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Office Memorandum • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

TO : Director, FBI (62-75147-210)

DATE: November 27, 1959

FROM : Legat, Havana (64-153)

Top Hoodlum Program - Cuba

SUBJECT: AMERICAN GAMBLING ACTIVITIES IN CUBA
ANTI-RACKETEERING

Re Havana letter to the Bureau dated October 12, 1959.

HAV-33, who maintains constant contact with the casinos in Havana, has advised on several occasions that the gambling business is very poor due to the lack of tourist trade. The large ASTA (American Society of Travel Agents) convention which was in session in Havana on October 21, 1959, when the alleged "bombing" of Havana took place by planes based in the United States, was expected to greatly increase the tourist trade; however, following the alleged "bombing" Prime Minister FIDEL CASTRO lashed out in very bitter attacks on the United States and a very negative impression was created on a majority of the ASTA delegates present in Cuba.

It has been observed by SA Edwin L. Sweet on several occasions that there are practically no hotel guests and no American players present in the gambling casinos of the Hotels Capri, Hilton, Nacional and Riviera. HAV-33 has reported that gambling business is also very poor at the Hotel Somodoro and the Tropicana Night Club. Havana, Cuba

It was publicly announced in the newspapers over the week-end of November 21, 1959, that the Hotel Riviera was intervened by the Cuban Revolutionary Government. It was known and has been reported that the Hotel Riviera was operating at a large loss and the Cuban Government refused to allow the hotel to release any of its employees or curtail in any way the night shows and entertainment offered at the hotel. Havana, Cuba

HAV-33 reported on October 23, 1959, that the following individuals were observed on October 10, 1959, at the casino of the Hotel Capri: ANGELO DE CRISTOFARO, ANTHONY WILLIAMS, brother of Boston Top Hoodlum, JOHN WILLIAMS, MARVIN KRAUSE, HENRY SAAVEDRA, JOE STASSI, JR., TOM COCHRON, RUSSELL GRAVELY, RAY DONAN, HY BEDOL, ROBERT STACY, SAM CHENOFF, A. FERGUSON, CLEVE FOX, LOUIS SEIDER, MAX CASVAN and GEORGE SHERMAN. Cuba

8 - Bureau (2-cc: New York, Miami, San Juan)

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Havana 64-153

In connection with the above-named group, informant reported on November 25, 1959, that he had not seen ~~JOHN WILLIAMS~~ in Cuba in approximately one month and allegedly that he is in Las Vegas on a new business trip. *mass*

Havana, Cuba

*E. Lee
Cuba*

The casino at the Hotel Riviera continues to be operated by ~~JACK LANSKY~~ as the manager in the absence of principal owner, ~~MEYER LANSKY~~, who apparently continues to reside in Florida and continues to be in ill health. The personnel manager is ~~DINO CELLINI~~ and others employed there are ~~EDDIE CELLINI~~, ~~SID JACOBS~~, ~~HARRY FROLDER~~, ~~ROBERT MANES~~, ~~TONY ABASOLO~~ and "~~DOC APPLE~~".

Observed on October 17, 1959, at the casino of the Hotel Hilton were the following: ~~LARRY SNOW~~, ~~JOE LOPINTO~~, ~~BILLY NUNLEY~~, ~~PADDY SMITH~~ and ~~CLIFF JONES~~. ~~JOE RIVERS~~ has allegedly been out of Cuba for some time.

HAV-33 reported that on October 21, 1959, the casinos at the Tropicana and Capri were visited and it was noted that each had a medium size crowd but they were all playing very small stakes and the players were entirely made up of Cubans.

On October 26, 1959, ~~JOE RIVERS~~, *Cuba U.S.* who had been absent for some time, was observed in the casino of the ~~Hotel Hilton~~. A few of the delegates to the ASTA convention were playing roulette and "21" but no large plays or stakes were noted. *Havana, Cuba*

On October 30, 1959, HAV-33 reported that on October 25, 1959, at about 10 p.m., ~~DINO CELLINI~~ had been observed at the Hotel Riviera restaurant dining with an individual known as "Gallego" ~~ANGELITO GONZALEZ~~. HAV-33 was unable to determine the nature of this conversation but stated ~~GONZALEZ~~ is well known as a crook and is presently employed at one of the dice tables in the casino at the Hotel Hilton. *Cuba*

HAV-33 also reported that he had heard from several sources in the casinos that efforts were being made to establish a gambling setup at Port-au-Prince, Haiti, but he had been unable to verify that gambling is actually underway there. He had heard that ~~LEFTY CLARK~~, FBI #1721507, had gone to Port-au-Prince for the purpose of assisting in setting up a gambling casino there. It will be recalled that ~~CLARK~~ was formerly connected with the casino at the Tropicana Night Club in Havana. *Cuba*

On November 11, 1959, HAV-31 stated that the ~~LANSKY~~ brothers would be delighted to "unload" the Hotel Riviera and gambling casino on any "sucker" who would buy it but he had no information indicating that a serious offer for the same of the same was under consideration. He stated that unless the gambling business improved considerably in Havana many of the big time gamblers would soon be pulling out.

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HAV-31 stated there is a "big fellow" with a mustache whose first name is MARK (LNU) who formerly operated at the casino in the St. Johns Hotel who is now reported to be handling a deal for the opening of a large gambling casino in Puerto Rico. HAV-31 believes MARK is handling this deal for MIKE ~~McLANEY~~ or at least MIKE McLANEY is fronting for the operation. HAV-31 could furnish no concrete information as to the identity of the owners at the Hotel Nacional casino but stated he believed a "big time" operator in New York actually is the owner of the casino and may be the money behind the setup in Puerto Rico. This source did not believe the casino in Puerto Rico would be ready for operation before October, 1960.

U.S
Cuba

On November 21, 1959, PCI Arthur Newman advised there is a night club with a capacity for about 1200 people near the Hilton Hotel in San Juan, Puerto Rico, and he understood that MIKE McLANEY is fronting for the establishment of a gambling casino there. This source thought the casino might be in operation shortly after the Christmas holidays in order to take advantage of some of the present winter tourist trade.

On November 5, 1959, PCI Alberto Suarez Aleman reported that ~~SANTO~~ TRAFFICANTE was departing the following day for Tampa, Florida, for the alleged purpose of tending to some business and bringing his wife back to Cuba; however, on November 23, 1959, source advised that TRAFFICANTE apparently had some difficulty over a tax deal at Tampa and he had still not returned.

On November 25, 1959, HAV-33 reported that TRAFFICANTE had gone to Tampa and had been involved in some difficulty regarding his taxes. HAV-33 also reported that as of November 23, 1959, JACK LANSKY continues to be out of Cuba and informant believed he was making some final financial arrangements with his brother, MEYER LANSKY, concerning their business at the Hotel Riviera and the gambling casino which has been intervened by the Cuban Government.

HAV-33 concluded that on November 23, 1959, he ascertained that the Hotel Capri has 40 guests and a visit to the casino on that night reflected no players in the casino.

Extra copies of this letter have been prepared for forwarding by the Bureau to the New York, Miami and San Juan offices.

The activities of American gamblers operating in Havana will continue to be followed and if any of the important gambling casinos are closed, the same will be promptly reported to the Bureau.

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