

“there was a stunned silence for about 15 seconds and the meeting continued.” (National Archives, Testimony of Robert H. Johnson, June 18, 1975; Folder 10-H-02, Box 44, Hearings, RG 46 Records of the United States Senate, Church Committee Records on JFK Assassination; President John F. Kennedy Assassination)

12. Memorandum for the Record¹

Washington, August 25, 1960.

SUBJECT

Minutes of Special Group Meeting, 25 August 1960

PRESENT

Messrs. Merchant, Gray, Irwin, Dulles

1. Congo

Mr. Parrott outlined broadly three (or as Mr. Dulles later described them “2½”) operational lines that we are following in mounting an anti-Lumumba campaign in the Congo. These included: operations through the [*less than 1 line not declassified*] Christian Trade Unions; the planned attempt of a [*less than 1 line not declassified*] Senator to arrange a vote of no confidence in Lumumba; and a brand new contact with [*less than 1 line not declassified*] of certain independent labor groups. He emphasized that the latter had just come up and that we are now in the process of assessing the bona fides and capabilities of the individual.

The Group agreed that the action contemplated is very much in order. Mr. Gray commented, however, that his associates had expressed extremely strong feelings on the necessity for very straightforward action in this situation, and he wondered whether the plans as outlined were sufficient to accomplish this. Mr. Dulles replied that he had taken the comments referred to seriously and had every intention of proceeding as vigorously as the situation permits or requires, but added that he must necessarily put himself in a position of interpreting instructions of this kind within the bounds of necessity and capability. It was finally agreed that planning for the Congo would not necessarily

¹ Source: National Security Council, Intelligence Files, NSC 5412/2 Special Group, Minutes and Agendas, 1960. Secret; Eyes Only.

no evidence that aid was ever provided for the specific purpose of assassination.

4. THE PLOT TO ASSASSINATE LUMUMBA

Summary

In the Summer of 1960, DDP Richard Bissell asked the Chief of the Africa Division, Bronson Tweedy, to explore the feasibility of assassinating Patrice Lumumba. Bissell also asked a CIA scientist, Joseph Scheider, to make preparations to assassinate or incapacitate an unspecified "African leader." According to Scheider, Bissell said that the assignment had the "highest authority." Scheider procured toxic biological materials in response to Bissell's request, and was then ordered by Tweedy to take these materials to the Station Officer in Leopoldville. According to Scheider, there was no explicit requirement that the Station check back with Headquarters for final approval before proceeding to assassinate Lumumba. Tweedy maintained, however, that whether or not he had explicitly levied such a requirement, the Station Officer was not authorized to move from exploring means of assassination to actually attempting to kill Lumumba without referring the matter to Headquarters for a policy decision.

In late September, Scheider delivered the lethal substances to the Station Officer in Leopoldville and instructed him to assassinate Patrice Lumumba. The Station Officer testified that after requesting and receiving confirmation from CIA Headquarters that he was to carry out Scheider's instructions, he proceeded to take "exploratory steps" in furtherance of the assassination plot. The Station Officer also testified that he was told by Scheider that President Eisenhower had ordered the assassination of Lumumba. Scheider's testimony generally substantiated this account, although he acknowledged that his meetings with Bissell and Tweedy were the only bases for his impression about Presidential authorization. Scheider's mission to the Congo was preceded and followed by cables from Headquarters urging the "elimination" of Lumumba transmitted through an extraordinarily restricted "Eyes Only" channel—including two messages bearing the personal signature of Allen Dulles.

The toxic substances were never used. But there is no evidence that the assassination operation was terminated before Lumumba's death. There is, however, no suggestion of a connection between the assassination plot and the events which actually led to Lumumba's death.¹

(a) Bissell/Tweedy Meetings on Feasibility of Assassinating Lumumba

Bronson Tweedy testified that Richard Bissell initiated a discussion with him in the summer of 1960 about the feasibility of assassinating Patrice Lumumba, and that they discussed the subject "more than once" during the following fall. Tweedy said the first such conversation probably took place shortly before Dulles' cable of August 26, instructing the Station Officer that Lumumba's "removal" was a "high priority of our covert action."² Whether his talk with Bissell was

¹ See Section 6, *infra*, for a discussion of the evidence about the circumstances surrounding Lumumba's death in Katanga.

² See Section 2, *supra*.

niceties parliamentary system. This not the case. [*cryptonym not declassified*] leaders [*1 line not declassified*] have little understanding of meaning world opinion or need for political compromise. Although Station understands pressure now heavy USUN, wish emphasize KUBARK not in position reach an immediate solution. Effort force through interim solution not acceptable key [*cryptonym not declassified*] leaders might result in formation govt which would not be able obtain parliamentary majority when parliament finally opened. Alternative danger might be angry [Mobutu] going for broke with another coup.

8. View political nature this operation, Station working closely with Ambassador and coordinating every step. We trying move as fast as possible and to implement ODYOKE policy but Station does not believe it advisable risk stirring up intramural [*cryptonym not declassified*] fight to try accomplish in week what we hope can be done in one month. We have come long way [*less than 1 line not declassified*] when one considers situation only three months ago. Our position strong with [Mobutu] as we give him help and guidance in early days when his chances were slim indeed. Some [*cryptonym not declassified*] leaders realize they would be occupying [Lumumba's] current quarters today had we not helped them. However, it is their country and they want make final decisions. Also politics is new game which they have not learned to play by our rules. Thus, we can go only so far as they willing go. Station believes we should not risk long term relationship with leaders for possible immediate gain in world opinion. However, will provide regular reports on efforts comply with Dir 15739 (Out 51379)² and ODACID cable 1551.³

End of message.

² Requested Leap see ODACID cable 1551 of 8 Dec. and support fully. [Footnote in the original.] CIA telegram 15739 to Leopoldville, December 9, is *ibid*.

³ OCR/CB notified of reference. [Footnote in the original.] Regarding this cable, see footnote 1 to Document 280 in *Foreign Relations, 1958–1960*, volume XIV, Africa.

ture from U.N. custody and that he had no advance knowledge of Lumumba's plan. He stated that he consulted with Congolese officers about the possible routes Lumumba might take to Stanleyville, but he was "not a major assistance" in tracking down Lumumba prior to his capture. (Hedgman, 8/21/75, pp. 63-65)

Mulroney, who had planned to draw Lumumba out of U.N. custody and turn him over to Congolese authorities, testified that Lumumba escaped by his own devices and was not tricked by the CIA. (Mulroney, 9/11/75, p. 22)

(b) Lumumba's Death

The contemporaneous cable traffic shows that the CIA was kept informed of Lumumba's condition and movements in January of 1961 by the Congolese and that the CIA continued to consider Lumumba a serious political threat. Despite the fact that the Station Officer knew of a plan to deliver Lumumba into the hands of his enemies at a time when the CIA was convinced that "drastic steps" were necessary to prevent Lumumba's return to power, there is no evidence of CIA involvement in this plan or in bringing about the death of Lumumba in Katanga.

There is no doubt that the CIA and the Congolese government shared a concern in January 1961 that Lumumba might return to power, particularly since the Congolese army and police were threatening to mutiny if they were not given substantial pay raises. Station Officer Hedgman reported that a mutiny "almost certainly would * * * bring about [Lumumba] return power" and said he had advised the Congolese government of his opinion that the army garrison at Leopoldville

WILL MUTINY WITHIN TWO OR THREE DAYS UNLESS DRASTIC ACTION TAKEN SATISFY COMPLAINTS. (CIA Cable, Leopoldville to Director, 1/12/61)

Hedgman urged Headquarters to consider an immediate reaction to the crisis. (CIA Cable, 1/12/61) This cable, which was sent through the ordinary channel, made no reference, even indirectly, to assassination, and instead recommended a different course of action.

The next day, Hedgman cabled Headquarters:

STATION AND EMBASSY BELIEVE PRESENT GOVERNMENT MAY FALL WITHIN FEW DAYS. RESULT WOULD ALMOST CERTAINLY BE CHAOS AND RETURN [LUMUMBA] TO POWER. (CIA Cable, Leopoldville to Director, 1/13/61)

Hedgman advised that reopening the Congolese Parliament under United Nations supervision was unacceptable because:

THE COMBINATION OF [LUMUMBA'S] POWERS AS DEMAGOGUE, HIS ABLE USE OF GOON SQUADS AND PROPAGANDA AND SPIRIT OF DEFEAT WITHIN [GOVERNMENT] COALITION WHICH WOULD INCREASE RAPIDLY UNDER SUCH CONDITIONS WOULD ALMOST CERTAINLY INSURE [LUMUMBA] VICTORY IN PARLIAMENT. * * * REFUSAL TAKE DRASTIC STEPS AT THIS TIME WILL LEAD TO DEFEAT OF [UNITED STATES] POLICY IN CONGO. (CIA Cable, Leopoldville to Director, 1/13/61)

On January 14, Hedgman was advised by a Congolese government leader that Lumumba was to be transferred from the Thysville military camp, where he had been held since shortly after Mobutu's troops captured him, to a prison in Bakwanga, the capital of another Congolese province reported to be the "home territory of * * * Lumumba's

less, there is enough countervailing testimony by Eisenhower Administration officials and enough ambiguity and lack of clarity in the records of high-level policy meetings to preclude the Committee from making a finding that the President intended an assassination effort against Lumumba.

It is clear that the Director of Central Intelligence, Allen Dulles, authorized an assassination plot. There is, however, no evidence of United States involvement in bringing about the death of Lumumba at the hands of Congolese authorities in Katanga.

Strong expressions of hostility toward Lumumba from the President and his national security assistant, followed immediately by CIA steps in furtherance of an assassination operation against Lumumba, are part of a sequence of events that, at the least, make it appear that Dulles believed assassination was a permissible means of complying with pressure from the President to remove Lumumba from the political scene.

The chain of significant events in the Lumumba case begins with the testimony that President Eisenhower made a statement at a meeting of the National Security Council in the summer or early fall of 1960 that came across to one staff member in attendance as an order for the assassination of Patrice Lumumba. The next link is a memorandum of the Special Group meeting of August 25, 1960, which indicated that when the President's "extremely strong feelings on the necessity for very straightforward action" were conveyed, the Special Group

* * * agreed that planning for the Congo would not necessarily rule out "consideration" of any particular kind of activity which might contribute to getting rid of Lumumba. (Special Group Minutes, 8/25/60)

The following day, CIA Director Allen Dulles, who had attended the Special Group meeting, personally cabled to the Station Officer in Leopoldville that Lumumba's

REMOVAL MUST BE AN URGENT AND PRIME OBJECTIVE * * * A HIGH PRIORITY OF OUR COVERT ACTION. YOU CAN ACT ON YOUR OWN AUTHORITY WHERE TIME DOES NOT PERMIT REFERRAL HERE. (CIA Cable, Dulles to Station Officer, 8/26/60)

Although the Dulles cable does not explicitly mention assassination, Richard Bissell—the CIA official under whose aegis the assassination effort against Lumumba took place—testified that, in his opinion, this cable was a direct outgrowth of the Special Group meeting and signaled to him that the President had authorized assassination as one means of effecting Lumumba's "removal." (Bissell, 9/10/75, pp. 33-34., 61-62; see Section 7(c), *infra*) Bronson Tweedy, who had direct operational responsibility at Headquarters for activities against Lumumba, testified that the Dulles cable confirmed the policy that no measure, including assassination, was to be overlooked in the attempt to remove Lumumba from a position of influence. (Tweedy, 10/9/75, pp. 4-5)

On September 19, 1960, Bissell and Tweedy cabled Station Officer Hedgman to expect a messenger from CIA Headquarters. Two days later, in the presence of the President at a meeting of the National Security Council, Allen Dulles stated that Lumumba "would remain

the series, it does monitor the overall process and makes recommendations on particular problems that come to its attention.

Because of the history and significance of this volume, the Advisory Committee offered advice throughout its lengthy preparation and took the unusual step of delegating a member to review the final manuscript. Although the committee appreciates that some documentation remains classified and does not appear in the volume, it assesses the volume as a reliable guide to the trajectory of U.S. policy toward the Congo from 1960 until 1968 and an exceptionally valuable addition to the historical record. Accordingly, the committee recommended its publication.

Declassification Review

The Office of Information Programs and Services, Bureau of Administration, Department of State, conducted the declassification review of the documents published in this volume. The review was conducted in accordance with the standards set forth in 22 U.S.C. 4353, and Executive Orders 12356, 12958 and 13526 on Classified National Security Information and applicable laws.

The principle guiding declassification review is to release all information, subject only to the current requirements of national security as embodied in law and regulation. Declassification decisions entailed concurrence of the appropriate geographic and functional bureaus in the Department of State and other concerned agencies of the U.S. Government. The declassification review of this volume began in 1994 and was finally completed in 2013. It resulted in the decision to withhold 4 documents in full, excise a paragraph or more in 12 documents, and make excisions of less than a paragraph in 222 documents.

As a result of the sui generis nature of this volume, it has undergone an extensive and prolonged declassification review and appeals process. The Office of the Historian is confident, on the basis of the research conducted in preparing this volume and as a result of the declassification review process described above, that the documentation, annotation, and editorial notes presented here provide a broadly accurate account of the main lines of U.S. policy toward Congo-Léopoldville from 1960 until 1968.

Acknowledgments

The editors would like to acknowledge the assistance of the Historical Staff of the Center for the Study of Intelligence who assisted Nina D. Howland and Harriet D. Schwar in the collection of materials for this volume. The editors extend sincere appreciation to the *Foreign Relations* Coordination Staff and the National Clandestine Service Declassification reviewer at the Central Intelligence Agency for providing assistance to the Office of the Historian and sustained collegial cooperation