

INTERVIEW WITH

Gordon Gray

by

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on

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for

Dwight D. Eisenhower Library



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W. Wilson Gray  
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This interview is being taped with Mr. Gordon Gray on June 25, 1975 in Mr. Gray's office in Washington, D.C. Present for the interview, Mr. Gray, and the interviewer is Dr. Burg, Eisenhower Library staff.

DR. BURG: Mr. Gray, let me pose this question to you: As we both know the newspapers now are full of material concerning the CIA [Central Intelligence Agency] activities and particularly allegations that the CIA was involved in assassination plots against various leaders, some of them in Latin America--Fidel Castro is one such who's been named. We would be most interested in knowing if in your work, particularly as a special assistant in the White House, if any such plans were discussed during the Eisenhower administration.

MR. GRAY: Well, let me first speak about organization in the White House. Of course, the National Security Council has been used in a different way by every President who has served since, well, the National Security Act of '47 which created the Central Intelligence Agency. At the risk of oversimplification and also perhaps considering some slight inaccuracies, but generally speaking my experience under President Truman--and I should say that in the original act of 1947, as you know, the secretaries of the services were



members of the National Security Council and I was secretary of the army in '49 and '50--the act was amended in 1949 I believe. And among the changes made was the elimination of the service secretaries from the National Security Council and leaving only the secretary of defense and I guess the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff as the military adviser. So I often say and perhaps I said this to Mr. Hopper--I'm one of two living men who've ever been kicked off the National Security Council, the other one being Stuart Symington who was Secretary of the Air Force, and at one time we were members because we were service secretaries and then in '49 this was changed. So my association with the National Security Council actually goes back to, 1949 when I was a member, briefly. Subsequently and in 1950, as the record will show, I went to Chapel Hill [North Carolina] for five years. I came back here in about July of '55 to become assistant secretary of defense for international security affairs in the Eisenhower administration and as such I was--Mr. [Charles E.] Wilson, then the secretary of defense--I was Mr. Wilson's back-up, if you will, for the National Security Council. I served on the



Planning Board of the NSC, and I assume that records are clear as to what the Planning Board is. If you want to go into that, I'll--

BURG: Setting up the agendas--

GRAY: Well, really it's preparing the draft policy papers mostly. The agendas were really set by the special assistant, originally with the approval of the President, but after a while he had sufficient confidence in me not to be concerned that I wouldn't schedule improperly what should be on the agenda. In any event, I was the defense member of the planning board and accompanied Mr. Wilson to NSC meetings. I briefed him in advance of the meetings to the extent that he would allow himself to be briefed, and it was not always easy to brief him.

BURG: Was that a personality quirk of his?



GRAY: Yes, that's right. He would take a "trip around the world," as he expressed it. We'd get on some subject and then he'd get in some reminiscence about General Motors or

something else and frequently he would go to a National Security Council meeting really not fully briefed about the issues which were coming up, either because he didn't feel that he needed to be briefed--and he was a very bright man; I mean he's been much maligned, I think, by the press--or because he just would get his mind on something else. But in any event, I went with him to the NSC meetings, all of them.

BURG: So we might be able then to say, Mr. Gray, that if this were a lack in Mr. Wilson, if it tended to reduce his effectiveness, the lack was in some part, perhaps totally, made up by the fact that you were always present with him. And you had the specific knowledge yourself.

GRAY: Frankly, I wouldn't go that far, but it's possible to put that interpretation on it. No, to be perfectly honest about it, I think he didn't really feel the need of being briefed. He was a well-informed man, and sometimes I was frustrated because there were difficult issues and I wanted to make sure that he understood them. Not that he would



need any more than anybody else to understand, but I was eager that the defense department was properly represented at the meeting. And sometimes I worried that he wasn't properly prepared, but, in all honesty, I can say that I don't remember any occasion when he embarrassed me by this lack of preparation. My point is that I know the National Security Council and its sub-groups pretty well because then following my service in that capacity I became director of ODM, no longer in existence, of course, that's the Office of Defense Mobilization, and at that time I was a statutory member of the National Security Council. So then I was attending the council meetings in my own right and then when I left the office of ODM to become a special assistant to President Eisenhower, the National Security Council was my responsibility. So, for a period of from July '55 until the end of the Eisenhower administration, I was constantly associated with the NSC, either as a back-up to Mr. Wilson, as a member or as a person responsible. I don't want to make any particular point of this, but, well perhaps I do--I read in the papers today about the senate select committee demanding



the minutes of the National Security Council meetings. Well there were no minutes of the National Security Council meetings, at least as I knew it. Now I'll get into a little more detail on that and it may be that this is covered in the Hopper interviews--I'm not just sure--in terms of whether there were minutes or not. I've said all of this to indicate that I'm not speaking in a vacuum when it comes to the National Security Council.

Now, as to the organization in the White House when, for what--two and a half years I served as special assistant to President Eisenhower--that was a staff job and so considered by the President and by me, unlike, for example, [Henry] Kissinger's performance where he's an operator as well as staff. General Eisenhower never would have had, I think, anybody in that position in an operating capacity. It was purely staff and therefore a much smaller, more narrowly-based function than now. Now it gets a little confused because he's also secretary of state. But I suspect that it was more narrow even than the functions performed by McGeorge Bundy and Walt Rostow and other later special



assistants. My responsibility was the National Security Council and such other responsibilities as the President chose to give me. And in those days, as you will probably find when you talk with General [Andrew] Goodpaster, he and I shared National Security responsibilities in a very happy way. In later years it was not Goodpaster and Gray; it was Bundy or Rostow or Kissinger--who else? The difference being this: I was more concerned with longer range policy planning, foreign policy, foreign military policy; whereas Andy, who had the title I think of staff secretary and therefore he had a lot of other duties with the respect to White House staff, he was sort of, if I can use a vernacular expression, he was sort of the spot man for the President. In other words, if the President wanted some message to go the chairman of the joint chiefs or if he was involved in something of immediacy, he would normally turn to Goodpaster. Goodpaster was his liaison with the military, to some extent with the intelligence agencies, and our duties therefore tended to overlap. And as John Eisenhower wrote in his book, I believe he adverted to this, he pointed out if Goodpaster



and Gray had not been men of goodwill and mutual admiration, we could have had a constant donnybrook in the White House because our responsibilities did overlap and intertwine. We avoided difficulty by keeping each other fully informed. And I think he will tell you that anything he should have known he was told by me, and anything that he knew that impinged upon my responsibilities I was fully aware of. And we saw each other, I would say, practically on a daily basis.

BURG: The contact maintained basically through conversation.

GRAY: Yes.

BURG: Rather than memorandum.

GRAY: No, no. Practically nothing by the way of memoranda, I think. For example, I'd go into the President's office sometimes to discuss, well let me say, you read today about the Forty Committee. When I first became special assistant this committee was known as the Fifty-Four Twelve Committee. And it was called that because that was the number of the



Security Council paper which established the committee and gave it its charter for oversight of covert operations, Fifty-Four Twelve meaning that this was the twelfth paper adopted by the council in 1954. That committee began to get some visibility in the press and otherwise and so I changed the name of it. Let me digress to say that my cure for a lot of evils in government would be simply to change the name of the organization. And when I say evils, assumed evils, press imbued to the government. I'd just frequently change the names of these organizations. But in any event we called it then the Special Group, subsequently and after I left the White House it was called, I think, the Three-O-Three Committee because it met in Room 303 in the Old Executive Office Building. It may have had one other name change until it finally became now the Forty Committee. And if I were running the government, I'd change the name of it again. In any event, if I had, as I sometimes did, occasion to go and talk to the President about some proposed action of the Fifty-Four Twelve Committee or the Special Group, I would without fail stop on the way out in Andy's office and



tell him that I discussed such and such with the President and his decision was so and so. And he did the same with me in almost everything, well, in everything that had any real relationship to our mutual and common responsibilities.

BURG: Could I ask you, Mr. Gray, did you come to this working relationship just because it was the very nature of your work that clearly this was a way to solve it, or had one of you advanced this solution to the other?

GRAY: Well I hope you'll ask Andy that question because his recollection may be clearer than mine. Let me say that he was in place before I was. In other words, he succeeded a man, an army officer whose name I think was Carroll.

BURG: Pete Carroll.

GRAY: Pete Carroll whom I really, I think, never knew or not well. And Andy was on board, and I've forgotten for how long, before I came into the job when I succeeded Bobby Cutler. So that my guess is that Pete Carroll had done--no I'm wrong about that because--I was going to say



that he did both jobs, he didn't, because Bobby Cutler was the first special assistant to General Eisenhower for national security affairs and he organized the council and its procedures and his organization procedures stayed substantially the same for the whole Eisenhower administration. So he and Carroll were there together. I'm not clear what Carroll's duties were but perhaps the same as Andy's; that is as immediate military aide kind of thing, although he was not called military aide.

BURG: No. That's my impression though that it would do the same sort of things. Carroll, too, a military man.

GRAY: Right. I never knew Carroll. I know that the President thought highly of him and I think that Bobby Cutler did. I should say, the record will show, but I'd like to say now that Cutler organized the National Security Council. He was succeeded when he first left that job by Dillon Anderson, now deceased, who was succeeded by Bill Jackson, now deceased, William Harding Jackson, and then Bobby Cutler came back in the government and I succeeded him. Now his exposure--and I



think his book indicates this--his exposure to that machinery really came during the rather brief period when he served as my deputy on the old Psychological Strategy Board.

BURG: That was in the Truman administration.

GRAY: That was in the Truman administration. The PSB as it was known was somewhat abortive. There are many reasons for this including its non-acceptance by established government agencies, particularly the state department, which is understandable because my view of what PSB should have been doing would have had it somewhat invade the state department responsibilities and the state department didn't cotton to this. It was, however, the forerunner of the old OCB [Operations Coordinating Board] and therefore it had, I think, an important and useful existence in the various evolutions that take place in government. It was a place where people in the important departments came together and really discussed and in many, many instances settled difficult questions below the level of the National Security Council. Well in any event, Bobby Cutler as my deputy on the PSB was made the PSB



representative on a body which was the forerunner, I think, of the planning board, and I've forgotten what that committee was called. It's easy to find because I'm sure it's in his book.

BURG: We'll be able to find it.

GRAY: And he became interested in and knowledgeable about this part of the government which is in a way a mysterious part of the government. So few people understand what the National Security Council is. My view of the council is that it is simply the President in council. You read today about the National Security Council says this; the National Security Council denies this; simply not so by statute or otherwise. The National Security Council doesn't exist except as a body advising the President and that's all it is; it's advisory to the President. And you cannot have, in my judgment, a meeting of the National Security Council in the absence of the President unless you have an acting President. It was suggested to me at various times, not consistently but it was suggested, by people highly placed in government



that we should have what I would call rump sessions of the NSC which I always declined to have because the thought being that some of these big issues could be discussed and sort of thrashed out and then perhaps save the President's time. Well, it was my judgment and I think the correct one that the President wanted to be involved and he was involved, and I never acceded to these suggestions about rump sessions.

BURG: It would be like having a rump session of the cabinet without the President.

GRAY: That's right, yes. But even more so because I think by virtue, you know you've raised a question, if I've ever thought of it I've certainly forgotten it. I'm not sure the cabinet is established by law.

BURG: No, the cabinet is not a part of the United States constitution.

GRAY: Well, nor is the National Security Council. But it is established by law and--

BURG: It seems to me that the NSC is a step below the cabinet

with a more limited frame of reference to which it addresses itself. But it is advisory.

GRAY: Well I would agree with the second part of that--I think it has a more limited and specific frame of reference. I do not agree that it's a step below--

BURG: Oh, you wouldn't. I suppose if one looks at it from the standpoint of the influence it can have, the potential influence it can have, perhaps this is right; it should not be placed a step below. I don't think of it in terms, really, of an organizational chart I suppose, but thinking mainly that the National Security Council addresses itself to, let's say, a narrower range of problems perhaps than one might find in the cabinet.

GRAY: That's right. Well, to oversimplify, I'd say that, at least as I knew the council, it was concerned practically not at all with domestic matters and the cabinet is concerned practically not at all with international matters. Now that's an oversimplification because I suppose the cabinet gets into wheat deals--but in terms of diplomatic and foreign military



policy, I think the cabinet is scarcely involved. It may have been before the National Security Act of 1947, but I had the privilege of attending cabinet meetings when I was special assistant and I attended only those when I knew there was something on the agenda that I thought might impact on NSC. And of course I attended cabinet meetings when I was director of ODM, and they were largely concerned with domestic matters, the cabinet meetings. I've talked a great deal to get to the point of, I suppose we started out--

BURG: Not at all, because this has the happy facility of bringing into focus this group and where it's placed in the system and how it functions, which I'm very pleased to have.

GRAY: Well as the records will show, except during some periods of illness, the President, I can't say without fail-- that's like saying never, but there was a regular meeting of the National Security Council every Thursday. This has not been the case since Eisenhower. And people, this was the members of the council and others who attended, never had a conflicting engagement. I mean there was nothing more



important to the President nor to the members of the council than a National Security Council meeting.

Well, I've referred to current news stories which themselves contain references to the minutes, et cetera. Now let me explain something about the council as it operated under President Eisenhower. There was always a record of action. That is to say, after the meeting was over, I, with the assistance of the executive secretary of the council, Jimmie Lay, would prepare a rather brief document which is known as a record of action which simply recorded the decisions the President had made and bear in mind these were presidential decisions, they were not National Security Council decisions. A brief record of the decision and sometimes some explanatory material; these minutes, or these records of action--I'm sorry, that was a Freudian slip, they weren't minutes--these records of action were circulated to the members of the council for comment as to accuracy.



BURG: Would that have been done on the same day, Mr. Gray?

GRAY: It would have been within forty-eight hours, I'd say. In the usual case, they would come back without comment.

Occasionally some department would enter a reclamation. I remember one particular one which involved, well this was in the basic national security policy paper and the state department objected to my record as to what the President decided and we had quite a little negotiation. This had to do with, as I recall it, the nature and number of our troops in Europe and what they should be prepared to do, et cetera, this kind of thing. And I must say more usually than not the President came down on my side of the interpretation of the record of the decision made in the council, but there were reclamations put forward from time to time. But in any event the record of action then became one which everybody knew, everybody understood and accepted because it was a presidential decision. And they knew what it meant; they were there; they heard the arguments for and against if there were any; and they knew the reasons for the President's decision. Now in the case of General Eisenhower, and I'm not sure this is on the public record but I think that perhaps it's time that it might be if it isn't. As I understand it, in the early days he instructed Robert Cutler that



he only wanted what I've been talking about; that is records of action of the council of--

[Interruption]

GRAY: He instructed, as I understand it and I was not present --I can only say this is what Robert Cutler told me--who incidentally was a dear friend of mine through the years from late '47 until his death. As I understand it, the President told Robert Cutler he wanted no transcript kept of the discussion; he only wanted what the council actually decided recorded.

BURG: Could I ask you at this point, sir, Art [L. Arthur] Minnich did keep minutes in the cabinet meetings and I think Brad Patterson kept the record of action; there happened to be two sets kept there. Did you ever happen to hear why this same procedure was not followed in NSC?

GRAY: Well, I'm just about to tell you that it was.

BURG: Sorry about that.

[Laughter]



GRAY: Yes, I remember Brad Patterson and Art Minnich very well. Well, the President instructed Robert Cutler not to keep a record of the discussions because the President felt, at least at the time that he started his presidency, that some of these things would be so highly privileged that there should be no record of them at all, I mean some of the discussions. But he did want the record of what was done, which was necessary. As I understand it, Robert Cutler simply ignored this instruction. He brought onto his staff a rather eminent historian named Dr. [S.] Everett Gleason, who was a scholar. He wrote some books with Bill [William] Langer at Harvard, European history I guess. And so there at the council table at every council meeting was a special assistant, Jimmie Lay, and Everett Gleason, and Gleason sitting there writing. I never understood why the President at one point didn't say, "What the hell is this fellow doing?" But he never asked me and whether he ever asked Cutler or Anderson or Jackson, I don't know. So Everett Gleason did keep a running account of the discussions. Shortly before, let's see, my recollection is dim about



dates, but it seems to me that Gleason left the NSC staff before the end of the Eisenhower administration. But in any event I do remember taking Gleason--maybe he came back to Washington or came back to the office for this purpose--I remember taking Everett Gleason to the President with two stacks of books about two or three feet high which were his handwritten--now my memory is bad--whether he'd ever put those in a typewriter or whether they were handwritten, I've forgotten. But in any event, they were his notes of all the National Security Council meetings.

BURG: You're describing a stack perhaps as high as two and a half to three feet.

GRAY: I'll say two feet, two stacks about two feet each.

BURG: Each stack about two feet. That would seem to mean that they probably are not shorthand notebooks.

GRAY: No, no. No, no. This is longhand. Longhand. Yes. They were longhand and whether he ever put it into type I've really forgotten. But the point is that there was this



record, and for that reason historians, whenever they get access to all the presidential papers, will find the most complete record--and I'm sharing the prejudice you earlier expressed about the Eisenhower years--I don't think it's a prejudice, I think that the historians will find that there's a more complete record of what was done in the field of foreign and foreign military affairs, policy making, than in any other President, because subsequent Presidents at times ran the National Security Council out of their hip pockets. And you know they had weekly luncheons and I just don't think the records are there. Now these notes by Everett Gleason went to [Fort] Ritchie and I think are now at Abilene. You don't remember seeing them?



BURG: I don't remember seeing them, no. But that's all right. My work doesn't tend to be in the archives section so they may well be there and let's hope that they are.

GRAY: I think without being sure of this that everything that was at Ritchie went to Abilene. I don't know this, but I suspect. I do know of one other thing--I'm going to talk

about Cuba in a few minutes--but I'd like to sort of clean up this business of any documentation of the National Security Council meetings. In the Eisenhower administration, I repeat, there were records of action, copies of which are with his papers and I assume copies remain in the government. I'm reasonably sure they did. There was only one copy, however, of Gleason's notes and that went to Ritchie and now presumably is at Abilene.

BURG: Now Gleason came to you with these notes?



GRAY: No, Gleason continued after I succeeded Cutler, performed his function while I was special assistant. What I said was, it's my recollection he left government maybe a couple of months before the Eisenhower administration went out of office. I'm not even sure of this, but I have some recollection that Gleason left, and I've forgotten how we filled this void afterwards, but in the transition phase as it were, after the election, and President Eisenhower had told everybody in his staff, but me in very special terms, to leave everything in apple-pie order for President Kennedy,

and we sought to do this. But it was in the transition period, when I say transition--after the election and before the inaugural, that I presented these notes of the National Security Council meetings to the President and I took Everett Gleason along because he had done it, you see, and the President at least appeared surprised. I think perhaps he was surprised because he remembered having given this order to Cutler. But he was delighted.

BURG: Did he mention the fact that he had instructed Cutler not to do this?

GRAY: No, no he didn't say anything about him, but he picked up a copy of the book and he said, "By golly, this is great. This is wonderful." So presumably these papers are at Abilene and I would hope that they'll soon be open to scholars. Nobody can really write the history of the Eisenhower years without access to these papers--not adequately in my judgment. And I don't know, for example, who's in control; I have the impression that John Eisenhower sort of is in control of his father's papers--but I'd like to see the Eisenhower papers be made available to scholars.



BURG: There is an Eisenhower committee which he heads and on which serve Roemer McPhee, Bill [William] Hopkins, possibly [William] Horkan--I may be leaving someone out. But this committee, under the chairmanship of John Eisenhower, periodically reviews the more significant papers so that they're being opened as quickly as this can be done.

GRAY: Let me turn now to a specific subject which I think is entirely relevant to the question of assassination, which is where we came in I think. At least this is what John informed us it was on.



BURG: Well we certainly thank you for these background things.

GRAY: Well I hope that it's not a burden to your job to have all this. You probably will want to edit a lot of this stuff out, but I've given one instance in which I think the President's orders were disregarded. I personally was involved in another somewhat similar situation, although not quite as direct. When I became special assistant (and I can't tell you how long after I became special assistant this conversation took place--and this may appear in the Columbia project

interview) the President spoke to Allen Dulles and me together, I think, giving me the instruction and Allen that there was to be only one copy of minutes, if you will, of what we then called the Fifty-Four Twelve Committee, now the so-called Forty Committee, and that one copy should be in the central files of the DCI [Director, Central Intelligence Agency], then Allen Dulles. General Eisenhower was perhaps more security conscious or as security conscious as any President we've had in history. He was well aware of the very sensitive nature of the subjects considered by the Forty Committee. And whereas he didn't want to block out history, in other words, whereas he felt there had to be a record of what was done by this committee, he didn't want copies of what they did floating around the government, even in the hands of a man--I have to say he trusted me or I wouldn't have been in that job--he didn't even want me to have copies of the minutes or records of the so-called, now, Forty Committee. So he instructed Allen and me that only one copy should be made of actions of this committee. I didn't chafe under this at all; in fact I thought it was a



wise decision. And so far as I know, this order was followed with the exception that I'm going to come to in a moment.

In about February or March--I suspect March but again this is in 1960 and, well, fifteen years ago--I remember that Allen Dulles asked me for a meeting with the President to discuss a program of action designed to harass Fidel Castro, and I've chosen my words very carefully--designed to harass Fidel Castro. I set up the meeting with the President.

I've recently had some conversations--this is parenthetical--with Don Wilson [Assistant Director, Eisenhower Library] and with Bill Colby [Director, CIA] about all of this. I may have written some of this to Don Wilson, but I'm sort of glad to get it on this record in any event. I set up the meeting at Allen's request. I'm sure he was accompanied by some of his aides in the agency, but who else was present I just don't remember. And he wanted the President to approve a program which consisted primarily and I think solely of sabotaging sugar refineries as a harassment and impediment, if you will, to Castro and his operation of his government. I remember there were schematic drawings of sugar refineries,



colored drawings, because Allen was showing the President how this sabotage was going to be effected. The President listened very patiently to this presentation and he said, "Well," as I recall it, "Allen this is fine, but if you're going to make any move against Castro, don't just fool around with sugar refineries. Let's get a program which will really do something about Castro."

And so Allen said, "Yes, Sir."

And he came back in what, a week, two weeks, four weeks, I can't remember, and this would have been, I'm reasonably sure, in March with a four-point program which was typewritten, and Allen read this program verbatim from the typewritten pages he had in his hand to make sure that he was proposing to the President something that would be understood by the President and would be in writing afterwards. I haven't expressed this very well, but Allen was very careful to read this document. As I recall it, it consisted of a four-point program. Sabotage, certainly would have been one of them; more effective economic sanctions; propaganda activities, which resulted specifically in that Swan Island



radio being established, propaganda station beamed to Havana; and the training of Cuban exiles. And this was the four-point program.



BURG: And the training, I presume, of a military nature?

GRAY: Paramilitary training, yes. In those days, back in March of '60, the thought was infiltration of small teams of trained people. There was never any thought in March of 1960 of an invasion of Cuba. But the President had authorized this program, one part of which was the training and equipping, at that time numbers unspecified, of Cuban exiles. The President gave his approval. He approved the document that Allen Dulles read to him. And it then went back in whatever the CIA or the DCI files were.

Now at the risk of having this thing quite confused, let me put in a perhaps a lengthy parenthetical statement. Perhaps a year ago I received word from a Dr. [Jack B.] Pfeiffer, an historian with the Central Intelligence Agency, well, end parenthesis--I'll have to come back to this later because chronology is going to be confused.

BURG: Pfeiffer, by the way, spelled--

GRAY: P-f--Moravian.

BURG: Germanic type.

GRAY: Well, I'm being more particular when I say probably Moravian. Anyway, P-f-e-i-f-f-e-r.

BURG: Yes. But you would rather reserve that statement for a moment.

GRAY: I'll come back to that in a minute because it would be more meaningful later.

BURG: Could I then ask one question before you move on?

GRAY: Sure.

BURG: With regard to the training of Cuban exiles--did Mr. Dulles's paper, his four-page paper, specify the kind of training that he proposed to give these exiles? Or was the President, in effect, agreeing to an unspecified kind of training?



GRAY: My recollection is that it was largely unspecified, except I would say the paper didn't contemplate artillery training. I mean I think it was more infantry type, small arms--

BURG: Small arms.

GRAY: This is my recollection.

BURG: And I'll ask one more thing: Is it now your impression that that training would be small arms training for units which would be organized, let us say, somewhat along an American pattern of squad, platoon, company--

GRAY: Small teams. Infiltrate.

BURG: Almost like commando units then.

GRAY: Okay. Yes, I--

BURG: That would be a term you think you could accept for that.

GRAY: I think so. But, anyway small teams. In those days



in February or March, whenever it was in 1960, which was a little less than a year before President Eisenhower left office, the original thought was infiltration of small teams, really a small operation as compared to what actually took place.

BURG: For purposes of sabotage, Mr. Gray?

GRAY: No, sabotage was a different operation. It was hoped that these small teams could actually get the population with them and that there would be an uprising against Castro and that these small teams could take care of the Cuban military.

BURG: I see. So they could form cadres within Cuba.

GRAY: Yes. There was a lot of discussion that went on in later meetings which I'm going to advert to in a minute about forming a government in exile, probably in Miami, I don't know, so that when this paramilitary action, whatever it might be, took place this government in exile could proclaim itself the constituted government of Cuba and move to Havana.



BURG: That sounds so much like what the General would have been familiar with while he was in England and later on when he moved onto the continent in 1944. In effect, the government in exile, whether Polish or Norwegian or Dutch, the resistance building--

GRAY: And he was really very much interested in the government in exile portion of this preparation for a move against Castro.

Anyway, that one memorandum that Allen read from, I now know went back into the central files, or the DCI files. Following that meeting, I had a hunch--and I saw no reason to keep a record of that because I knew that that would be preserved--but following that meeting I had a hunch that this Cuban thing would develop into something more than the ordinary covert action taken against some foreign leadership. And so, contrary to the President's instructions, I made careful memoranda of every meeting he had on Cuba, on the subject of Cuba, all during 1960 and into '61, if there were any meetings in January.



BURG: Meetings, for example, of the NSC?

GRAY: No, no.

BURG: Or private meetings--

GRAY: These were private meetings with the President.

BURG:--with Allen Dulles.

GRAY: Well, the one thing I can't remember is whether these meetings were under the auspices of what we were then calling Special Group or whether it was really the President, Dulles, and Gray. I'm sorry, I just can't remember whether they were officially, if you will, Special Group meetings.

Although I do know that as the year went along, the other departments involved, state and defense, were brought into the meetings and towards the end of the year actually Mr. [Thomas] Gates and whoever then was chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and some high-ranking state department official, secretary or undersecretary, attended some of these meetings. But in any event, this is easy enough to



establish if anybody wants to try to do so because these papers are at Abilene, these memoranda, and the memoranda would certainly disclose who was present at the meeting, each memorandum would disclose it. So unbeknownst to the President again, I was keeping a record, a very careful record, of everything that was said in these meetings about Cuba because I had a gut feeling, sometimes you're lucky enough to have, that this could become quite important.

BURG: You're taking the notes physically during the meetings or recording it immediately after you got back to your office?

GRAY: Taking notes during the meeting and dictating to my confidential secretary; they are all typewritten. No copies, just the original.

BURG: And the General didn't notice you doing that anymore than he noticed Dr. Gleason.

GRAY: I just think he just didn't pay attention. Well I never told him that I'd done this until after the Bay of Pigs. I think he went out of office not knowing that these



memoranda existed. And they went with all of my papers, and I had scores, dozens, hundreds, I don't know, of memoranda of meetings with the President which didn't relate to Cuba, all in only one copy. I'm sorry I don't have copies of these things now myself. And they went with all of my National Security Council materials to Ritchie and now I know that they're at Abilene. After the Bay of Pigs, I called General Eisenhower up--he was at Gettysburg of course--with details of some of this. John would remember perhaps better than I. Are you going to interview him or have you on these general subjects?

BURG: I will.

GRAY: Well, I would suggest you jog his recollection. My recollection is that as soon as the Bay of Pigs occurred and there began to be this spate of statements by people like Stuart Udall, then secretary of the interior who didn't know his elbow from third base about national security affairs, and others that the Kennedy administration had just been stuck with the Eisenhower military plan; there's was no way



they could avoid going through with it and so forth, which was a bunch of nonsense, of course.

BURG: They were implying a military plan of great dimensions, great complexity, on-going, difficult to stop.

GRAY: That's right.

BURG: Where your contention is, the only thing military was this training of--

GRAY: That's right.

BURG: --paramilitary groups.

GRAY: And I would have to say that as the year went on, they began to talk in terms of larger sized units.

BURG: That is the year 1960.



GRAY: Yes. And one thing I do remember, and I think the memoranda will reflect this, one thing the President said in virtually every one of these meetings was this: "Now boys, if you don't intend to go through with this, let's stop talking about it."

[Interruption]

GRAY: In any event, as the year went on the talk was more of units more resembling our military than guerrilla, if you will, trained people. Although, if there was ever any unit training, I'm just not sure. Well in any event I called the General up and I said, after all these public statements began to come out, "Would you like to see a record of all of your conversations about Cuba?"

He said, "I think I'd give my right arm to have such, but of course there isn't anything."

I said, "There is."

And he said, "Well, where is it?"

And I said, "It went with my papers to Ritchie."

So somehow, and John would remember this better than I, what I think happened was that the General asked John to find these memoranda at Ritchie and to bring them to Gettysburg. And he asked me how quickly I could get up there, and so very soon I got up there, and John had all these memoranda, and we went through them. The President read them word for word--"By golly, that's right," "Remember this," and he



came to one, he said, "This is wrong."

I said, "Well, all right sir, what is it?" I'd used the word planning, and, of course, he being a military man the word planning had a very special, precise meaning to him.

And he said, "We did no military planning," which is correct. I mean, for example, I never heard of the Bay of Pigs until this thing took place. I mean, there was no military plan. The only thing that he had authorized and he discussed was the organizing, training and equipping of Cuban exiles. As long as he was President, there was no plan as to how they would be, where they would be landed, how they would be transported--there was no military planning is the point.

BURG: Or even when.

GRAY: That's right. Oh, yes. Absolutely.

So he said, "There wasn't any planning."

And I said, "Well, that's right, Mr. President."

So he said, "With your permission I'm going to have this page rewritten to reflect the facts."



I said, "That's fine with me." And we agreed on the language which, I don't know whether it was program or something, but we took the word planning out because there actually hadn't been any planning, and I guess John got the page retyped. I've written a memorandum about this, I think, for Don Wilson. I think I've described this thing once before, perhaps in a letter which would be at Abilene. But I invite you to check John Eisenhower's memory on this. I'm sure he'll remember it.

BURG: So, if nothing else, we can assume that one page of the typewritten notes prepared by your confidential secretary, one page will appear in a different typeface than the one she used and that this may allow us to identify the particular page.

GRAY: I have to assume that it'd be a different typeface; I can't believe that by this time I could have gotten hold of the same typewriter. I think John had it done, but his recollection would be--. And I mention this in the interest of historical accuracy for two reasons. I would feel impelled



to point out the fact that one of these memoranda, a page I think, one page only is involved, was changed with my full approval because I agreed with the President's objection to it. I also wish to have it recorded to underscore the fact that he left office clear in his own mind that there was no military planning yet devised for what became the Bay of Pigs operation. Well, he was delighted to have these memoranda or to have them on record as it were.

BURG: Said nothing to you about your having violated his instructions.

GRAY: No. No. I said to him, "Mr. President, contrary to your instructions I did this." And he looked at me with a look of disapproval and then began reading them and the disapproval disappeared rather quickly, and correctly so because this is an important part of history.

Well now to get to Dr. Pfeiffer. He called me perhaps a year ago and said he was writing a definitive history of the Bay of Pigs at the request of the DCI, then Bill Colby. Colby had come on board at this time. And he wanted to



read my Columbia [University Oral history] transcript. Well I said to Dr. Pfeiffer--I don't think I've ever met him, this is all by telephone--I said, "You certainly have my permission and I don't remember what's in there about the Bay of Pigs, but you cannot write a definitive history without having access to that four-point paper and to my memoranda." I should say I have in my files here an exchange of correspondence with General Eisenhower, copies of which are at Abilene, I have the originals here, after he went out of office and after this discussion up at Gettysburg about the memoranda, I think saying he had sent John down here to try to find and read, what I refer to as the four-point paper. And I think his correspondence, and this is easily checked at Abilene, although I do have it here--you see this was post-government. I didn't take any papers out of government but I've kept correspondence with--



BURG: This private conversation between you and the General.

GRAY: Yes. I think he reported to me that they told him at the CIA that they couldn't locate that four-point paper.

And we had some cluck-cluck correspondence about, you know, "It's sort of silly that they couldn't locate it," but he sort of gave up on it. He wanted to have a chance to read that again, too, as well as these memoranda, you see.

BURG: Did he accept the fact that that memorandum couldn't be found? Did he accept that as within the possibilities, given filing systems in government service?

GRAY: I think he did. The point is, however, that I'm making, that after Dr. Pfeiffer got in touch with me about his history, I told him that, well I'm repeating, that he couldn't write a definitive history without the first memorandum and then the subsequent memoranda that I kept. And I called Bill Colby about this. Colby said this was a serious history, commissioned by him; he's having several of the more controversial things researched and he started it before all this recent furor--this was a year ago I guess. And he said it was all right for Pfeiffer to see these various papers and he assured me that I would be given the opportunity to review anything before it was put in final form.



So then I talked with Don Wilson. He caused research to be done, or did it himself, I don't know, and he found some of these Cuban memoranda of mine, but they weren't all in one place, unfortunately. Apparently they had been dispersed-- for what reason I can't imagine because they were in one folder when they went to Ritchie. And subsequently Colby told me that they had found the four-point paper in the DCI files and that Pfeiffer indeed did have access to that and Don Wilson, I don't know whether he communicated with Pfeiffer or I did, anyway Pfeiffer was told. He'd been out to Abilene doing research absolutely in the dark about these memoranda and nobody told about them until I did. So he has seen some of them; I haven't checked with him recently. Whether he's going to get his hands on all of them, I don't know. There must have been scores. There were many, many meetings about Cuba with the President. Every one carefully recorded.



BURG: By the way, when you were at Gettysburg and John Eisenhower had acquired them evidently from Ritchie, they were at that point--

GRAY: All together.

BURG:--still in the folder all together and organized pretty much as you had organized--

GRAY: Well it was chronological. Now whether in the meantime --I haven't talked with Don Wilson about this in months and months--maybe they've found them all. I don't know. But I myself don't see any reason now, subject to reading them again, again personality thing--I don't know, but I can't really see any reason why they shouldn't be surfaced to students, to historians, scholars.

BURG: So there would be in them nothing detrimental to the present security of the United States nor--

GRAY: I would think not.



BURG:--detrimental to the administration in the way that it handled--

GRAY: I wouldn't think so.

BURG:--covert activities.

GRAY: I wouldn't think so. Of course this was the biggest covert activity, so-called covert activity, ever engaged in by the United States. There's never been anything to equal it and it probably shouldn't have--it should have been a-- at one point it should have been turned over to the military.

BURG: You're thinking now of the Bay of Pigs.

GRAY: That's right.

BURG: Kennedy administration.

GRAY: Yes. But in any event we're only talking about the Eisenhower administration.

Well now I've talked for over an hour I guess or longer, to get to one point, which is the thing that John Eisenhower wanted me to talk to you about--assassination of Castro. I recall no serious discussion, serious discussion about the assassination of Castro at any level in government although I have no doubt that it was fully discussed in the agency and other places.

BURG: By the agency--the CIA?

GRAY: CIA and maybe the military for that matter. I have no doubt that people contemplated assassination attempts. I'm almost as sure as I'm sitting here that no assassination attempt was ever discussed with President Eisenhower. And I have two reasons for feeling so confident about that. Number one: If he had ever seriously considered approving an attempted assassination of Fidel Castro when otherwise would he have seriously considered it than in these repeated meetings about Cuba? And assassination was never involved in any of these discussions. This, I think, can be proven you see by these written memoranda. I'm reasonably sure, also, that nothing was contemplated in the way of action--well I'm certain while he was still in office because I had been and was his representative to what we now call the Forty Committee, and there were many activities approved there by that committee which were of intense interest to me and I remember following the actions we men approved very carefully. I used to call Desmond Fitzgerald who was in charge of this business at the agency. I remember once it was something going on in Tibet and I was calling him almost every other day saying, "What's



going on? Are we succeeding?"--and various other things that were being done around the world I was very much interested in. I sure would have been interested in the outcome of any assassination attempt and I never remember any serious discussion, certainly not at the presidential level.

BURG: Now what interests me, Mr. Gray, if I can pursue it for just a moment, it seems to substantiate, too, what you say. When Allen Dulles wished to present to the President a rather innocuous plan, in the state of the world at that time an innocuous plan, that would involve sabotage of sugar refineries, you say that he came to you. He approached you and asked you to set it up so that he could see the President.

GRAY: That's right.



BURG: This would seem to imply that Allen Dulles, certainly, was not in a position where he could go directly to the President with plans of this nature.

GRAY: Yes, that's correct.

BURG: He went through you.

GRAY: That's correct.

BURG: And to your knowledge that was the only way that he gained access to the President.

GRAY: Oh, he saw the President, but on intelligence matters.

BURG: He went through you?

GRAY: No. I'm saying I have no doubt that if they discovered a new Yankee class submarine or something in the Soviet navy, he'd ask to see the President, show him pictures of whatever the documentation was about that kind of thing, but not for covert, not for covert action.

BURG: Covert--the route would be through you.



GRAY: That's right. And this is why I say I'm not sure whether this was strictly a matter for the so-called Forty Committee or not, but because of his understanding that I was to be involved in anything of that nature--to protect the President frankly; that was my job, to make sure that they didn't do something that was going to--well, I would make exception to something that was going on before I

became special assistant and to which I was not privy till I became special assistant: The U-2 flights. How they originally got approved, I don't know. But after I became special assistant, over-flights and things of that sort had to be approved by the Forty Committee. The President said to me when--you remember the Berlin tunnel? You remember they dug a tunnel under--went into East Berlin, tapped all the telephone lines and the operation was blown. And the President issued instructions through me that he wanted to make sure that thereafter the Forty Committee approved every action that involved the sovereignty or territory of another nation. And I guess it was this instruction which led to Allen coming to me to set up the meeting. He would not have set up a meeting for action involving another country without my knowledge and participation.



BURG: So you can state categorically that assassination was certainly not talked about in the NSC and in the Special Group or Forty Committee; it was certainly not discussed and furthermore you made complete memoranda of those sessions throughout the year 1960 so--

GRAY: And into January of '61 probably.

BURG:--January of '61. So, in these two places where it is quite likely it would have been discussed if it were to be discussed at all, it was not--

GRAY: That's right.

BURG:--covered. Nor was anything said there with respect to Trujillo and the Dominican Republic--

GRAY: Now, Trujillo's a, let's finish with Castro.

BURG: All right.

GRAY: One thing I want to make clear is that, as I said earlier, I'm not sure that Cuba was handled strictly in accordance with Forty Committee procedures. I'm inclined to think that it wasn't, that this was between the President and the CIA and then others were brought in from time to time who normally would have been members of the Forty Committee, but I don't think that--I'm trying to think. The Forty Committee then had a secretary and he was never present at these meetings. I guess that's one reason that I felt



compelled to make a memorandum. This leads me to think now these were not strictly Forty Committee meetings, but by the time that the thing finally shook out as it were, the departments normally represented on the Forty Committee were involved in these meetings. Not in the first one, but in subsequent meetings.



BURG: It might not have taken place within the usual framework of the Forty Committee meeting.

GRAY: That's right. No, no. One difference is, all these meetings took place in the President's office. The Forty Committee, as such, never met in the President's office.

BURG: I see. I'd meant to ask you what was the site of the meetings.

GRAY: All in the oval office. Every one in the oval office. To say that I never heard anybody mention the assassination of Castro--I can't say that because, for example, I remember the planning board once considering a revised paper on the Near and Middle East at a time when Nasser was riding high.

And a part of this paper dealt with what the United States' posture should be towards Nasser. And in the planning board in the early days of the preparation of this paper, the views went from one extreme to the other--somebody wanted to bump off Nasser and somebody else wanted to get in bed with him and everything in between. But I can assure you when the paper finally went to the President and council, assassination was not mentioned as one of the alternatives. There were several alternative courses of action. Interesting thing that it was the Central Intelligence Agency that wanted to get in bed with Nasser and John Foster Dulles took issue with that point and the President came down just about where he should have which was half way between assassination and getting in bed. You know what I mean.

BURG: The conversations were in the discussion stage. Then you're saying the discussion was so wide ranging, so free ranging that one could have this enormous spread in alternate solutions.

GRAY: Oh, well sure. I seem to remember and probably it

may have been the treasury representative, I don't know, who said, "Let's bump him off." Well the interesting thing is that the CIA view was at least at that level--

BURG: Poles apart.



GRAY:--was, well the CIA view was certainly not to assassinate, but embrace him, you see. Because they thought he was the wave of the future and we better jolly well get on with the wave of the future. No serious consideration of assassination.

Now other mentions. I said some of this to the Rockefeller Commission because they inquired about assassination when they had me appear. I served as a member of the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board. Now I can remember during the Vietnamese period when one member of the board no longer on the board, every time the DCI appeared and he appeared every time we met which was every two months, this member of the board would say, "Have you done anything or given any thought to trying to bump off the leadership in Hanoi?" And the DCI would shrug and the next time he'd

come before the board and this same member would ask this same question and he'd--. So for me to say I never heard assassination mentioned would be ridiculous, but no DCI of whom he asked that question, and I think there were at least two, ever gave any, as far as I know, any serious thought to it.

BURG: The response was a shrug and a--



GRAY: Yes, that's right. And so I'm just saying that I can't say I never heard assassination mentioned.

BURG: But as a serious consideration, brought into a planning stage or even evidently a close inspection of the idea, it doesn't seem to have--

GRAY: Well it was never disclosed to our board that there was any serious--. Now there may have been a lot of conversations in the agency, but--

BURG: Where contingency plans have to be

GRAY: That's right. But it was never reported to us--yes, we've got a plan.

Now, Trujillo. I was asked by the, well not the chief counsel whose name is Belin, but one of his associates. I met with Belin perhaps an hour before I appeared before the Rockefeller Commission. And he sort of wanted to go over what he was going to ask me so that--. He asked me if I'd ever heard of the phrase "executive action." I couldn't recall ever having heard of it. In fact I had to ask him what it meant and he said, well as he understood it, that was a term given to plans for assassinations. Well, as far as my memory goes, I never heard of "executive action." He asked this in my sworn testimony and I told him I didn't recall hearing, except from him earlier.

Then one of his associate counsels said, "You remember the Forty Committee considering arms shipments to dissidents in the Dominican Republic?"

And I said to him, "Well, no, I don't." And I said, "If you're talking about Trujillo, this all occurred I think in the Johnson administration or maybe it was Kennedy, I don't know, but not in the Eisenhower administration." Trujillo's murder or whatever it was did not take place, I think, during



the--. So I said, "Do you have any dates of these meetings you're referring to?"

He said, "Yes, December something, 1960 and January something, 1961."

Well I said, "Well, no, I don't recall. It's possible that there was discussion and approval; I just don't happen to recall it. It couldn't have been any very big thing or I would have recalled it."

Well he said, "There were certain approvals given to the shipment of certain types of small arms and it was discussed in meetings in late '59 and early '60."

Well I said, "Frankly I don't recall."



BURG: Late '59, early '60 or late '60, early '61?

GRAY: I'm sorry, Late '60 and early '61. While I was still in government.

I said, "I'm sorry I don't recall it."

He said, "Well, had there been such discussion, would it be your guess now and not recalling that the purpose of the request for these arms was to help some dissidents, oh,

to give them some fire power or was it clearly for the purpose of assassinating Trujillo?"

And I said, "Well, I'd be shocked beyond any measure that I can think of if the Forty Committee discussed assassinating Trujillo." And I said, "This is the best answer I can give you. I don't recall the discussions and certainly I think I would have remembered anything which pertained to assassination." And this seemed to satisfy him.

Subsequently I made inquiries about this, and I think there was something like a half a dozen weapons involved and went in some diplomatic pouch or something. My impression is that, without knowing this, that this was not involved with any assassination attempt, although, of course, he was killed. Now whether the CIA had anything to do with that, I don't know: I honestly don't know. But I'm sure that Eisenhower didn't have any knowledge of it.

BURG: Now let me stop it at this point, thanking you so much for what you've done.