

* quote Korabluk's on back - found in Guatemala doc's

19 page manual on assassination

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The Thin Line Between Diplomacy and Murder

By David Wise

WASHINGTON

If the CIA's assassination specialists had succeeded in one of their wackier plots against Fidel Castro in the 1960s, the Cuban leader's likely complaint, "My feet are killing me," would have been literally correct.

The spy agency, aware that Castro's favorite sport was skin diving, planned to have an intermediary present him with a diving suit contaminated with Madura foot, a rare, tropical fungus disease that begins in the foot, then slowly spreads throughout the body, destroying skin, bone and limbs.

But Castro never got the diving suit. Nor did the Mafia chiefs hired by the CIA to kill Castro ever manage to slip botulinum toxin into his soup, although the capsules, when tested, killed several CIA monkeys.

The controversial subject of assassination as an instrument of foreign policy has arisen again, three decades later, because of the carnage in Kosovo. In barrooms, living rooms and perhaps even in certain corridors of power in Washington, the suggestion is heard that one solution to the crisis in the Balkans would be to dispose of Yugoslavia's president, Slobodan Milosevic.

During the Cold War, the Central Intelligence Agency plotted against eight foreign leaders, five of whom died violently, with the agency's role varying in each case. If the CIA failed to kill these targets, such as Castro and the Congo's Patrice Lumumba, it was not for want of trying. President Gerald R. Ford put an end to this scheming in 1976, when he issued an executive order barring assassination. His successors have honored the ban.

Ford's order stated that no U.S. government "employee" shall engage in "political assassination." Author and in-

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telligence analyst Jeffrey T. Richelson points out that the order was "significantly broadened" by President Ronald Reagan in 1981. Reagan's order dropped the word "political" so the ban would apply, for example, to military figures or others; it covers not only government employees but persons "acting on behalf of" the U.S., such as contract killers.

The ban, however, has eroded over time. The biggest loophole has been the emergence and high-level acceptance of the position that if a foreign capital is bombed, and the leader of the target country just happens to be killed, that's not an assassination, it's an accident, a casualty of war.

Milosevic is the monster of the moment. But Washington never seems to lack an unpleasant world leader to demonize. A decade ago, it was Libya's Moammar Kadafi. His successor was Saddam Hussein of Iraq. After the bombing of U.S. embassies in Africa last summer, the crown passed to Osama bin Laden, the Saudi terrorist.

Against this background, the assassination ban seems a good deal less firm than when Ford promulgated it in the wake of disclosures of the CIA murder plots by the Senate Intelligence Committee. When U.S. warplanes bombed Libya in April 1986, they killed Kadafi's infant adopted daughter and injured two of his young sons, according to Kadafi's physician.

Former CIA director Robert M. Gates said publicly last year that when the Bush administration bombed Baghdad in 1991, during the Persian Gulf conflict, White House officials hoped that "Saddam Hussein would be killed in a bunker." At an air base in Saudi Arabia that year, the nation's two senior military officials, Secretary of Defense Richard B. Cheney and Gen. Colin L. Powell, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, signed a 2,000-pound laser-guided bomb destined for Iraq. "To Saddam with affection," Cheney wrote. Powell added his own inscription: "You didn't move it, so now you lose it."

CIA assassination plots "wack by"

1) contaminated w/ fungus suit w/ a deadly fungus

2) to slip botulinum in his soup in Mafia chief's

3) exploding pen in his beard + blow up cigars

(where are they?)

Come to kill senate select committee on intelligence CIA assassination attempts vs. 8 diff foreign leaders - 5 died violently

76 Ford bars assassination by executive order

ban has eroded over time

"monster of the moment"

Crown passes to Osama bin Laden

Powell + Cheney sign bomb "To Saddam with affection"



WES BAUSMITH for The Times

When U.S. cruise missiles struck Afghanistan last August, the Clinton administration's national-security officials were clearly disappointed that the airstrike failed to kill bin Laden. In December, after Hussein refused to readmit United Nations weapons inspectors, the U.S. again bombed Iraq. One reported target destroyed in the attack was the house where Hussein saw his mistress. Since the United States presumably had no quarrel with the mistress, Washington clearly hoped the Iraqi leader would be visiting her when the bombs fell.

Despite the official assassination ban, NATO bombers destroyed much of Milosevic's Belgrade residence on Thursday, and Yugoslav officials called it an "assassination attempt." Although the attack literally lobbed a missile into Milosevic's bedroom, President Clinton denied that NATO was directly trying to hit the Yugoslav president, who was not home at the time. But, he added, "We are targeting command and control facilities." Pentagon spokesman Kenneth H. Bacon said, "We are targeting the head of this military regime," although his comment was ambiguous as to whether he meant Milosevic personally or the "command and control system of the regime."

During last year's congressional elec-

tions, Rep. Christopher S. Bond, a Missouri Republican, suggested that the assassination ban be lifted. "One bullet at Hitler at the right time might have saved millions of lives," Bond said.

The Hitler analogy is often cited by proponents of official assassination. But killing leaders whom Washington decides are unacceptable despots is a bad idea, for a number of reasons. First, there is the legal barrier. That policy could be changed, but there are practical problems, as the attempt to dispatch Castro demonstrated. Even the Mafia, which has professional hit men, failed. The United States does not have a ready supply of suicide bombers, like those in the Middle East, so who would bell the cat? Killing a foreign leader and escaping safely might be difficult.

Who decides?
But aside from practical considerations, who decides who is a bad guy and should be assassinated? The United States may have to negotiate with the intended target in the future. Moreover, a leader who is assassinated may simply be replaced, perhaps by someone even more unsavory.

In addition to these considerations, there is the real possibility of retaliation for a state-sponsored assassination. President John F. Kennedy was quoted as

saying, "We can't get into that kind of thing or we would all be targets." Some assassination conspiracy theorists have speculated that Kennedy was killed in retaliation for the CIA's attempts to murder Castro.

Finally, there is the moral issue. Morality is normally the factor that least drives foreign policy. The United States fought a disastrous war in Vietnam to try to stop the spread of communism in Southeast Asia. It went to war in the Persian Gulf in 1991 to protect U.S. supplies of Saudi oil. One notable exception to the strategic and economic motives that often lead to war appears to be Kosovo, where humanitarian considerations did seem to influence Clinton's stance, at least once the refugees began streaming across the border. How ironic it would be, therefore, if Washington, engaged in a "moral war," resorted to assassination.

Not that the government lacks the necessary knowledge. A CIA document, entitled "A Study of Assassination," turned up in the agency's files of the 1964 coup against the leftist government of Guatemala. Peter Kornbluh, senior analyst at the National Security Archives, a private group, describes it as "a detailed manual for every conceivable which way to murder a person or group, from hitting someone with a hammer—did you know it's not effective to hit someone on the top of the head, you have to hit them right behind the ear, the softest part of the skull?—to making death appear to be an accident. It's recommended you not throw someone off a bridge, because there is a chance they might survive."

The 19-page manual, declassified by the CIA, warns that "No assassination instructions should ever be written or recorded. . . . The essential point of assassination is the death of the subject. . . . The simplest local tools are often much the most efficient means of assassination. A hammer, ax, wrench, screw driver, fire poker, kitchen knife, lamp stand, or anything hard, heavy and handy will suffice. . . . The most efficient accident . . . is a fall of 75 feet or more onto a hard surface. Elevator shafts, stair wells, unscreened windows . . . will serve. . . . Falls before trains or subway cars are usually effective, but require exact timing."

The unknown author of the CIA manual cautions, however, that "assassination can seldom be employed with a clear conscience. Persons who are morally squeamish should not attempt it." □

Kennedy - we would all be targets"

morality the factor that least drives foreign policy

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