

**Allen W. Dulles, Oral History Interview – 12/5 and 6/1964**  
Administrative Information

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**Biographical Note**

Dulles, Director of the Central Intelligence Agency from 1953-1961, discusses the planning for, execution, and aftermath of the Bay of Pigs invasion, and briefly discusses his service on the Warren Commission, among other issues.

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Allen W. Dulles

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Oral History Interview

With

Allen W. Dulles

December 5-6, 1964  
Washington, D.C.

By Thomas Braden

For the John F. Kennedy Library

BRADEN: This is December 5, 1964 and we are at the residence of Allen W. Dulles, former director of the Central Intelligence [Agency], for the purposes of the Kennedy Library. I would like to begin this by asking you, Allen, just to sort of get going, when did you first meet John F. Kennedy?

DULLES: Tom, when I knew I was going to be talking with you about President Kennedy, I tried to think back and I can't be absolutely certain when I first met Jack Kennedy. I believe it was when he was senator and I believe it was in Palm Beach. He used to go down there a good deal, you know, and I think I met him through his father, Joe [Joseph P. Kennedy]. I knew Joe quite well; I knew Joe from the days of being a lawyer and in the securities business to some extent myself. I knew him from the days when he was head of the Securities and Exchange Commission, wasn't he, in 1933 or thereabout? And, I had known him quite well. I used to go down to Palm Beach from time to time. I was quite a friend of Charlie Wrightsman [Charles B. Wrightsman], you know, the Wrightsmans who are close neighbors of the Kennedys, and Charlie was an old client of mine in the law. I used to go down occasionally with Charlie and Jayne Wrightsman, and I recall a series of visits I made--I'm not awfully good on dates without a lot of paper before me, and I haven't got any paper here. Maybe you can help me out on this, but I remember at the time that Jack Kennedy was working on his *Profiles in Courage*.

BRADEN: That would have been while he was ill.

DULLES: It was while he was ill. He was quite ill. He was lying on--he was suffering a good deal of pain, and he was lying

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on the sofa there in the study in Joe Kennedy's house, that house that you probably knew quite well there at Palm Beach, and as I recall that was the first time I saw him. I might have seen him before that, but that's the first I recollect having seen him.

BRADEN: Did you have any impression about him at that time--just a young fellow that was writing a book, a fellow that had a particularly tough time--what was your impression or did you have any?

DULLES: Well, I had more of an impression than that. I had the impression that here was a fellow that had been grievously wounded in the war, and that he was just bound that he was going to make a comeback, that he was going to conquer the physical ills that he had. Now I don't know what his ambitions were at that time, but I don't think he was looking at that moment at the presidency. His job then, as he saw it, was to get well, get physically well, and he conquered it, but it was a hard struggle. I could see many times--he would get up, you know, in the room and walk a few paces; he was wincing with pain, you know. Then he overcame it. But that was the impression that I got of those early days, and we used to have quite long times together. I mean oh, I'd go and stay a couple of hours. I would rely on Joe a good bit because I knew Joe would let me know when Jack had had about all he ought to take.

BRADEN: Do you remember what you talked about?

DULLES: Mostly foreign affairs. Various stages of foreign affairs.

BRADEN: He was very obviously interested.

DULLES: Oh, fascinated, fascinated.

BRADEN: Was he informed, intelligent?

DULLES: Oh, yes. But he obviously wanted to learn. I was trying to think whether I wasn't director of Central Intelligence at that time. You see I came in in 1953, in 1951 I was deputy director, you see, and I think it was during that period '51, '52, '53 along then. Am I correct on that, do you think?

BRADEN: Yes. So you would have been either director of Central Intelligence or deputy

director.

DULLES: At that time my brother [John Foster Dulles] was secretary of state, and we used to have dinners over at Charlie Wrightsman's. As I recall,

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about this time we had a very interesting dinner there with my brother, Charlie Wrightsman and several others and spent the long evening together discussing foreign problems, foreign policy problems. Jack Kennedy was quite a modest man in those days. In those meetings particularly--I remember my brother was there--I don't say he was overawed, but he [Kennedy] was very respectful. I mean he didn't throw any weight around, and he was trying to find out what the facts were--the Middle East was worrying us particularly at that time, and a good many other things.

BRADEN: This was the time of Mossadegh [Mohammed Mossadegh] perhaps?

DULLES: Yes, I think it was just after, but the Middle Eastern oil situation was not so... Charlie Wrightsman was an oil man and he was interested and we were all deeply interested in the developments of the Middle East at that time. That was one of the main subjects of that particular dinner conversation as I recall it.

BRADEN: Now, when he recovered and came back to Washington, and during the time he was a senator and recovered from his back injury, did he have any particular interest in intelligence affairs? I mean did he come over--I don't remember any of this, but did he come over to the agency a good deal and ask questions? Or did he take particular interest in it in the senate?

DULLES: I can't speak about the senate. He took great interest in it. As I say, he was always trying to get information, I don't mean secrets or things of that kind particularly, but to get himself informed. He wanted to get my views, and when my brother was there his views on what we thought about things, and we had many, many talks together. As I say, very often Joe was there at the same time.

BRADEN: Allen, to go on a little bit there--do you remember any period of succeeding relationship with him between that time and the time he became president? Just social in Washington or occasional interviews or was there no contact at all?

DULLES: Oh, no, the contact was fairly continuous because my trips to Palm Beach were quite frequent. He was very often there, and whenever he was there we always got together. I respected his views. I thought he had a very keen appreciation of foreign problems, and being in the intelligence business, I pumped him as

much as I could to get his views on things and his reaction to things, and that continued on during these days until the days when I served under him for a short time as director.

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BRADEN: I remember that Allen. I remember the announcement in the newspapers, and it seems to me I saw you within a few days after that by an odd chance in your office. Were you surprised when he called you and asked you to become director or did you think this...

DULLES: No, I was surprised.

BRADEN: You were. Why?

DULLES: Well, I'll tell you I wasn't surprised that he considered my continuance on in the job. Our relations were such and our friendship such that I thought that might happen. I didn't think it would happen as soon as this. This happened right after--it was one of the first things he did after the election...

BRADEN: Within a day or two or so...

DULLES: ...in a very few days--it's a matter of record.

BRADEN: Where were you then when he called you?

DULLES: I was in my office.

BRADEN: Here in Washington?

DULLES: In Washington, yes. I was in my office in Washington and I remember my secretary coming to me and said the President-elect, I guess she said, wanted to speak to me, and he went right to the point.

BRADEN: What did he say?

DULLES: He said, "Allen, I'd like to have you stay on as director of Central Intelligence when I take over next January 20th," and I admit I was surprised, and I was flattered and I was pleased. As you know as well as anyone, Tom, intelligence has been my life blood, and I have tremendous interest in building up the agency, and developing it. I thought that the one thing that could be most damaging to the agency at the time of presidential change is that if you establish the precedent that when a new president, new director of Central Intelligence, new party is in, change the director and get somebody that is the same party as the president. I've always felt that intelligence ought to be kept out of politics, and I, therefore, was gratified and thrilled that I was given the chance to help

establish the precedent that here we have a Democrat coming in taking over from a Republican...

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BRADEN: And you, after all, with your brother as Republican Secretary of State had a certain--oh, let's say, a certain independent type of Republican...

DULLES: Oh, yes, I generally voted Republican, and, I said--I think I called him a senator then—"Senator, I'm beyond retiring age, you know, normal retiring age." Let's see, I was 58 or 59 at that time--how long ago was that? That was 1960--no, let's see--yes, that was January. Well it was November of 1960; I guess I was 67 or thereabouts--born in '93 is that mathematics right? I said, "Look here, I ought to retire fairly soon. I don't think a man should stay on in this job indefinitely. There are a lot of young men in this shop that are coming along, and a lot of able people, and I would like to see a change come about in an orderly way and be around when it was made. But if you want me to stay on, I'll certainly stay on for a period--year or so--whatever you want, and then I think I probably ought to retire." That was about the way it went.

BRADEN: What did he say?

DULLES: Well, he said, "We can talk about the other later. What I'd like to know is and I want to announce it, I'm also communicating with J. Edgar Hoover, and I would like to announce that both you and J. Edgar Hoover will continue on in your present functions, respective functions, after I take over as president. I want to announce that right away." That was the way he was.

BRADEN: On that particular question did you ever hear later of the ways in which he came to this decision? As far as you know, did he just decide that this was what he wanted or do you think there were advisors who suggested this? Do you know of any particular facet of this decision other than what you just said?

DULLES: It came so soon that, as far as I know, people weren't talking or thinking about it. If it had come a couple of months later there would have been time. I don't think there was time for anybody to bring a lot of pressure on him even if anybody wanted to do it. So I have every reason to believe that this was his own idea because, as I say, this was a matter of, I don't know, forty-eight hours after the results of the election were known.

BRADEN: I believe you said at the time, I've forgotten now, but it seems to me that it was either the sixth president or the seventh that you had served since Wilson [Woodrow Wilson]...

DULLES: I think I've served nine now. Let me see how.... Well, I don't need to stop and

count up now, but I've served—

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started in with Woodrow Wilson and I've served every president since Woodrow Wilson, including Mr. Kennedy and now Mr. Johnson [Lyndon Baines Johnson].

BRADEN: Well now, he took office then January 20. Do you remember your first official business with him? Or was it before January?

DULLES: Well, we had a good deal of official business before January. Let's discuss--I think it's an interesting subject and I'd like to get a little down on it--on this question of briefings of Kennedy.

BRADEN: Oh, that's right. I'd forgotten about that. I'm glad you remember. This involved the Quemoy-Matsu business, didn't it?

DULLES: Well, it involved that, and it involved Cuba, and it involved the problem with Nixon [Richard Milhous Nixon], you know. Well, what happened was this. Back in--I was trying to think what campaign it was--it was back in the Dewey [Thomas E. Dewey] campaign...

BRADEN: Forty-four.

DULLES: No, let me see--'44 yes, also took place in the '48 campaign. Back in the '44 I had been working with Tom Dewey as a candidate in New York--weren't you there at the time? Don't you remember being in a hotel room--yes, that's another story. I had an office set up at Dewey's request in the Hotel Roosevelt, and interestingly enough I had Chris Herter [Christian A. Herter] and Mac Bundy [McGeorge Bundy]--do you remember both of them were working with me? We were gathering together--this was particularly in '48 but seriously started in '44--gathering together information that would be necessary after the Republican victory of '48. We were thinking of '48 particularly because we thought we knew the results in '48 a little more surely than we did in '44. '44 for the Republicans was a pretty uphill campaign, as you know, against FDR [Franklin Delano Roosevelt], but in '48 it looked as though the Republicans would come in. We set up that office and I went on the--my brother was there and we were advising him as to what was going on and this was with the full consent of the State Department. It was all set up. What we got was official information and I passed that on to Tom Dewey--Chris Herter did--Mac Bundy, all of us working there together.

BRADEN: Was this your idea--that the presidential candidate ought to have at least the official records so that he could speak wisely, is that the idea?

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DULLES: No, I don't think so. That went back a bit earlier. Vandenberg [Arthur Hendrich Vandenberg]--of course, you recall the role he had played and was playing in these days, and I think Vandenberg had something to do with it. And my brother had been called in to consult with regard to the Dumbarton Oaks Conference when they were working on the new United Nations and so forth and so on. So it was the idea of a bipartisan foreign policy or nonpartisan foreign policy insofar as one could possibly get it; that that ought to be carried over into the electoral period; that the candidate, once he was nominated, should have access and should have briefings from the administration in power or from the State Department so that the two candidates, the two rival candidates, would each know the essential facts so as to keep as far as possible the campaign somewhat on the track. It didn't always work out that way. I'm not absolutely sure the system is a sound system; I've had some qualms about it since, in some ways growing out of this misunderstanding that took place in the time of the Kennedy campaign. Should I just go into that for a minute?

BRADEN: I think you should. Yes.

DULLES: Let me get this straight. During the campaign, of course, Cuba was a major issue and this is the Nixon-Kennedy campaign. Cuba was a major issue; Castro [Fidel Alejandro Castro Ruz] was behaving like a Communist and the American people were disturbed. The question was what to do, what could you do? And at one stage of the--not going into the details 'cause it's all a matter of record--campaign Nixon was under pretty heavy attack from Kennedy on the grounds that we weren't doing enough. What were we doing? Here were these Cuban refugees who wanted to get into the battle, and who was doing anything for them?

BRADEN: Ninety miles away and all of that.

DULLES: Ninety miles away and were we doing anything? And Nixon was pretty vigorously attacked by Kennedy on that point. The suggestion was made, as I recall, that we ought to be training these Cubans, we ought to be sending them back and so on. Well, then candidate Kennedy jumped in--I don't know if Adlai [Adlai E. Stevenson] was back of this or not or whatever caused it--anyway he jumped in and he attacked Nixon and said this was improper. You ought not to propose this. We have all these treaties,--non-interference--and you are recommending that the president of the United States should violate the neutrality laws of the United States by arming people to go landing in Cuba.

BRADEN: You mean Nixon came back with this or do you mean Kennedy came back?

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DULLES: Yes, Kennedy came back--did I say Kennedy?

BRADEN: Yeah, you did.

DULLES: Kennedy went on the attack. I think he made a mistake in that but anyway—no, let me see,—I think Nixon made a mistake. Then the issue arose as to whether or not Kennedy, when he had said this, knew that there were certain covert operations going on because he was being briefed. Nixon was quite annoyed, and he thought Kennedy might be making use of the fact that there was secret information of this kind, but it couldn't be used, and that he was violating a confidence. Well, that wasn't the case.

BRADEN: Well, how much secret information were you giving Kennedy?

DULLES: Well, that is the question—just to carry along with the story. Nixon, after this incident, got hold of one of Eisenhower's [Dwight D. Eisenhower] close advisors—I've forgotten which one it was at the moment—and he called up Jerry Persons [Wilton B. Persons] in the White House, and he said will you find out for me whether Allen Dulles, in connection with his briefings of the candidates, has briefed Mr. Kennedy on Cuba, and left it vague—it was on Cuba, you see. They didn't make it clear. What they meant was whether he'd briefed Kennedy on the secret operations that Nixon knew about as a member of the National Security Council, but that was not in the public domain. The word came back—and it was a perfectly honest mistake, I'm quite sure—that Kennedy had been briefed by me on Cuba, but just that—that was all there was to it: “on Cuba.” They didn't get in touch with me; I think maybe I could have straightened the thing out early if they had. I had briefed the candidate, Kennedy, on Cuba, and I told him about what was going on there, and about Castro, and about the whole situation on Cuba. But I did *not* tell Mr. Kennedy that there was, on the back of the stove, a project to arm some of these Cuban refugees, to help the underground in Cuba. At that stage there was no plan of an invasion or of a military operation directed from the outside against Cuba.

BRADEN: We weren't then training people?

DULLES: We were training people, but we had not decided at that time whether they would be infiltrated individually as guerillas, or whether they were going to be dropped in to add to the underground there—one or two at a time or a few at a time. There had been no planning as to how they were to be used; that is, we had them in training in various places in Latin America, Panama, and other places, in relatively small numbers. The number at this time I would

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imagine--by this time I'm talking about September, October--we might have had a couple hundred being trained, but mostly for guerrilla operations, sabotage, and things of that kind. I'm afraid this is getting a little bit long, and I would like to get back now to the point of it.

So I told Jerry Persons--if it was Jerry who was called at the White House, and I think it was Jerry--yes, I'd briefed Mr. Kennedy on Cuba. When that word got back--you see, that was passed back to Nixon--Nixon thought that I had briefed Kennedy on these secret operations which Nixon knew about because of being a member of the Security Council, and I knew about, but Jerry Persons I don't think did. So you see how the misunderstanding arose. So then....

BRADEN: Was Nixon furious?

DULLES: Nixon was quite furious--it comes out in that book he wrote, *Six Crises*—because he thought Kennedy, being in the know, had made use of this, but knowing that there couldn't be any comeback on it, really, because this was confidential information. Well now, I had not deliberately withheld this from Kennedy, but the ground rules under which I was operating, as the briefing of the president, did not cover covert operations unless they were going to blow before the elections. Now if you had a long-range covert plan that was being developed, but which wasn't going to be put into effect until after the elections, you did not bother the candidate with it because it wasn't going to affect anything politically. At least that was the ground rules under which I was operating because no matter how discreet one is in the heat of a campaign, if you fill his mind full of all kinds of information this is going to come out. No matter how good he is. No matter how careful he is. And so the general rules under which I was operating--I don't know whether I made them up myself or whether they were given to me--but I did not brief candidates on secret operations which were destined to come out only in the future, and with respect to which the candidate, if elected, would have all the opportunity in the world to pass his own judgment as to whether he wanted to go ahead. The candidate, if he became president, would then have complete control of the situation, and if he said, "I don't like this operation, you'd better stop it"... In the Cuban matter we weren't even going to get anything committed except a little money and except a little time on training. That was about all.

BRADEN: Did you have to brief Kennedy on any secret operations that were going to take place? I don't recall any.

DULLES: I don't remember any on which we did brief him prior to the election. Now I was trying to think of the date when I went

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down to Palm Beach to brief him--whether that was after the elections. I did go down but before he took over office; I went down to Palm Beach later and told the candidate-elect what was going on, but I did not ask at that time any judgment on it. I took this up with Eisenhower because at that time there was a good deal of pressure on Smathers [George Armistead Smathers] and others. The senators from Florida, they were getting worried about the situation in Cuba; they wanted something to be done, and there was quite a demand and pressure to get going, do something. Well now, we were at that time--this was

after the election but before the President took over--we wanted the President-elect to know for his own guidance in dealing with, especially with pressure from the congressmen, senators and so forth that this was not being neglected, something was being done. And at that time we did not say to Mr. Kennedy: we want your views on this; we want you to know this is going on; when you've taken over, you can turn it off or you can turn it on; we will not in the meantime--in connection with this--we will not be taking any action which commits you as to the future.

BRADEN: Let's go back for just a second now. A little while ago you said you doubted—at least you had some grave doubts about whether this system worked, of briefing candidates. I'd like to just ask you what are your doubts?

DULLES: Well, my doubts are this. This system is subject to abuse in that, in the particularly delicate foreign affairs situation, you might give a full briefing to a candidate and you might then, or he might be afraid that then you would say, well now look here, this is all very confidential, you can't use this. You could restrict the freedom of action of a candidate in a very important situation or make it very uncomfortable for him; and yet you are going to brief on delicate situations--you are going to brief on situations where, even between the period of the election and change of administration if there is a change, you may even have to reach some decision in this field.

BRADEN: But don't you risk on the other hand by not briefing--don't you risk the possibility that he might make a completely irresponsible statement because he didn't know the facts. Do you think that's a better risk? Maybe it is.

DULLES: Well, I think that you have to sort of weigh the pros and the cons. I have found candidates on the whole not anxious to get briefings in depth.

BRADEN: What was Kennedy like during this period? How many times did you brief him, five or six or was it often?

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DULLES: Three times, I think, and as I recall General Cabell [Charles P. Cabell], who was my deputy, briefed him once. The first briefing was a very general briefing and covered the water front. I think briefings of that kind probably at that stage are a good thing, but I have found that candidates don't generally want to be told too much. That is, say they want to attack Policy B that the administration is following. Now, if you have a lot of briefers that are going to him and filling him full of all the virtues of Policy B and so forth and telling him all about it and giving him secret information about it, what's he going to do then? Is he free then to go up and attack Policy B, and is he going to use this information in doing it, or what is he going to do? There is a grave danger that the freedom of debate of foreign policy issues might be hampered unless this briefing is done

very carefully, unless the ground rules are perfectly clear, and unless the candidate is able to keep complete freedom of action.

BRADEN: Yes, I see. Well, in any event, the first briefing you gave him was very general and after that do you remember any particular incident--was he particularly interested in the briefing?

DULLES: Oh, yes, we went over country by country.

BRADEN: Did he ask a lot of questions or was it a hurried thing?

DULLES: No, it wasn't hurried at all. We went up there--let's see, he was up on the Cape--and we spent most of the day to it, and went over the situation, and then we had a couple of other briefings. I've got a--somewheres tucked away--list of the various subject matters. One was related, I remember, to the question of developments in the atomic field in which he was extremely interested, and he asked a half a dozen questions, I would say, during the period; and we had two or three or four briefings altogether and we went over these various questions that he had.

BRADEN: Did you remember that he ever asked you specifically about--did he ever ask you about the Cuban thing, specifically?

DULLES: Well, you see, I covered that right after the election.

BRADEN: No, but before, I mean, during the campaign briefings. Did he ever ask you--well now, is there anything going on there? I just say he might have because...

DULLES: No, I was trying to think as to whether he did. I don't recall that he did. When this issue came up with Nixon,

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Nixon indicated he thought he'd been double-crossed. I said this is all a misunderstanding because as far as I know President Kennedy did not know about the training--from me anyway. Now, if he knew about it--there had been some press comments on it, he might have believed the press comments. He didn't know anything about it from me, until after the election took place.

BRADEN: All right then, do you think we've covered this question of briefings? Or did you want to say anything more about that?

DULLES: No, I think probably we've pretty well covered it. I think that I wouldn't go so far as to say that I would absolutely change the present system as it has

developed, but I do think I would try to get the ground rules, particularly the ground rules with regard to covert operations, a little clearer so that there wouldn't be this misunderstanding that took place this last time.

BRADEN: Now, let's go ahead then. Do you remember after he took office, do you remember the first official time you met him? Did you show up the first day for your normal briefing of the President? Don't you do that or didn't you do that--let's see, how often?

DULLES: Well, that's a fairly complicated question and the answer is going to be fairly complicated too. Every president has his own system. Under Eisenhower the briefing system was quite largely developed around the meetings of the National Security Council. The National Security Council met every Thursday unless there was some reason for postponing it or some reason for having an extra meeting. At that meeting, the Director of Central Intelligence was afforded an opportunity, at the opening of every meeting, to give a briefing, and generally took it. It was my practice in the days when I was director of Central Intelligence; this covers about the eight years of Eisenhower and some of the period prior to that under President Truman [Harry S. Truman].

BRADEN: Yes, I was going to ask you about that in a minute because I remember that you used to go over and brief Truman--it seems to me in the morning...

DULLES: That's right. That's different.

BRADEN: ...and I remember you commenting to me that he was extremely interested.

DULLES: Yes, he was. He followed it very closely. I would always be in touch before the meeting of the National Security

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Council with the director, Bobby Cutler [Robert Cutler] or Mac Bundy or whoever it might be who was the director of the National Security Council staff. I generally would go over with him the subject matters which I felt were important. I would ask him--it was Gordon Gray for awhile, it changes you know--and I would ask the director of the National Security Council staff, was there anything he wanted to have me cover. And if there was anything then I'd say, "all right we'll add that in," and then I would cut my time down on the others. That was sort of the routine that had been established during the Eisenhower administration and followed fairly closely what had been done in the Truman administration, although a good deal more briefing was done of President Truman in his office alone, generally before a National Security Council meeting. He would get some briefing papers and some of them he would read, some of them he would keep and give back to you later, and that was the way it was done under Truman.

Then I've described a bit how it was done under Eisenhower, and under Kennedy the National Security Council procedures were somewhat changed, partly due to the different temperament of the men. I only, of course, was in on this--let's see, I served under President Kennedy for about a year. You see, I resigned at the end of November--well, he became president--I mean he was "acting" president before that, so that it was almost a year. President Kennedy liked to get snappy, short, but fairly, at the same time, reasonably comprehensive--as to subject matter--notes, and we'd get to him every morning several sheets of paper. It might be four or five pages, and on these pages we'd say--here are the important things that have happened in the last twenty-four hours, if anything important had happened. Then we would often find that there would be quite a barrage of questions. You'd often get telephone calls and so forth.

BRADEN: Was this daily?

DULLES: Yes, this was daily. Now how long that lasted I can't say because I wasn't there the whole time. It did during the early period and I think.... Then there were certain other papers that were prepared and presented on a daily basis that were a little bit longer.

BRADEN: You said you'd often get telephone calls. You mean you'd get them personally?

DULLES: Sometimes you'd get them personally; sometimes you'd get them from the particular aide who was working with him on the particular matter for the National Security Council. It might sometimes be his military aide or whoever was working very

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closely with him on current developments in the foreign field.

BRADEN: Was this set up right away as soon as he took office? Did he decide this or did you?

DULLES: Oh, it took a little time to work it out. We gave to him--we carried on for a time the system that we had developed before he came in, and then there were certain changes he wanted made: this is too long; I want this worked out a little differently; I want one or two sheets of paper and I want to get the main points of crisis, points of difficulty, in the foreign field, and I want to get that quickly, and then you can supplement that and add to it as you want, but give me that every morning.

BRADEN: Do you remember any particular things that he asked questions about or were they just too frequent to recall?

DULLES: No, I wouldn't. Well, we had the Dominican business--do you remember Trujillo [Rafael Trujillo (Molina), Jr.] and all that business--and that blew up. We had constantly the Cuban situation; we had the developing problems in NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization] and I worked out a system at the time--whether it's carried on or not I don't really know--of trying to pinpoint in some one or more documents that we would hand to the President--not always every morning--developing crises situations. He, more than almost anyone I ever knew, said: I don't want to get caught short on this thing; I want to know; you can't give me all the details but if you see a crisis situation, point it out to me quickly so that I can do my own homework and get a background on it. He didn't want something to happen in, say, Nicaragua and find himself not knowing anything about the current situation in Nicaragua. Nicaragua, say, might have been quiet for six months and then all of a sudden you see a crisis coming up; he wanted to have that crisis pinpointed to him so he could get the background. He was always very accessible on the telephone; I would telephone him from time to time. If anything happened in the world, you never made a mistake if you called up Mr. Kennedy and said, "Here's what's happened." He might differ from you as to whether it was urgent or not, but he wanted you to do it and he accepted your judgment if you saw it was urgent to tell him about it.

BRADEN: Let's go back for a minute then if it's all right with you to when you first told him about the Bay of Pigs--not about the Bay of Pigs--but when you first briefed him on the covert operation in Cuba. That was down in Palm Beach, after he had been elected but before he took the presidency. Then when did you go to him--when did you first go to him to say, well, now, here's what the plan is and here's a prospective timetable--or did you do that?

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DULLES: By the way I might just add at that time, when I went down to brief the President, I took up with him--and I don't think it's necessary to put this on the record what I took up with him--I took up with him two or three other covert operations that were going on, that were significant, so that he would have an opportunity to study and decide promptly whether he wanted these things to continue or not.

BRADEN: Did he?

DULLES: I think in most cases he did, as I remember. We then had out some rather delicate problems about the U-2 and made quite a thorough review of that situation. He wasn't timid and he wasn't rash, but we wanted to lay before him everything that was being done that might have implications. This particular briefing, as I recall, was after the election but before he took over, so that he did not technically have responsibility; but still he was in a situation where he was going to inherit the responsibility for anything you did in the meantime, and we didn't want to be doing anything in that delicate field of covert operations.

BRADEN: I gather--maybe I'm reading this into it--I gather he wasn't a man who was simply fascinated with the covert operations arm as some people are. He was not.

DULLES: No. No, but I didn't feel he was frightened by it.

BRADEN: He didn't seem to think that it was reprehensible or immoral or anything?

DULLES: No, oh, no, I think he took that quite in his stride because I recall he didn't cut off anything that was being done and we gave him that opportunity. He was the boss. But we did not say, "We are bringing this to you now for a final decision on your part." We said, "This is going on"--let's say a U-2 flight. "You will have the problem when you take over as president; you will have the problem of whether you want this to continue or not. Meanwhile we will bring to your attention the pros and the cons and the benefits and the possible difficulties."

BRADEN: Right. And not then or even later did he tell you--do you remember it anyway that he told you to cut out any particular covert operations?

DULLES: I wouldn't want to say yes or no on that; I don't recall any at this moment. There were some that were sort of being developed on which no very formal decision had been

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reached which later were stood down, but it might well have been that they would have been stood down anyway. And it might well have been that, when the time came to reach a decision, those that were working on them, including myself, might have said to the President: we've worked on this, but on reviewing the whole situation we don't recommend it, or we recommend it be changed--something of that sort.

BRADEN: Just to go back for just a minute. Somebody told me once that you had made the President interested in the James Bond thrillers which everyone knows he read. Is that the way you remember it?

DULLES: Well, really, I think that the shoe's on the other foot. As I recall; this is when--in those days I was down in Florida a good deal--that on one occasion Jackie Kennedy [Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy] gave me the first James Bond that I ever had. I think it was this one, *From Russia, With Love* which is, I think, one of his best books, and then after that I got so much interested in them that I bought up the next two or three that he got out. I think there I did--I know I sent them to Senator Kennedy and

President Kennedy and we often talked about James Bond, and we both of us kept up our interest in it until his sad death recently. I'm speaking there of James Bond.

BRADEN: of James Bond's death--or Fleming [Ian Fleming].

DULLES: Rather Fleming, yes.

BRADEN: Let's go back now to the operations of the agency and of your relationship with the President during the time that you served as DCI under him. We were talking about the covert plan for Cuba. When, do you recall--it doesn't matter when, I think, because that will be a matter of record perhaps, but do you recall what the circumstances were and what it was like when you first went to him in his official capacity, after he had become President in the White House, and said, "Here's the plan." Did you say—"Here's the plan, what are we going to do"--or what did you say?

DULLES: As I recall, this took place at the time of that meeting after the elections. I think we fixed that for late November, didn't we, or around that time in Palm Beach. Maybe this is repetition, but the circumstances of that were that, after the elections, I went to President Eisenhower and I said to him, knowing the pressures he was under from his friends in the Senate and Congress, to get going on Cuba in some way or another. I said to President Eisenhower that I had never briefed Mr. Kennedy, President-elect, on what was being done with regard to training exiles and others for possible

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operation in Cuba, and I recommended that he be brought up-to-date on that as soon as possible so as to avoid any misunderstanding or embarrassing situation between the President-elect and respected members of the Senate who were importuning him to do something. President Eisenhower agreed and Dick Bissell [Richard M. Bissell, Jr.], who had been my particular deputy for the Cuban matter and who was the deputy director for operations in the CIA, went down with me. We spent the better part of a day with President-elect Kennedy and told him of what had been done, who had been trained, where they had been trained--talking now about Cuban patriot refugees who wanted to do something--and I told him something of the timetable. As I recall, and I'm speaking now without any records before me, when we went down there to do the briefing there had been no plans formulated for anything like an invasion of Castro's Cuba. The training which had been given, had been very largely training that one would give to guerrillas, and there were bands of guerrillas in Cuba and the original idea had been that these bands would be strengthened and built up with accretions from the outside, and it was sometime later that the plans changed from a purely guerrilla-type operation to a more directly military type operation.

BRADEN: Did you go to him then when the plan changed and say--here's our plan? How did that work out?

DULLES: Well, immediately after the new administration came in following the election, and you had a good many--a certain number of new faces, there was quite a briefing operation to do. Many of the same people were in the State Department and many in Defense, but there were many new faces also, and then a more definite plan was formulated and was discussed at a great many meetings of the National Security Council and its Cuban and Latin American subcommittees. As I said earlier, there were certain changes in operation of the National Security Council. President-elect Kennedy had indicated that he wanted to change a little bit the method of procedure and to develop ad hoc task forces, sometimes called subcommittees of the National Security Council, on which there should be people who were expert in the ad hoc question that was up--whether it was Cuba or whatever it might be. The plans then began to take shape in meetings of the task force committee within the general structure of the National Security Council, and with the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the military establishment being fully brought in on the plans which took over more and more of a military character.

BRADEN: Did the President from the beginning, do you remember, review these plans which you showed him first down at Palm Beach as with any particular.... Did he like them, did he think

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they were interesting or did he just--he didn't oppose them right away or anything like that?

DULLES: No, now I'm drawing on memory, but my recollection is that his initial attitude was well, what is your timetable on this. And we gave that to him in that we said well, we won't be ready until the late spring probably to do anything, and we were given a go-ahead to continue to plan but without any commitment.

BRADEN: When you told him about this, was he alone present with you and Bissell or were there others?

DULLES: As I recall, at that time we were alone. I don't remember anybody else being there.

BRADEN: In any event he did ask you what your timetable was and then apparently looked upon it with some equanimity.

DULLES: If I'm right that I was doing this sometime in November--let me get my year now--November '60, and I was talking of the spring--that would be '61--February, March, April along there. That's right.

BRADEN: All right then, do you recall, Allen, as you look back on when you began to present these plans, as they firmed up, in a more military fashion, did he still look upon it with equanimity--was he doubtful, distrustful, worried, harried?

DULLES: He was inquiring. He was inquiring. He had a certain amount of skepticism. He studied them pretty carefully, very carefully. There was that one period along there where there was a rather dramatic change in the planning. I'll go back just a bit here to pick up the thread. I've already described the situation our country faced: Communism taking over in Cuba; more and more tie-ins with the Kremlin; a great many Cubans, refugees, exiles, some of them, in this country--they wanted to do something to save their country. There was a certain amount of pressure, political pressure, congressional pressure on the President to do something more definite, more dramatic than had been done in the past. What were we going to do with these high-minded, young, able, patriotic Cubans? Our military people looked into it and measures were taken so that they could get under certain conditions, training, military training, under the procedures that had been set up by the Defense Department. And then there had been the very specific training that the CIA had done starting, as I reported before, with relatively small groups of men who had been trained--many of them--trained in the jungles of Central America and the tough terrain that you had there--trained to be ready,

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trained in guerrilla tactics.

And by this time--the time I'm speaking of shortly after the Kennedy election--we had several hundred of these trainees, and not only did we have these, but we had many more that were pressing, that were ready to be trained, that were in touch with the various recruiting organizations that had been set up to maintain contact with them. So we were in a position where we could recruit several hundred in addition to the few hundred that we had at this time, and at the time of the change that I mentioned--the change really was from sending in scattered guerrilla fighters to join the existing underground. The plan was to consider the formation of a brigade, a military formation; the number of that we hadn't finally fixed at that time. It was going to be somewhere between five hundred and a thousand with the possibility of later increasing that so that you would have a small *force de frappe*; a small military formation, a brigade fully equipped, armed, and ready to make a descent upon Cuba at the time and under the circumstances that the military, our military people, would think the wisest.

Now then, you had various plans that were presented as to if you were going to make a landing in Cuba, where would you make it? The decisions on that point were very largely dictated by the military. Our military advisors in the Defense Department--you had to consider certain things; you had to consider the availability of some air strip so that you could develop quickly some air coverage for the operation, particularly so that you would have possession of a runway from which aircraft could take off to protect the ships which were bringing in the men and the military material--the equipment including later even tanks, mechanized units, armored units, and the like. I forget exactly how much in my previous tape I've described how these plans were considered, but if this is repetitious you can cut it out.

Plans were formulated, military plans on paper; various sites for a possible landing were considered. You had to consider the many factors: how you get your men ashore and

their equipment; how once ashore then they would have access either to roads of ingress or lines of communications so they could get where they wanted to. One had in mind, too, that while we had moved at that time from the purely guerrilla concept to the concept of a strike force, we still had in mind that if the strike force failed, we wanted to be able for it to join, if possible, other military Maquis-type underground forces that were already in the mountains of Cuba, and had some organization there and some protection from being overrun by the Castro forces and by the Cuban militia.

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BRADEN: I take it that the military phase of this, as you described it, the change in plans which made it more of a military type of operation than merely an infiltration of some guerrillas--individual guerrillas or bands--came after the inauguration of January 1961 then, didn't it?

DULLES: The first decision--preliminary decision to consider that--to prepare a plan on the basis of a strike force, was reached on a very tentative basis before the change of administration, as I recall. I have in mind the date of November with the change of administration taking place the next January. But you must realize that this was very tentative because it hadn't yet been processed in the Defense Department; it hadn't been looked at by the Joint Chiefs of Staff; you hadn't as yet finally decided on, let's say, the place to attack, or even whether to attack.

BRADEN: It was almost a paper idea.

DULLES: It was on paper without having been approved. Of course there was no go-ahead signal having been given at all.

BRADEN: Of course not. As you described it, it wasn't completely staffed out as yet.

DULLES: It wasn't completely staffed out; it was for planning purpose and it was a plan to be staffed out.

BRADEN: Now, when was that? What was the new President's reaction when this particular plan, as distinguished from the guerrilla operation idea, was first revealed to him? Do you remember what his reaction was or was that the same plan that was shown him, as you described earlier, when you went down to Palm Beach with Dick?

DULLES: No, I don't think that when I went down to Palm Beach--and I might be wrong on this--I don't think even for planning purposes we had finally decided on that when I went down to Palm Beach.

BRADEN: Do you recall...

DULLES: I might be wrong on that because it was about that time--I have a date in mind of the seventh or eighth of November. Let's see, what year am I talking about--November 1960, that this plan was discussed with me in a very tentative way inside the CIA.

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BRADEN: Inside the organization--so it must have been just about the date of the election.

DULLES: Yeah.

BRADEN: All right, I think the election that year, as I recall, was the eighth of November, so therefore do you recall then when this particular plan was first shown to the President or discussed with him?

DULLES: I can't say definitely when it was. It was a good bit later before it got to the point of being a plan that had been considered by the Joint Chiefs of Staff and that you had before you a military paper.

BRADEN: Just for the sake of history--not that it perhaps is very important in terms of the long-range interests of the United States, but was the plan that you are now talking about, the military plan, was that ever discussed with President Eisenhower?

DULLES: Funny, I don't remember clearly. It was not discussed with President Eisenhower as a formulated plan on paper stating: we have X number of well-trained, highly-trained, equipped Cuban refugees; they are now in a task force in a brigade; we have the equipment for this number and certain additional ones that will be added to it; and we have a brigade--eight hundred men or whatever it may be--all equipped and ready to go. I don't know whether that was discussed with President Eisenhower in that form or not. I would doubt whether it was.

BRADEN: I think you're indicating to me--or at least you seem to be indicating--that general ideas of this sort of thing might have been discussed in a casual way, perhaps, not in a formal way.

DULLES: Yes, that would be fair enough.

BRADEN: Well, all right, then let's get down to the time when you first showed a conceived plan to the new President, Kennedy, do you recall anything about that?

DULLES: Oh, yes, I recall a good deal about it, but I'm rather chary about giving dates because I am speaking here without any papers before me at all.

BRADEN: Yes, that's right. Let's not bother with the dates.

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DULLES: We had a period now to deal with which goes from the time of election which was the first week early in November, and the date when the final decision to proceed was taken which was next April. I think that's correct. I've forgotten-- I think it was in the first ten or fifteen days of April. That was dictated by various other considerations, the rainy season, questions of weather and so forth. I mean you had certain periods when it was better to do this than others, and that whole period of the end--of following the election.... And of course, there was some little time between the election; there were some new faces coming in; there were certain changes being made, certain personnel changes being made at that time so that it wasn't right after--it wasn't immediately after the elections. It was the--numerous meetings that we held with the task force of the National Security Council that was assigned to this took place over a relatively long period of seven or eight weeks, I should say.

BRADEN: Do you suppose that you were the first man to tell the President about the plans or do you suppose that he got it from the papers of the National Security Council or the task force report?

DULLES: I would have thought that--my best memory serves me now--this would have been done in a task force meeting and a paper which would probably have been prepared by Dick Bissell, gone over by me, reviewed by the military, and then presented merely as a talking paper in this meeting of the task force of the National Security Council.

BRADEN: Then we have the question of what you recall of his reaction to this.

DULLES: At this stage it was purely study. It wasn't--you didn't present this to him at that time saying, "It's important you reach a decision at this meeting," or that we have to reach a decision before next week or the next two or three weeks.

It wasn't even as close as that, and you may recall from written history of this period that there was some difference in views with regard to how one should use the brigade, where it should go, the nature of its equipment. I think you probably remember what's called the Trinidad Plan. I don't know whether you do or not, but there was a plan which was known as the Trinidad Plan. That was very carefully considered; that involved certain somewhat different considerations because you were going into a more highly populated area there. It was a kind of an operation where if you won, you won big, but if you lost, you lost awful quick because you were going into an area where there were certain known hostile forces. That plan was--after a good deal of

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consideration--finally set aside, partly because of opposition at the White House level and partly because the military thought that another plan, another place where we finally went--The Bay of Pigs--was better.

BRADEN: Eventually, however, over a series of weeks, I suppose, as you've described it, the President must have at some time or another become involved in this...

DULLES: Oh, yes, he did, very deeply.

BRADEN: ...was he interested? Do you remember anything about that? What we're trying to find here, of course, is not dates--his reaction and what he thought.

DULLES: Yes, I understand that. I remember during the discussion it was realized by him from the beginning that this was tricky business, it was difficult business. No one could hold out the assurance of success, and he was, therefore, anxious to see what alternative possibilities there were. I mean what was the--say, we were met in force as we went ashore, what do you do then? Say that we succeeded in a penetration in some depth what, would happen then? Were you planning your landing so that if there were these guerrilla forces that we knew were on the island, if they could help, were we landing in the best place to aid them; or were we landing in the best place so that your force, if it was knocked about to begin with as an organized military force, could still become a guerrilla force and join the guerrillas that were on the island? I remember discussions of things of that kind. He was very much interested to know what the chances were. What was the worst that could happen? What was the best that could happen? What was the situation on the island? How effective were these other guerrillas? How much could we count on them for some help and how much could we count on being able to help them through this force?

BRADEN: It's been said, and you've no doubt read, that you or Dick Bissell or I guess you and Dick Bissell *sold* the President--do you feel as though you sold him on this or do you think it was a kind of a joint decision that was reached?

DULLES: Well, one ought never--I mean, naturally, one ought never to sell anybody a bill of goods. I mean, of course, that wasn't one's job.

BRADEN: Well, did you feel the role of a salesman?

DULLES: You've put a hard question to me there, and I'd like to be very honest about it. I didn't feel that, although maybe

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instinctively I was drawn into that situation a little bit. Obviously you present a plan and it isn't your job to say, "Well, that's a rotten plan I've presented." You can only say, "Here are the merits of the plan," and in presenting the merits of the plan the tendency is always to--because you're meeting a position, you're meeting this criticism and that criticism--the tendency is, of course, to be drawn into more of a salesmanship job than you should. I remember one time though--I know the President was terribly disturbed about this and very thoughtful about it--I remember it was a meeting that... I think we'd been meeting in the cabinet room and then we went aside into the room next to the cabinet room there--I think they call it the "Fish Room"--in the White House. Several of us were there; I think the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff [Lyman L. Lemnitzer] was there, and I think the vice president was there that day. He was in on a good many of these meetings.

BRADEN: You're talking about President Johnson.

DULLES: President Johnson, yes. I remember the President came up to me--I was just alone--and he said, "Allen, what do you think of this? Would you do it or would you not do it?" And at that time--and this was, oh, a month before the final decision--I said, "Mr. President, I think we ought to study this further before reaching a final decision. I know what a tough one this is. I think we ought to study it some more." And we did study it some more; we weren't ready then for a decision. I remember that incident very clearly.

BRADEN- Do you recall, Allen, whether opposition to the plan came largely from the White House staff, or the military, or people within the agency, perhaps, who thought it wasn't such a good idea?

DULLES: Well, there was no really organized center of opposition to it. Later, you may recall, there was that meeting in which the President went around the group and asked every body to stand up and be counted on it; and you remember what was attributed to Fulbright [J. William Fulbright], which I think--the accounts given of that are more or less accurate. It was a general feeling that it is very important to do something here. We had been working now--the time I'm speaking of when we get on to April--a good many months with these trainees. Some of them had reached a point in their training where they pretty nearly had a stomach full of it. I mean, you know, you can train just so long and then you go too fine. Now that was only the case with a few of them.

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You may recall that at that time, just shortly before the decision was made, I wanted to get a further appraisal of the situation, so we sent down to the head military people who were in charge of the training, and there was one marine colonel, a brilliant fellow, who had been doing a good deal of supervision of the training, and I wanted to get a report from him, and we got a report from him. It was a very optimistic report; I guess it was too optimistic as it turned out. Had a great deal of influence, that report had a great deal of influence--on me, I

know it had a great deal of influence--had a great deal of influence on the President, that report.

BRADEN: It was written, was it?

DULLES: Oh, yes.

BRADEN: It was a written report--not made in person?

DULLES: No, it was a written report. Later the man came up and did report in person, I believe, to the President; he certainly reported to the task force.

BRADEN: Just to get the record straight . . .

DULLES: It came up by cable and that cable was presented and was read in these meetings.

BRADEN: Just to get the record straight about--just as a guess, and I suppose there wouldn't be any record of this so maybe a guess will have to stand--how many times do you think you discussed this whole idea with the President?

DULLES: You mean in an organized manner with a plan?

BRADEN: Yes, either through a National Security Council staff meeting or personally. Would you say you talked about it with him five or six times?

DULLES: Oh, more than that. More than that, if you take in all of these meetings with the particular task force that was working on this.

BRADEN: He, of course, wasn't present at those task force meetings?

DULLES: Oh, yes, he was. I don't say he was present during all of the meetings, but at some stage of the meeting and during a good deal of it he would be present himself.

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BRADEN: And by the time these meetings were shaping up to the point where decisions had to be made, do you feel that he, President Kennedy, was in support of it or still dubious certainly...

DULLES: I think he wanted to do it. I think he felt--yes, I think he wanted to do it, but he wasn't quite persuaded it was going to work out. That was the impression I got.

BRADEN: Now, let's go to the time then when the decision had to be made and he must have been persuaded. I presume he was persuaded--maybe I shouldn't do that. Let's go to the last meeting when the thing was decided. What was his-- describe that a little bit. Did you tell him for example, now look, we must decide this now or we have to either do it now, or we have to wait so many months, or just how was it put to him?

DULLES: There were certain factors which made it necessary to reach a decision not later than a certain date--I can't remember what date it was in April--around the time the decision was reached. As I recall, you were approaching the rainy season, which was a problem. You had certain technical questions in connection with the landing operations where the time made a good deal of difference, the weather made a good deal of difference. You had certain problems that I've already referred to with regard to the state of the training. We had to reorganize our training because we had brought certain of the trainees up to a point where they almost had to go or else be put into a different kind of a training for a different period. The people that were in charge of the training felt, as we got into April, that we were approaching the time limit when these particular men were at the peak of their efficiency for the particular job to which they were assigned.

I have made it a practice in my relations with the National Security Council not to keep personal notes of National Security Council meetings. There is a note made of decisions reached and so forth, but the conversations have to be so confidential that I always thought it would be improper for any single individual to prepare notes; the temptation to use those notes some day is very great, and there have been cases where I think notes of cabinet meetings and National Security Council meetings had been abused. You have no way of checking off these personal notes that are made, you know.

BRADEN: You're talking now of what people said and their reactions?

DULLES: What people said and their reactions, and the decisions were registered. Notes were taken by the staff, the National

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Security Council staff. Generally, those notes, as I recall, were not formally typed up--certainly they were not circulated. There was a note generally circulated that--meeting of the National Security Council on a certain date, it was decided--or sometimes there would be added to that: this or that agency should prepare this or that, or this individual in this agency should study a certain point and bring it back to the National Security Council or the Joint Chiefs of Staff should give a further summary, a further findings on certain questions presented, but I never kept any notes. I always made just a notation of what the CIA was supposed to do before the next meeting. I would always get that confirmed, though, by a written note that went to the CIA or to what other agency was involved. Let me philosophize just a moment here. We formulated a plan, a plan was drawn up jointly by the

military and the CIA. Bissell was very active in the CIA in the preparation of those drafts and various people, Lemnitzer, Burke [Arleigh A. Burke],--Wheeler [Earle G. Wheeler] came on a little later, I think. He was there but I don't think he was--of course, he was appointed chairman of the Joint Chiefs later. Lemnitzer was Chairman but he was away a good deal of this period on NATO business, and Arleigh Burke was acting in his place a good deal during this particular period, but many of the papers were prepared by Burke and Lemnitzer, on the basis, of course, of consideration by the Joint Chiefs as a body. I'm not trying to impose responsibility any particular place. It was done as an operation which had military connotations of grave importance, to see that the military aspects of it were considered by the military authorities of the United States government. That was done, and we had in those days preceding the final decision in April--we met very frequently, prepared quite a large number of papers, and eventually reached decisions.

There was one other thing I wanted to add to that. When the attempt was made and there was the failure, the President, without any hesitation, assumed personally full responsibility for the action that had been taken. And without issuing orders he made it clear that, having done this, he did not expect his subordinates, others that had been working on this matter, to go out and do some after-game quarterbacking on the thing, and do a lot of talking about it. I have always felt that the President, having taken what I believed was the honorable and right and courageous stand that he did, there was a very strong duty on the rest of us to respect the almost unspoken injunction that he gave to us not to go around talking about it, or shove responsibility here, there or the other place. He said, "I was President, this was done under my presidency, I was responsible, I assume the responsibility and that closes the chapter as far as that is concerned." I think the country owed him a great deal for that very courageous decision.

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In all cases of this kind where the Central Intelligence Agency is involved, I have always felt the director should naturally assume full responsibility for anything his agency had done, and wherever he could shield or protect the President in any way, he should do it. Some people say, well, you ought to always deny all these things, and they said that after the U-2 and they said it again after the Bay of Pigs. You ought not to let the President get so deeply involved that this situation arises. Well, no director of the Central Intelligence Agency can really control that. He stands there ready at any time to take any responsibility that the President wants him to take, to resign if the situation calls for it, but in any rate to take any responsibility that he can. But there are certain situations, and I've said this often--I wrote it in my book *The Craft of Intelligence*, in discussing the U-2 issue--there is a greater issue than the responsibility of a particular individual. There's a whole question of what kind of government we run. Do we run a responsible government or an irresponsible government? And no president can admit that we run an irresponsible government. No president can properly admit that people are going around doing irresponsible things when he, the president, is responsible, and he has that choice. He boldly took the responsibility here. I admired him for that stand. I think, as I say, I think it was the only stand that he could take, because he either had to say, well look here, a lot of strange things are going on in my

administration right under my nose and I don't know what's going on. But I don't say that was his motive; that wasn't necessarily the reason why he did it. That is why I personally feel that there wasn't any great choice, but he took it because that's the kind of man he was. He had to study the matter, he had reached his decision, and he stood by the decision he had reached, and he wasn't going to blame anybody.

I talked to him a great deal about it afterwards, and while I did have a feeling that maybe he thought I had let him down, there never was one harsh or unkind word said to me by him at anytime thereafter. He never blamed. He never said, "You ought to have warned me more about this. You ought to have made it more clear to me"--and I think there maybe we did make a mistake--"you ought to have made it more clear to me that this air cover was absolutely a sine qua non, that this was absolutely essential." We kind of thought we had made that clear, but I guess we hadn't made it clear. You can't land naked vessels with ammunition and supplies on board in the face of any kind of hostile aviation that controls the air. I mean, whether they are bombers or whether they are C-47's, they can drop a bomb and blow an unarmed merchant vessel to pieces, and that's what happened. But, I just want to say that he never at any time addressed a word of criticism afterwards. We had many talks about it and I could hardly tell--I'm sure it had some effect on his views as to maybe about my judgment; maybe he felt that I had persuaded him too much. I tried not to. I don't

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think if you had the record here, I would be accused of being a salesman on this thing, but I may have appeared in that light to him. It was a very difficult decision because if you didn't do it, you had the problem of trying to reverse a line of policy in connection with the training of these men which had set in motion a great many hopes, expectations, policies were affected, and it wasn't just a thing you can easily turn off the spigot, and go off and forget it. You left behind you quite a trail that would have affected our relations with Cuba, and affected, if we ever wanted, to do anything like it, affected our ability to do that again.

BRADEN: Just to mention what you are talking about now, when the thing had ended in failure did you go see the President, or call him, or did he call you, or what?

DULLES: Oh, we were together a good deal those days during the time...

BRADEN: I thought that you--it seemed to me that you, following a precedent which I think you established in some other occasions, had gone off from Washington at that time. Am I wrong?

DULLES: No, you're not wholly wrong. I had planned to be in Puerto Rico for other business a good many months before the date of this operation was fixed.

BRADEN: But if I can ask you this, isn't this a ruse, in effect, that you've followed before...

DULLES: Yes I have, I have followed that before; during certain phases of the Iranian matter I was deliberately away. I wasn't deliberately away here. I was in a situation where I had to--I had one very important speaking engagement. The only reason I mention that is that I would have had to cancel out at a time when everybody would say, "Why has he cancelled out?" It wasn't just a thing that you give up and say you had a bad cold or something of that kind. It would have had significance because it just happened to be on the eve of the landing, and so I knew I could get back with the speed of aircraft; it was only a question of six or eight hours. So I was in Puerto Rico the night before, the night of the landing, and then I came right back, and I saw the President during that following period several times.

BRADEN: While things were still uncertain?

DULLES: Well, while things were going badly.

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BRADEN: And, as you say, besides not delivering any blame and behaving in the fashion you described, was he particularly crestfallen, nervous, upset, did he appear...

DULLES: Oh, this was a shock to him, there's no doubt about it. He never allowed it, as far as I could see, to affect his judgment or he wasn't short, he wasn't...

BRADEN: Did he swear?

DULLES: No, I don't remember--it moved fairly fast so the time wasn't awfully long, but there were forty-eight hours there--twenty-four or forty-eight hours of when the thing was hanging like this.

BRADEN: Were you spending most of your time in the White House at that time or on the phone?

DULLES: I was a great deal at sort of our own operations in the CIA, but I was in touch with the White House.

BRADEN: Was he devoting full time...

DULLES: He was in the White House--oh, yes, he was devoting full time to this.

BRADEN: And who did you have over there with him--Dick?

DULLES: Dick was over there, General Cabell was over there, the military, of course, were there, Burke and others, and I think Lemnitzer was back by this time.

BRADEN: I would just like to bring up, to raise one point because I think it has some bearing upon President Kennedy and the kind of man he was--what about the calling off of the second air strike which has been said by what historians we've had so far to be the crucial decision which may or may not have determined the enterprise. The inference is that it did. Did it and how was that made? What lessons can we draw from it?

DULLES: Well, the lessons I would draw from it is that one ought never to leave the Chief of State, the man who has to reach the final decisions, in any state of uncertainty as I think the President must have been as to the points of a plan which are absolutely essential. I don't think he appreciated fully the vital importance, the absolutely essential character, of these particular air

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strikes. Now, when you say the air strikes might have failed, and the whole plan ought not to have been based on something which might fail, but that's inherent in almost all planning.

BRADEN: The first air strike did fail, did it not, or almost failed?

DULLES: Well, it wasn't a complete success, it wasn't a complete success, it was a partial success; it wasn't a complete failure, it was a partial failure.

BRADEN: So, we have decision number one here to go in, and decision number two to call off a part of the plan which was essential to it, is that right?

DULLES: Well, when you say an essential part of the plan in a sense that if all air strikes and all air coverage was removed, your plan was a faulty plan. I don't think the essentiality of that point was clearly enough and absolutely decisively enough brought to the President's attention in connection with the planning work. And if I blame myself for many points, I might engage in self-criticism, but that's rather useless here at this stage. But there's one thing that I do feel badly about, because I think I had a responsibility there that I didn't fully carry out. That is before we went into this I should have said, "Mr. President, if you're not willing to permit us to take the steps necessary to immobilize for X periods--or substantially immobilize--the Cuban air force which was a very small and crotchety and defective air force at that time, the plan to get this brigade ashore with its equipment and supplies is a faulty one." That seems to me to be, as I say, if I was looking back on it, if I engaged in self-criticism which is always a useful thing to do, I think, that's the point that I would stress, that I don't think I made that absolutely crystal clear to the President.

BRADEN: Let me interject a couple of questions here to finish up this part about the Bay of Pigs. To start with what did the military think about the plan? What was their view?

DULLES: Well, that, of course, you will find in the military records, and they ought to speak for themselves. It was my understanding that they felt that the plan was a plan which held out some hope of success. I don't recall we ever asked them to put a percentage figure on it. They felt that the brigade was well-equipped, they felt that the place selected for landing was appropriate for the various purposes that we had in mind for the brigade. They never guaranteed success of the plan. They never underwrote it from that angle, and, as I say, what their general position was that this plan

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has a possibility, if the brigade is well trained.

BRADEN: There's one other aspect of this that--I'm maybe not wording this too precisely--when the President called off the second air strike and you discussed this to some extent, he did it for reasons which were said to have been presented to him by other officials of the government: the exposure of the plan in the United Nations, for example, and for the rising public and press criticism and anxiety. And I suppose that those factors which caused him to call off the second air strike are factors that you, in a sense, can't comment on. After all you were charged with trying to make the plan a success. You were not charged with the other facets of the decision, the other thing...

DULLES: No, I think that you're right on that and further I don't have all the information available on which to pass judgment. I have never discussed this with Adlai Stevenson or anyone else at the UN. I don't know what he said to the President or whether he said anything to the President on this particular subject. I assume that he did, but I never have gone into that. It certainly was his business to present that viewpoint, but I don't know what he said. Of course there are two features, and I haven't gone into this air coverage question in any great detail. There was the question of an air strike and there was a question of some air coverage.

BRADEN: The air coverage was to follow though wasn't it? The following morning the air strike had already been called off, is that correct?

DULLES: That is correct. That is correct. There had been certain discussions though during the planning period and a good deal of discussion about certain air coverage that might be furnished in the event of attack, or threatened attack, on the merchant vessels which were taking the supplies, and the equipment, and the brigade itself into the place of landing. This involved possibly operations over international waters, and it might have involved some beyond that. I don't think I should say anymore about that at this stage.

BRADEN: Well, can I just ask--is it true that the President also decided, so it's been reported, on the following morning not to furnish this air cover? He made that

decision, didn't he?

DULLES: Well, there was air coverage to be furnished for a limited period of time.

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BRADEN: I see.

DULLES: And, there was some mix-up with regard to that. In a great event some small things often make a lot of difference--the time element, Greenwich time, local time, the time element got a little fuzzed up, and so one bit of air coverage that had been planned didn't--due to a misunderstanding of the time--get quite at the place at the right time. I think probably I had better leave it at that and I think, as you say, it's not up to me to judge of the pressures, which I know were very great, on the President on many phases of this matter, the consequences, resulting from it and a great many other factors--that's for history to judge and for those that had that phase of American foreign policy particularly within their scope of judgment and decision.

BRADEN: Did you, when this was all over, continue to see the President a good deal on other matters? Did you feel from that point on you had to some extent lost his confidence or were your relations good?

DULLES: I think I've said before that I did see the President. Let me see, I was continued on as director of Central Intelligence Agency until roughly the end of November of--let's see, where are we now--'61.

BRADEN: You served another six months.

DULLES: About six months after--let's see, from April to November after the Bay of Pigs--and I saw the President a good deal. I think I've said that there was never any recrimination on the President's part. I might well have lost to some extent in the measure of confidence he placed on me--that's inevitable in things of this kind, I think, but I may say in his personal attitude toward me, in the many meetings we had, he never let that appear, and I retired at about the time I had planned to retire when he first asked me, as I've explained earlier, to stay on after he took over the duties as president.

BRADEN: You have, I know, in the course of a long lifetime, met a lot of people and in the particular job you have, something I've always noticed about you is that you have a variety of friends from many, many different fields and walks of life. You are friendly with people who were spies, you are friendly with people who are musicians, you are friendly with people who are lawyers, the whole spectrum really, and you have rated a lot of men. How did you rate personally in your own mind--how did you rate President Kennedy

as a man?

DULLES: Oh, I rated him high, maybe that's trite to put it that way, but I rated him high. I shall never forget when I first heard the news of the Dallas tragedy. I felt that here is a man who hadn't had a chance really to show his full capabilities, that he was just reaching a point where his grasp of all the intricacies of the presidency were such that now he could move forward. He'd gone through the very difficult days, problems with Khrushchev [Nikita Sergeyevich Khrushchev], the confrontation after the Cuban business, and all that, that he had put behind him, the testing crisis, and he was at a point to move forward and show us the full possibilities of a very extraordinary man. That tragedy was brought out again and again when I was asked to serve on the Warren Commission and go into all the tragic details of that event, November '62. As we were doing that work, I felt here was an extraordinary happening in history. Here was a man, Oswald [Lee Harvey Oswald], who had been a failure at everything he had done. He was almost a misfit in the world, and yet he carried through successfully the intricate details of this mad act, and as I studied all that record I could see literally hundreds of instances where if things had just been a little different, if one fact had been known that wasn't known but which might have been known just as the fact of his earlier attack on General Walker [Edwin A. Walker]. I'm not criticizing anyone of that because it just wasn't known, but there were so many factors. If the employees of the Book Depository had eaten their lunch in a little different place, if somebody had been at one place where he might easily have been instead of another at one particular time; the "ifs" just stand out all over it. And if any one of these "ifs" had been changed, it might have been prevented. I don't know how we got off on that but I mean it was just your question about the man. That was a hard task, you know, because of that; it was so tantalizing to go over that record, as we did, trying to find out every fact connected with the assassination, and then to say if any one of the chess pieces that were entered into the game had been moved differently, at any one time, the whole thing might have been different.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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