cuba, Box 47, Central Intelligence Agency, Memorandum for the Executive Committee of the National Security Council, 'Current Status of Soviet Forces in Cuba', Top Secret, February 23 1963, and February 24 1963.

[60] Thomas, ibid., citing Ormsby-Gore, Washington to Foreign Office, Telegram 675, Priority & Secret, March 2 1963. (AK 1193 / 10 / G) FO 371 / 168202; Marchant, Havana to Foreign Office, Telegram 226, Priority & Secret, March 4 1963. (AK / 1193 / 10 /G) FO 371 / 168202.

Evaluating the Impact of the Canadian Intelligence

The Havana embassy's reporting was evidently appreciated by Ottawa. Ambassador Kidd and his deputy, Dwight Fulford, were congratulated more than once for their "excellent reporting."[61] The intelligence provided was also valued and used by Washington. A representative in the Canadian embassy in Washington remarked on the Americans enthusiasm when writing during 1963 to his DL2 contact back in Ottawa. "As you know, our United States friends have been most anxious to receive information on Cuban developments just as promptly as possible."[62] A senior Canadian official, Basil Robinson, has stated on the record that the Americans made "far greater use" of the Canadian intelligence from Cuba than has been openly acknowledged.[63]

[61] NAC, RG 25 Vol. 5076 File 4568-40 Part 8

[62] Letter, E. R. Rettie, Canadian embassy Washington to J. J. McCardle, DL2, 26 March 1963: NAC, RG 25 Box 5352 File 10224-40 Part 13 (18 November 1962 – 27 August 1963)

[63] Robinson, quoted by Commander Peter T. Haydon, RCN (Retd.), *The 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis: Canadian Involvement Reconsidered* (The Canadian Institute of Strategic Studies, 1993), p. 120. Robinson confirmed this comment in a personal interview with the author, 3 July 2002. He was in a good position to make this judgement. He was posted to the Canadian embassy in Washington during and after the Cuban missile crisis, and had previously been Prime Minister Diefenbaker's foreign policy assistant in Ottawa.

These assessments are confirmed by the research of Guto Thomas, on the basis of British Foreign Office documents. One Washington-based United Kingdom diplomat noted in early 1962 that according to American officials, "only we and the Canadians supply any real military information on Cuba."[64] The two allies were "the State Department's major source of information about internal developments in Cuba."[65]

Hard evidence of actual American use of Canadian intelligence is scanty (at least in Canadian documents). Intelligence agencies are not prone to using footnotes in their reports. Occasional references do creep into some reports, however. One such case was a general survey of developments during the Cuban missile crisis in which specific reference was made to the Canadian ambassador in Havana having reported that Castro was furious about the Russian willingness to remove the missiles and about not being consulted on this decision.[66]

Another case where information from the Canadian reports from Havana may have been utilized directly in American intelligence analysis is that of the Bow despatches of June 1961. In November of that year the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research issued Research Memorandum, RAR-7, entitled "Cuban Internal Political Situation."[67] Its opening line was a succinct summary: "Fidel Castro remains in firm control in Cuba, chiefly due to the increasing efficiency of his internal security forces." The Bureau also concluded that "The strength and security of the Castro regime is dependent mainly upon its development and control of force … The recent reorganization of the military, militia, and police bodies augment the regime's potential to combat subversion or invasion." The army and security forces are "being reinforced by a constantly growing system of political and surveillance controls, represented by the *Comités de Defensa,* numbering about 100,000." The conclusion of this memorandum was that the Cuban exile forces did not represent a significant threat, that internal opposition was now weak, and that, absent substantial foreign support, what internal opposition there was to Castro might well "gradually disintegrate."

This memorandum has some distinct parallels with the Bow despatches. That American officials found these despatches, and perhaps other Havana embassy reports, useful is confirmed from an additional source. In August 1961, Willard Matthias, the acting CIA Deputy Assistant Director for National Estimates, told the intelligence liaison from the Canadian embassy, G. C. Cook, that the Canadian reporting had favourably impressed their analysts.[68] These included Sherman Kent, one of the CIA's most senior and most respected figures, and an almost mythical personage around the Agency. Kent had been especially impressed by two recent despatches, the ones written by Bow in June. The American enthusiasm was in this case undoubtedly due in part to the fact these relatively negative reports about conditions in Cuba coincided with and reinforced their own views. That was clear

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[64] Thomas, ibid., citing GG Brown (Washington) to Edmonds, Air Bag 11921 / 62G, February 27 1962. (AK 1201 / 6) FO 371 / 162374

[65] Thomas, ibid., citing Cabinet Committee on Latin America and the Caribbean, The Cuban Problem, Note by the Foreign Office, Secret, December 12 1962. LAC(62)16 CAB 134 / 2153, quoted in Thomas, *op. cit.*

[66] Liaison Services, Central Intelligence Agency "The Cuban Situation" 1 November 1962: NAC, RG 25 Box 4184 File 2444-40 Pt 12

[67] Department of State, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, "Cuban Internal Political Situation," Research Memorandum, RAR-7, "confidential," 20 November 1961: NAC, RG 25, Vol. 5352, File 10224-40 Part II.

[68] Letter (classified secret) , G. C. Cook, Embassy of Canada, to J. K. Starnes, D.L.(2), 23 August 1961: NAC, RG 25, Vol. 5352, File 10224-40, Part II.

when Matthias went on to suggest that Canada might undertake to provide the government of Brazil with these and other despatches, in an effort to influence the new Brazilian president "in the right direction." The "right direction," of course, was toward the American view of the danger posed by Castro's revolution, and presumably not toward the somewhat different Anglo-Canadian perspective.

7. Canadian Motives: Moderate, Ingratiate, Reciprocate

Why did Canada cooperate on intelligence regarding Cuba? Why engage in these activities to the extent it did and in the manner it did?

Three possible explanations would seem to be worth exploring. First, Canada may have been seeking to influence United States views and policy toward Cuba. As it had attempted to do during the Korean War a decade earlier, albeit then quite unsuccessfully, Canada could have been seeking to "constrain" or at least moderate America.[69] Second, Canada may have been attempting to curry favour with Washington. The intelligence may have been carried out and passed on in the hope or even the expectation that this measure of assistance would reduce or offset the public and strong criticisms of Canada's relationship with Cuba often voiced in Washington, if not necessarily reduce those found in American newspapers. Third, Canada may have regarded its intelligence activities in Cuba in the broader context of allied intelligence sharing. That is, the efforts of the Havana embassy may have been seen less in political-diplomatic terms than in technical intelligence terms, and less as a departure than a continuation, albeit with some extension, of existing intelligence commitments to close allies. To put these alternative explanations in somewhat cryptic fashion, the motives in Ottawa may have been to *moderate*, to *ingratiate*, or to *reciprocate*.

Of these explanations, the evidence seems most thin with respect to the aim of moderating American policy. One of the rare articulations of such a motive can be found in a letter from the Canadian embassy in Washington one year into the Castro era, and one year before the United States broke off relations. The embassy representative is reporting on a discussion with the State Department's Cuban desk officer, who had enumerated all the communists now to be found in Castro's government. The Canadian passed his American colleague a copy of a recent despatch from Ambassador Anderson in Havana. After a quick perusal the desk officer indicated that the document would be shown not only to the American ambassador to Cuba, Philip Bonsal but also to Secretary of State Christian Herter. The Canadian embassy official suggested to Ottawa that the despatch may have "played some small part in calming down the obvious annoyance of the State Department officers over Premier Castro's repeated charges that the United States is trying by aggressive acts and various forms of conspiracy to oust the present Cuban government."[70]

Such thoughts were not in abundance within the Canadian foreign service, at home or abroad. It was quite clear to most of those who watched the politics of Cuban-American relations that this was not a subject where American flexibility was evident or to be expected. Rather, it was one where feelings ran strongly and where policies were soon deeply entrenched. The Canadian government heard or received little to suggest that any moderation of American policy was imminent or even possible.

On one occasion, however, there was a clear hint from a relatively senior source that a change in policy on Castro's Cuba might be under consideration. It came toward the end of an August 1961 meeting at the CIA between William Matthias, acting Deputy Assistant Director of the Agency, and a Canadian diplomat. After discussing their intelligence cooperation and some recent Havana despatches provided to the CIA, Mathias moved the discussion to the subject of American policy toward Cuba. He noted he had begun to hear the idea that "if you

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[69] Denis Stairs, *The Diplomacy of Constraint: Canada, the Korean War, and the United States*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974

[70] Letter, Washington to External Affairs, #138, 27 January 1960: NAC, RG 25 Box 7258 file 10224-40 Part 7.1

can't lick 'em, join 'em." His visitor was startled and questioned the likelihood of the United States seeking "an accommodation with Cuba." Mathias agreed that it would be some time before such a step could be possible politically. He left his Canadian guest, however, with "the impression that he personally though it was the only reasonable thing to do."[71]

This incident perhaps at best provides insight into the CIA itself, and thus of further evidence of the view that the CIA was not, as often assumed, simply a hotbed of cold right wing feet – to mix a few metaphors. The diplomatic record of Canadian-American relations on the matter of Cuba certainly provides few similar examples of American officials contemplating a significant shift in policy toward Cuba. It is most unlikely that many did so very often, or with any serious effect.

[71] Cook letter to J. K. Starnes, loc. cit.

Canadian officials familiar with the Cuba issue and the intelligence arrangements strongly dispute the idea that anyone in a position of responsibility in Canada would have expected the mere provision of information could change American minds on Cuba and the arch-villain, Castro.[72] "We were under no illusion," says one former Havana-based diplomat, "that our point of view, regarding accommodating Castro, would be influential" in Washington.[73] Such a notion would have been "naïve."[74] To be sure, one needs to take into account that American views on Cuba look, four decades later, to be even more fixed than they may have appeared at the time. Even taking this factor of time perspective into account, however, the "moderation" objective seems to lack empirical support.

Was the Canadian motive not to moderate but to ingratiate? Did Canadian officials approve, maintain and extend these intelligence arrangements with the aim of pleasing Washington in a difficult era and perhaps deflecting some of the heat over Canada's diplomatic and trade ties with Cuba?

If such an understanding was conjured and pursued at all it was almost certainly an implied one. The implicit understanding to be reached would have been straightforward: We help you with your intelligence problem and you avoid or at least tone down criticism of our policies.

The strongest albeit still circumstantial evidence for such an implicit understanding comes from a summit meeting between Pearson and Lyndon Johnson in August 1966. After discussing a range of international issues from Viet Nam to President deGaulle's stance on NATO, the two came, briefly, to the matter of Cuba. The prime minister offered the view that perhaps American authorities "felt it was helpful that Canada had maintained diplo[matic] representation in Havana."[75] LBJ agreed. End of that agenda item. The two leaders moved on.

The Pearson-Johnson exchange may have been an accurate reflection of American acquiescence in 1966. It is not grounds for assuming that official Washington accepted Canada's "engagement" policy toward Cuba in the first half of the decade. It did not.

Executive branch officials were not as vocal as those in the two houses of congress, but they did attempt to persuade Canada to change its Cuba policy. President Kennedy did not make any requests of Canada in this regard when he first met Diefenbaker in early 1961. The pitch came and came at a high level the following year, however. Canada's ambassador to the United States, Arnold Heeney, was called in to see Dean Rusk in the State Department on 19 February 1962. (It might be noted the intelligence arrangements requested by the United States had been in place at this point for about a year.) Rusk was polite, but suggested the Government of Canada might reconsider its policies, particularly with respect to continued trade relations.[76] The ambassador, of course, reported the meeting immediately to Ottawa. Nothing much came of the initiative, however. Nor is there any record of anyone in Ottawa commenting on the intelligence arrangements in the context of this friendly pressure. Even at such a juncture, the two issues simply do not seem to have been linked in Canadian thinking.

Further evidence that the Kennedy administration did not consider itself bound by any sort of implicit understanding not to pressure Canada on Cuba comes during the Cuban missile crisis. The broader context of the renewed push was the aftermath of the agreement President Kennedy and Premier Khrushchev reached on 28 October to resolve the crisis. The Soviet missiles sites would be dismantled; the missiles would be returned to the USSR. In return, the blockade of Cuba would end, and the U.S. would promise not to invade Cuba. Kennedy also

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[72] Interview, Basil Robinson with author, 3 July 2002, Ottawa
[73] Interview, John Graham with author, 8 July 2002, Ottawa
[74] Interviews Basil Robinson, 3 July 2002 and John Starnes, 30 June 2002, with author; Ottawa
[75] Telegram, External to Washington, 22 August 1966: NAC, RG 25 Box 10044 File 20-1-2 Vol 4
[76] Telegram, Washington to External 19 February 1962: NAC, RG25 Box 5050 File 2444-A-40 Part 1 US Quarantine

promised secretly to remove American Jupiter missiles from Turkey over the coming months. He further demanded that United Nations-organized inspections be allowed in Cuba to ensure the offensive weapons had in fact been withdrawn. Fidel Castro, however, refused to allow inspectors into Cuba.

As part of the American effort to secure the desired inspections, the State Department sent the American chargé in Ottawa, Ivan White, to External Affairs on 1 November. The request he bore was not minor. The Kennedy administration wanted Ottawa to tell the Cubans that Canada would break off diplomatic relations unless they relented and allowed the United Nations inspections.[77] The Canadian government, however, was not about to make any such demand, much less contemplate actually breaking relations. With the minister's approval, External Affairs drafted a letter to Castro underscoring Canada's belief that inspections of Cuba were important to peace and security, and expressing its hope that Cuba might agree to the verification measures. There was not even a direct request, let alone a threat. The letter was duly delivered by Ambassador Kidd to the Cuban foreign minister. Predictably it had no effect.

The importance of this incident lies not in its unfolding but rather in the American initiative. It would be most surprising if the State Department would make such a request of Ottawa in the face of some sort of bilateral understanding, even an implicit understanding, that Canada's intelligence efforts in Cuba were linked to American acceptance of Canadian policy.

It could be argued perhaps that the link only existed in the minds of the Canadians, and existed there only in the form of a hope, as opposed to being an accepted, mutually understood trade-off. If so, then the American request would not have been seen in Washington as a breach of faith. But, if this were the case, the State Department request still might have been expected to raise some concerns within External Affairs, especially when coupled with the Rusk initiative some months earlier. Canada was again being brought under pressure to change its policies. If these arrangements had been supported in Ottawa on the assumption that the intelligence assistance thus provided would at least buy Canada some slack, then that premise had been sorely tested if not proven fallacious. That no such re-consideration seems to have occurred suggests there was no such generally assumed premise. Indeed, within months Canada would be accepting without any apparent qualms a significant upgrading of its intelligence activities.

The "ingratiate" thesis seems no more strongly supported than the "moderate" explanation. Two down, one to go.

The third option, so to speak, was the notion that Canada accepted and undertook to share intelligence information and to engage in tasked intelligence activities in Cuba as part of its perceived obligation to cooperate in on-going allied intelligence endeavours. This explanation seems much more persuasive than the previous two. There is admittedly little in the way of hard evidence to support it, at least in the sense of documents where the motive is explicated. The explanation simply rings true given what is known about intelligence sharing amongst the western allies, particularly Canada, the United States and Britain.

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[77] Memorandum to the Minster, 1 November 1962: NAC, RG 25 Vol 4184 File 2444-40, Part 12; Memorandum to file, H. B. Robinson, 1 November 1962: NAC, RG 25 Box 3176, Cuba 1960-64.

The norm of reciprocity is a key one in the intelligence area. You cannot expect to receive volumes of intelligence from others if you have nothing to offer them in return. In this sense, the intelligence world has its own measures of what the NATO alliance refers to as burden sharing. The reciprocity norm was something that senior officials such as Norman Robertson understood.[78] Moreover, the opportunity to provide intelligence on a matter of some concern to an ally was not a chance Canada had often. In contrast to some of his External Affairs colleagues, the under-secretary also believed in the importance of intelligence collection and analysis. And, as noted earlier, it was Robertson who either approved the original American request in 1961 to provide intelligence or who secured the minister's and perhaps the prime minister's approval for it.

Conclusion

Canada's Havana embassy intelligence operations show rather starkly the extent to which diplomatic work is or can become intelligence work, and the error in the common notion that Canada does not engage in foreign intelligence gathering. Canada does engage in foreign intelligence gathering and has done so for decades, back through the heights of the U.S. – Cuban not-so cold war of the 1960s, and beyond. The External Affairs operations in Cuba remind us that much critical foreign intelligence is collected not by spies or by high-tech electronic eavesdropping, but by diplomats.

Thus, during the height of the Cold War Canada's Department of External Affairs engaged in intelligence activities in a country with which Canada steadfastly, and in the face of some adversity, maintained friendly relations, albeit one with which it did not have a close relationship. As noted earlier, this intelligence gathering, often at the behest of the United States, might seem out of character for a helpful fixing, honest broker mediator. The paradox here is only apparent, and stems from the Pollyanna-ish element in much thinking about Canada's role in world affairs.

Intelligence collection and analysis is a normal part of international affairs and a standard and important instrument of policy. For all. There is nothing inconsistent in a middle power aiming to keep open diplomatic and economic ties with a country at the centre of one of the major disputes of the cold war period while at the same time engaging in intelligence activities related to that dispute. Indeed, to some extent, these activities could be considered as part and parcel of a middle power aiming or hoping to facilitate an eventual reconciliation, even if they were not mounted to serve that end. The primary factor behind the Canadian decision to mount the Havana embassy operations seems to have been its commitment to existing western intelligence sharing arrangements and its recognition of the importance of reciprocity in such collaboration.

Canadian intelligence may not often have been influential in Washington. To take but one prominent example, the Canadian and British reports on the lack of organized opposition to the Castro government in the months preceding the Bay of Pigs operation did not succeed in discouraging the Kennedy administration from launching that undertaking. Then again, neither did a message intercepted by the CIA from the Soviet embassy in Mexico accurately reporting to Moscow the invasion date of that "secret" operation.

It is not clear from the available evidence how long the intelligence operations in and about Cuba persisted. They certainly continued through the early and mid 1960s. The passing of the Cold War may have brought down the curtain on these operations, if they had not already come to an end. Or, they may continue today. After all, the Canadian embassy in Havana remains open and the American embassy remains closed, more than forty years after the Eisenhower administration broke off relations with the government of Fidel Castro.

[78] Interview, Basil Robinson with author, 3 July 2002