

## Dominican Crisis (1965)

### SUMMARY:

**December 1962:** Juan Bosch's presidential victory in December 1962 sparked local commercial-military alarm at his alleged pro-Communism, and at the new Constitution of April 1963. On September 1, 1963 a military coup installed a Triumvirate that was eventually led by Gen. Donald Reid Cabral with U.S. support.

**September 1963:** The replacement of Bosch's elected government prompted young military officers to rally to Bosch's PRD party. In late 1964, in the Rio Piedras Pact, they vowed to restore the constitutional President.

**April 24, 1965:** The rebellion against the military junta began prematurely, but military professionals in the leadership refused to engage the rebels. Street crowds, hailing Reid's decision to step down, overwhelmed the police. When the installation of a provisional President was broken up by junta-inspired air raids, the populace was inflamed. The US, fearing a Communist Cuban-style take-over, landed Marines on April 28 ostensibly to protect American lives, later supporting Gen. Antonio Imbert Barreras as provisional President. OAS, UN, US and Red Cross mediation efforts alternated with periods of heavy fighting. Finally, the OAS-sponsored peacekeeping force, IAPF, became effective and won popular support. Hector Garcia Godoy was accepted conditionally by both sides as provisional President, but substantial U.S. pressure was required to persuade Imbert to retire.

**August 1965:** The Act of Reconciliation led to a general amnesty and Garcia's installation on September 3.

**July 1966:** Newly-elected President Joaquin Balaguer took office, and IAPF withdrawal began.

*Source: MIT Cascon System for Analyzing International Conflict, Cascon Case DOM: Dominican Republic 1965-66, [http://web.mit.edu/cascon/cases/case\\_dom.html](http://web.mit.edu/cascon/cases/case_dom.html), © 1999 Lincoln P. Bloomfield and Allen Moulton.*

### PRIMARY SOURCES:

1. Special National Intelligence Estimate, "Instability and Insurgency Threat in the Dominican Republic," January 17, 1964—background on the situation in the Dominican Republic (history, military takeover, plans for future)
2. Telegram From the Embassy in the Dominican Republic to the Department of State, "Prospects for the Dominican Republic," May 21, 1964—assessment of the situation in the Dominican Republic by new U.S. ambassador
3. Memorandum from Robert M. Sayre of the National Security Council Staff to the President's Special Assistant (Dungan), "Dominican Republic," October 15, 1964—assessment of political situation and Communist strength

4. Letter From the Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs (Mann) to the Ambassador to the Dominican Republic (Bennett), February 25, 1965—discussion of Juan Bosch, deposed and exiled president of the DR (living in Puerto Rico), and how to deal with his political speeches about removing the military government in the Dominican Republic
5. Telegram From the White House Situation Room to President Johnson at Camp David, “State Department report on the situation in the Dominican Republic,” April 25, 1965—summary of resignation of Dominican president Reid and rebellion
6. Telephone Conversation Between the Under Secretary of State for Economic Affairs (Mann) and President Johnson, April 26, 1965—discussion about rebellion and possible outcomes, with president’s directive to address it  
Listen to conversation at (9 minutes total):  
[http://whitehousetapes.net/content/audio/lbj/mp3/telephone/convs/1965/lbj\\_wh65\\_04\\_05\\_7362\\_mann.mp3](http://whitehousetapes.net/content/audio/lbj/mp3/telephone/convs/1965/lbj_wh65_04_05_7362_mann.mp3)
7. Telegram From the Embassy in the Dominican Republic to the Director of the National Security Agency (Carter), April 28, 1965—request from junta for U.S. military assistance
8. Quotes from Conversation Between Under Secretary of State for Economic Affairs (Mann) and President Johnson, April 28, 1965—comparison of Dominican Republic to Cuba
9. Handwritten Notes From White House Cabinet Room Meeting, April 30, 1965—discussion of rebellion and fears of Communist involvement/takeover in Dominican Republic
10. Instructions from General Earle Wheeler, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, to Lieutenant General Bruce Palmer, May 1, 1965—unannounced anti-Communist mission in DR
11. Telephone Conversation Between Abe Fortas and President Johnson, April 30, 1965—discussion of OAS and how to proceed to avoid Communist domination of Dominican Republic  
Listen to conversation at (15 minutes total):  
[http://whitehousetapes.net/content/audio/lbj/mp3/telephone/convs/1965/lbj\\_wh65\\_04\\_08\\_7404\\_fortas.mp3](http://whitehousetapes.net/content/audio/lbj/mp3/telephone/convs/1965/lbj_wh65_04_08_7404_fortas.mp3)
12. Telephone Conversations Between President Johnson and His Advisers, April 30, 1965—discussion of President Johnson’s proposed statement to the press and parsing of language on Castro/Communism  
Listen to conversations:
  - (a) Robert McNamara, 5:05 p.m. (8 minutes)—LBJ reads draft presidential statement on Dominican crisis; McNamara suggests other officials make statements on Cuban role:  
[http://whitehousetapes.net/content/audio/lbj/mp3/telephone/convs/1965/lbj\\_wh65\\_04\\_09\\_7425\\_mcnamara.mp3](http://whitehousetapes.net/content/audio/lbj/mp3/telephone/convs/1965/lbj_wh65_04_09_7425_mcnamara.mp3)
  - (b) Robert McNamara, 5:40 p.m. (3:30 minutes)—concerns about language on Communist role:  
[http://whitehousetapes.net/content/audio/lbj/mp3/telephone/convs/1965/lbj\\_wh65\\_04\\_09\\_7429\\_mcnamara.mp3](http://whitehousetapes.net/content/audio/lbj/mp3/telephone/convs/1965/lbj_wh65_04_09_7429_mcnamara.mp3)
  - (c) McGeorge Bundy, 6:00 p.m. (6 minutes)—discussion of timing and language of statement, strong words from LBJ about delays:  
[http://whitehousetapes.net/content/audio/lbj/mp3/telephone/convs/1965/lbj\\_wh65](http://whitehousetapes.net/content/audio/lbj/mp3/telephone/convs/1965/lbj_wh65)

[04 09 7432 bundy.mp3](#)

(d) Robert McNamara, 6:25 p.m. (6 minutes)—casualties and status of military action and evacuation, question of Communist role

[http://whitehousetapes.net/content/audio/lbj/mp3/telephone/convs/1965/lbj\\_wh65](http://whitehousetapes.net/content/audio/lbj/mp3/telephone/convs/1965/lbj_wh65)

[04 09 7435 mcnamara.mp3](#)

(e) Dean Rusk, 6:30 p.m. (3 minutes)—discussion of whether or not statement should be made, concern about Communist statement:

[http://whitehousetapes.net/content/audio/lbj/mp3/telephone/convs/1965/lbj\\_wh65](http://whitehousetapes.net/content/audio/lbj/mp3/telephone/convs/1965/lbj_wh65)

[04 09 7436 rusk.mp3](#)

(f) McGeorge Bundy, 6:35 p.m. (13 minutes)—final wording of statement, need to inform U.S. public:

[http://whitehousetapes.net/content/audio/lbj/mp3/telephone/convs/1965/lbj\\_wh65](http://whitehousetapes.net/content/audio/lbj/mp3/telephone/convs/1965/lbj_wh65)

[04 09 7438 bundy.mp3](#)

### **DISCUSSION TOPICS:**

1. Vocabulary about Communism used by officials in their correspondence.
2. How LBJ's experience with the Bay of Pigs affected his assessment of the situation in the Dominican Republic.
3. The U.S.'s support of basic rights and democracy in the face of Communist fears.
4. The process of crafting of official statements. What should citizens know and who should tell them?

## **Source 1: Special National Intelligence Estimate, Washington, January 17, 1964**

### INSTABILITY AND THE INSURGENCY THREAT IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

#### Conclusion

We believe that the security forces of the Dominican Republic can control any subversive activities likely to occur during the next few months. Nevertheless, leftist leaders probably can increase hit-and-run terrorism in urban areas and, over time, may be able to resume guerrilla activity in the mountains. If they show ability to sustain such operations, Castro will probably supply them clandestinely with small amounts of material aid, and they may attract the support of other Dominican elements, including erstwhile moderates. Thus, over the longer run, the insurgency danger could increase, perhaps sharply. This development would be facilitated if the regime failed to show progress in meeting demands for restoration of political freedoms and for social and economic reforms.

#### Discussion

##### I. Background

1. The Dominican Republic is one of the Latin American countries least prepared for representative government. Its past has been characterized by a succession of foreign occupations, coups, and despotic administrations. In particular, the thirty years of Trujillo's dictatorship, ended only by his assassination in 1961, warped the political and economic framework of the country. Over the years, many Dominicans have come to doubt that they can accomplish anything by themselves; there are few who have the experience, honesty, and backbone to play effective roles as government leaders.

2. Along with this unfortunate political legacy, Trujillo left an economic jumble of major proportions. His economic policies were designed primarily to funnel funds into the coffers of the Trujillo family. As a result, most of the enterprises now operating in the Dominican Republic are unsound, having inefficient administration structures and swollen payrolls. The Haina sugar complex, the Dominican Republic's most important producer for export, is a case in point. Moreover, some of the country's best land—formerly Trujillo-owned—is still lying fallow.

3. None of the governments which have ruled since Trujillo's death—including the Bosch administration which held power from February to late September of 1963—made appreciable progress toward solution of the country's political and economic difficulties. Although Bosch began with a strong popular mandate, he did not consolidate his electoral victory by decisive and constructive action. On the one hand, he failed to attract the cooperation of influential opposition elements in the business community, among the large property owners, in the military and church hierarchies; on the other hand, he failed to organize his mass popular following into an effective supporting political force. Bosch reacted vigorously against Communists and Castroists only when he thought they posed direct challenges to his own position. His refusal to adopt a strong anti-Communist posture

left him vulnerable to rightist pressure for his removal. For many of those working for his overthrow, the Communist issue was the excuse; their own self-interest was the motive.

4. The extreme leftists waited for the dust to settle after Bosch's overthrow before undertaking a campaign of violent opposition. This began in November and has consisted of a number of scare-bombings in the cities and the establishment, for a brief time, of several small guerrilla units in the mountains.

## II. The Present Regime

5. The military coup of 25 September was incited by anti-Bosch politicians and carried out by the top-level of the Dominican officer corps. The key military leaders were strongly anti-Communist and inclined to believe that reformers and moderate leftists were actually Communists. The coup provoked surprisingly little popular reaction....

7. The present regime has developed no clearly defined program to ease the country's basic economic problems—widespread poverty, low productivity, and growing unemployment. The triumvirate has, however, made sensible policy statements and has undertaken some constructive measures, along with many dictated by expediency.

8. In the political field, the regime has taken a strong anti-Communist and anti-Castroist position and has acted to curb Communist and other extreme leftist activities. Under much press, internal and external, to hold elections soon, it has announced a five-phase scheme which would begin with several limited local elections and put off national congressional and presidential elections until mid-1965....

*Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, National Intelligence Estimates, Dominican Republic. Secret. According to a note on the cover sheet this estimate was prepared in the Central Intelligence Agency with the participation of the intelligence organizations of the Departments of State and Defense.*

**Source 2: Telegram From the Embassy in the Dominican Republic to the Department of State, Santo Domingo, May 21, 1964, 2 p.m.**

Subject: Prospects for the Dominican Republic.

1. On conclusion of my first eight weeks in this tormented country, Dept will perhaps be interested to have from me a preliminary analysis of the situation here and its portents for United States policy.

Continuing State of Crisis

2. During this period since late March the country has been rocked by three major crises, two of which were political and either of which could easily have ended in a military takeover. One did end with change in governing triumvirate. Govt is attempting to face up to financial crisis, and some initial measures have been taken; but we are still in early stretch of long road. Sufficient to say that with crises recurring so constantly little gets done. Political malaise is perhaps more serious than economic, and the various forces emerge from one crisis to prepare for the next....

Economic Misery

6. As a result of sampling this wide cross section of Dominican opinion, I am convinced that country's major interest at the moment is finding jobs and food, i.e. getting on with economic development. With perhaps a third of the working force unemployed and many others underemployed, urban slums I have visited are Asian-like in their overcrowding and squalor (they lack even such basic necessities as water, sanitation, and garbage collection). They are seething with unrest and frustration. Economic misery, as distinct from political tyranny, strikes me as much more prevalent now (drift to cities dramatizes it, of course) than when I served in this country over twenty years ago during the Trujillo period.

Political Apathy

7. One of the things which has impressed me most in my travels and conversations about the country has been the almost total lack of interest in talking politics with me. This excepts, of course, the several party leaders here in the capital whose profession it is to keep the waters boiling. In conversations with others, however, the more sophisticated emphasize development needs and propose projects, large and small, government and private. Less educated people stress jobs and housing. I am repeatedly surprised at how rarely politics comes up....

Leftward Drift

8. On other hand, the poor and the unemployed, most of whom scrape through on a minimum subsistence diet and have trouble even getting water, while not active politically, appear to be steadily drifting leftward in their sympathies. They are, of course, on receiving end of heavy stream of radio and word-of-mouth propaganda from extreme left. My Peace

Corps friends who live in slum areas tell us that many of their neighbors sympathize with Castroite 14th of June movement. Comments made to me on my own visits to these sections indicate, despite the appealing simplicity and easy friendliness which still characterizes the average Dominican, a general sense of abandonment at hands of society. Perverted as it is in its aims, the 14th of June at least shows interest in their misery and promises them help....

#### Need For Urgent U.S. Action

10. Given the above factual situation, what should be the U.S. posture? My own conviction after eight years here is that we have less time even than we thought during Washington consultations in March. If we are to influence Dominicans in ways we want to see them go and counter leftist efforts to poison popular mind, we must lose no time in getting under way with full-scale Alliance for Progress program. Despite rather somber picture drawn above, I do not believe body politic here is as yet deeply infected with Castro-Communist venom, notwithstanding intensive efforts mentioned above. There is rather touching trust and faith that the United States can solve all Dominican problems; there is, in fact, over-dependence on us.

11. The time for us to act is now. AID Director Carter Ide is presently in Washington, and I hope he can be given urgent and sympathetic support in getting approval of program along lines worked out during his recent consultation here. We believe emphasis should be in fields of (1) agriculture (agricultural productivity has simply got to be increased to meet needs of rapidly increasing population and to offset effects of measures to counter balance of payments problem) and (2) education, but with sufficient flexibility to take on desirable projects that may be offered in other fields. There is critical need to put people to work here, and we should have some impact projects of sufficient scope to be impressive and have effect on local consciousness....

#### The Prospects

24. With sufficient commitment on our part I believe the problem here is manageable, although I do not underestimate the difficulties and the uncertain prospects. We learned all too recently here that we do not, despite our great influence, have the last word; we are dealing with human material which does not always respond logically or even in its own long-range interests. When the chips are down it is the Dominicans who make their own final decisions—largely on the basis of their own self-generated pressures.

25. There are many larger problems than the Dominican one, and many which would appear to be basically more insoluble. But the Dominican Republic is on our doorstep and, let us have no illusions, the Dominican problem is urgent.

Bennett [William Tapley Bennett, Jr, Ambassador to the Dominican Republic, 1964–66]

*Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1964–66, FN 2 DOM REP. Secret; Limit Distribution.*

**Source 3: Memorandum from Robert M. Sayre of the National Security Council Staff to the President's Special Assistant (Dungan), Washington, October 15, 1964**

SUBJECT: Dominican Republic

...I find a little more optimism on the Dominican situation than there has been for some time. This apparently stems from two factors:

a. Donny Reid recently had a confrontation with the Trujillista element in the armed forces (San Cristobal group) and bested them. He thereby strengthened himself within the government and with the Dominican people....

b. Reid is carrying out an economic stabilization program with vigor. [U.S. Agency for International Development], State [Department] and the [International Monetary Fund] were all pessimistic about the chances of pulling this one off. IMF doubted the wisdom of even starting, and leaned toward devaluation instead. There is some hope now that the program may work.

I do not find anyone really confident about the Dominican situation. There are only a few Dominicans qualified to help run the government. When you are that thin, it does not take much to upset everything....

The question of Communist strength is a mixed up one, and not as urgent as either of the two factors above. When the Government broke up the guerrilla movement and killed a number of its leaders, it dealt a severe blow to Communist strength. It also deported a number of activists—in fact got rid of two more last week. At the same time, some are coming back. The only explanation at the moment seems to be that they are from “good” families in the Dominican Republic and the Government has not resisted the pressure from these families. Nevertheless, Ambassador Bennett raised the issue with the Dominican Government last week. His [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] has put together a list of those that have filtered back, and both the Ambassador and State plan to urge the Government to take necessary precautions.

Robert M. Sayre

*Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Country File, Dominican Republic, Vol. II, 1/64–4/65. Secret. A copy and the attachment were sent to Bundy.*



**Source 4: Letter From the Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs (Thomas C. Mann) to the Ambassador to the Dominican Republic (Bennett), Washington, February 25, 1965**

...The problem of what to do about Juan Bosch is a difficult one. I do not think we can come up with a final answer at this time. Kennedy has briefed me on Bosch's recent activities and we have examined options open to us for dealing with him. Unfortunately, there is very little room within which to maneuver.

From a legal standpoint, we have no evidence that Bosch has violated or conspired to violate any U.S. laws. What he has done is exercise the right of free speech. I can understand why the Dominicans find reason to complain about the way he's done it, but there isn't any law against it. Nor is there legal basis, or basis in precedent which would support a finding that Bosch's activities have constituted an abuse of his status as a political asylee in the U.S. I'm afraid this would be true even if Bosch had made statements which could be identified clearly as incitation of Dominicans within the Dominican Republic to rebel against the Dominican government. Although we can agree that this is what he hopes to accomplish, after going over the statements we can attribute to him, we would also have to agree that he has carefully phrased what he has said to avoid anything approaching outright or clear-cut incitation to rebellion....

Bosch is an unpredictable man, but we do know he's a political gambler, sometimes a reckless one. He plays what we might call a forcing game, as the series of crises he deliberately provoked during 1962 and 1963 demonstrate. It would be in character for him, then, to force us into a showdown.

Also, as you know, Bosch likes the underdog role. For years he has looked for ways to appear as the persecuted champion of democracy—just he and the people against the powerful forces of reaction. This is his style and it won the 1962 elections for him. He has also been effective in the pose of defender of national honor, dignity and independence.

We think the foregoing suggests that Bosch would seek to extract maximum advantage out of what he would picture as U.S. persecution on behalf of an illegal and unpopular government. His only chance to regain power probably lies in some kind of upheaval within the Dominican Republic. Under the circumstances, why should he hold back? At this point Bosch needs an issue. The best new tack available to him might well be to tag the Triumvirate with the U.S.-lackey label—another colonialist regime sold out to big brother. This could be particularly effective at a time of acute economic difficulties and it is not entirely improbable that he has had just this possibility in the back of his mind during recent weeks....

*Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, ARA Files: Lot 70 D 295, Dominican Republic, 1965-1967. Confidential; Official-Informal. Drafted by Shlaudeman and Crockett on February 24.*

**Source 5: Telegram From the White House Situation Room to President Johnson at Camp David, Washington, April 25, 1965**

CAP 65134. Following is State Department report on the situation in the Dominican Republic as of noon today:

The Embassy in Santo Domingo has reported that Donald Reid, respectively President and member of the triumvirate which has governed the country since September 1963, resigned this morning and turned power over to General Montas Guerrero, ex-Army Chief of Staff who has been serving as Minister of Interior....

Reid and Caceres, who have been providing the country with responsible and reasonably effective government, resigned in order to prevent further bloodshed. Key units of the army revolted yesterday and, although the other services at first seemed loyal to the triumvirate, it became apparent this morning that the government could only survive at the cost of civil war. The rebellious units moved into Santo Domingo, the capital, some sporadic fighting occurred and the military units loyal to the regime began to waver. Crowds of antigovernment demonstrators were active and there were reliable reports that the rebellious troops were distributing arms to their civilian sympathizers. Under the circumstances, Reid had little choice but to resign.

The movement against the triumvirate was initiated yesterday by a mixed group of disgruntled military, students and political agitators. The leaders included at least two prominent members of ex-President Juan Bosch's Dominican Revolutionary Party: Jose Francisco Pena, a skilled and eloquent agitator, and Miguel Soto, who directs the party's affiliated labor federation. Both are identified with the party's left wing and both have been suspected of ties to the extreme left. Available information indicates that individuals identified with the pro-Castro 14th of June political movement were also involved, along with representatives of extremist student groups. It does not appear, however, that either the official Communist Party or the Popular Dominican Movement, a party oriented toward the Chinese Communists, was directly involved....

With the government now in the hands of a military junta, the key problem is restoring at least a measure of unity within the armed forces. Continuing dissension would open the way for the extremist elements who have attached themselves to the anti-triumvirate movement and would bring the possibility of further bloodshed. If unity is restored, it seems probable that the junta will call early elections. The available evidence indicates that Joaquin Balaguer would probably win such elections. He has a history of demagoguery and was closely associated with the Trujillo regime. However, Balaguer is firmly anti-Communist and enjoys the support of some of the country's best people. We could cooperate with him, as we have in the past....

*Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, Dominican Republic, White House Cables, 4/65-7/65. Secret. A handwritten notation on the first page of the telegram reads: "Seen by the President 25 Apr 65."*

**Source 6: Telephone Conversation Between the Under Secretary of State for Economic Affairs (Mann) and President Johnson, Washington, April 26, 1965, 9:35 a.m.**

President: What is the report on the Dominican Republic?

Mann: Well, it isn't good this morning. We were hoping last night that the Army would be able to get together but they are split. The Wessin group and the Air Force are in one camp; a large part of the Army that is in Santo Domingo, the capital itself, is supporting the rebel government and the loyalties of the troops outside the capital are still uncertain. They have not gone over to the rebels yet and presumably they will split too. The Wessin forces are separated from the center of town by a river which is commanded by the rebels—the bridge over the river—there is only one. The guns controlling the bridge are being strafed by the Air Force and Wessin has not yet tried to move across the bridge with his main troops. Looting is going on in the city and a lot of chaos. They have got about 1400 Marines on board these ships standing offshore....I do not think that there is anything that we can do right now except wait it out. I do not know how it will go. They are not likely to do too much shooting—at least they never have in the past. Either the troops on one side or the other are likely to cave. We heard last night late that they were moving over to Wessin's side and it apparently stiffened during the night and early this morning.

...

President: We are going to have to really set up that government down there, run it and stabilize it some way or another. This Bosch is no good. I was down there.

Mann: He's no good at all. And the tragedy behind all of this is the price of sugar which you can't do much about—even try to raise the price of sugar—without putting Castro firmly in the saddle. They are both sugar economies. I think what we are going to have to do is pour even more money into Santo Domingo to offset this low sugar price right now. This is what's hurting them. And if we don't get a decent government in there Mr. President, and we get another Bosch, it is just going to be another sinkhole.

President: Well, that's your problem. You'd better figure it out....

*Source: Johnson Library, Recordings and Transcripts, Recording of telephone conversation between President Johnson and Thomas Mann, Tape F65.10, Side B, PNO 3. Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968, Volume XXXII, Dominican Republic; Cuba; Haiti; Guyana, Document 22. No classification marking. This transcript was prepared in the Office of the Historian specifically for this volume. President Johnson placed the call to Mann, which lasted approximately 9 minutes.*

**Source 7: Telegram From the Embassy in the Dominican Republic to the Director of the National Security Agency (Carter), Santo Domingo, April 28, 1965**

Critic 4. Following is text of request by newly formed junta for US military assistance:

Military junta of government, conscious that present revolutionary movement against democratic institutions junta represents, is directed by Communists and is of authentic Communist stamp, as shown by excesses committed against population, mass assassinations, sackings of private property, constant incitations to continue fight broadcast by Radio Habana, and which movement, if victorious will convert this country into another Cuba we request, with responsibility and in categoric manner, that United States Government lend US its unlimited and immediate military assistance so that such grave situation may definitively be controlled.

Bennett

*Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1964-66, POL 23-9 DOM REP. Confidential. The telegram printed here is the copy repeated to the Department of State, which was received at 4:54 p.m. Passed to USIB agencies.*

**Source 8: Quotes from Conversation Between Under Secretary of State for Economic Affairs (Mann) and President Johnson, April 28, 1965**

During a 5:15 p.m. telephone conversation on April 28, 1965, between President Johnson and Mann, President Johnson also asked Mann “to be sure we are right on our predictions.” Furthermore, the President said he “[didn't] want the rebels to win; he had just about lived down the Bay of Pigs and he [didn't] want Mr. Mann to get him involved in another spot like that.”

*Source: Johnson Library, Papers of Thomas C. Mann, Telephone Conversations with LBJ, Jan. 14, 1964–April 30, 1965.*

**Source 9: Handwritten Notes By Jack Valenti, Special Assistant to the President, From White House Cabinet Room Meeting, April 30, 1965**

...“LBJ: I am not willing to let this island go to Castro. OAS is a phantom—they are taking a siesta while this is on fire. How can we send troops 10,000 miles away and let Castro take over right under our nose. Let's just analyze—we have resisted Communists all over the world: Vietnam, Lebanon, and Greece. What are we doing under our doorstep. We know the rebel leaders are Communist, and we are sitting here waiting on OAS. We know Castro will hate us. We got rid of the dictator and we will now get a real dictator....

“LBJ: I think enough leaders are there to make it Castro. Not all Cubans were Communist. I am ashamed of the little we have done.

“[George W.] Ball: But we have done considerable; we have put men ashore without real angry response.

“LBJ: I want McNamara to get ready so that Castro cannot take over.

“[Robert S.] McNamara: Before we move, open press corps—show evidence of Castro takeover—evidence irrefutable. Until we act, Castro will be in command of the island—China Reds. Call on Latin American countries to join US in support to crush Communist threat. Call on Dominican Republic citizens to organize their own government. Must have some government to get behind. Asked US to come in to save their island from communism.

“LBJ: I want US to feverishly try to cloak this with legitimacy. We cannot stand with our hand in our pocket and let Castro win. Military get ducks in a row. Diplomats see if we can do anything to get observers in here or troops from other Latin American countries. We are willing to do whatever is necessary to put the pistols down. We will have one of 3 dictators: 1) U.S., 2) Moderate dictator, 3) Castro dictator.

“Bundy: Here are some thoughts that may or may not be helpful to you. One thing is clear: a Castro victory in the D.R. would [be] the worst domestic political disaster we could possibly suffer. But in order to quash Castro in D.R. we need above all else to get hemispheric public opinion on our side. We can do it this way: Before we move call an open press conference. 1. Show indisputable evidence that Castro-Communists are in control in the D.R. (CIA ought to prepare full dossiers) Vital that this [be] proven without a doubt. If can be linked to Chinese reds all the better. 2. Call on D.R. citizens to rise up (if at all possible, a group of responsible D.R. Citizens should cry out for US to save them from Castro). 3. Call on Latin-American countries to join with us—(if we can announce 2–3 or 4 countries who are with US all the better). 4. Give the choice: stand by [and] do nothing, let Castro take over or with the OAS and local entreaties move in to quell the Castro people and save this island from black darkness. We must lay the public opinion base—a clear choice: freedom versus Castro; citizens cry out for help versus Castro reds.”

*Source: Johnson Library, Office of the President File, Valenti Meeting Notes. Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968. Volume XXXII, Dominican Republic; Cuba; Haiti; Guyana, Document 42.*

**Source 10: Instructions from General Earle Wheeler, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, to Lieutenant General Bruce Palmer, May 1, 1965**

Your announced mission is to save US lives. Your unannounced mission is to prevent the Dominican Republic from going Communist. The President has stated that he will not allow another Cuba—you are to take all necessary measures to accomplish this mission. You will be given sufficient forces to do the job.

*Source: Msg, JCS 1113 to CINCLANT, 30 APR 65, C, CJCS 091 Dominican Republic (DATA Concerning Roles and Actions of DOD). Stability Operations, Dominican Republic, Vol. I, Pt. I, Ch. II, p. 1, S, JMF 9128.4 (4 May 65) sec 1A. Interv, W.S. Poole with GEN Bruce Palmer, Jr., USA (Ret.), 4 Sep 84.*

**Source 11: Telephone Conversation Between Abe Fortas and President Johnson, Washington, April 30, 1965, 10:50 a.m.**

...President: I had tried to explain to [McNamara] that I hoped for some prospect of internationalizing this thing: a. To get the OAS to meet again today. They just adjourned until tomorrow and said they decided to sleep today. And try to get some of the sympathetic liberal forces in the hemisphere to send an observer or send a military contingent. We've been doing all this for a week; they don't do it. They're killing our people and as you say they have captured tanks now; they're taking over the police marching them down the street and they got a hundred of them as hostages. Our CIA says this is a completely led, operated, dominated—they've got men on the inside of it; it's a Castro operation. It started out as a Bosch operation but he's been moved completely out of the picture. They shoved them out and completely took over....

Fortas: Mr. President, if Bosch calls for a cease-fire and Wessin agrees to it, they'll continue fighting, the Communists [will] continue fighting.

President: They won't; they'll just take charge and start running the government, I think.

Fortas: I don't see how they could do that [inaudible].

President: We're not stopping them from running the government. Since last Saturday, Bosch lasted for a few hours, then Castro started operating; they got 45 more in there last night—trained, Castro-trained, Castro-operated people. We're doing nothing to them. They started firing, they came in here last night and said to me at 7 o'clock that we've got 900 men, the most elite force in Santo Domingo holed up here in prison. Now, what do we do about it? I said let's protect them. "No, we can't do that," because that would be partiality. I said, well let's get them out and evacuate them and get them to another part of the island. Oh, we can't do that because that would be sending our Navy in and the Ambassador says that would be showing partiality. And then I said, let's get the Dominican Navy to evacuate them from the Communists. They said all right, we'll do that. [At] 2:30 they called me and said they couldn't get the Dominican Navy because it was in machine gun fire and the Dominican Navy didn't want anything to do with it. So, I get up this morning and they take 900 of the people who are not Communists, the best police we have got on the island, and the Communists have taken them. So they had added 900 to their strength of 1900 and marched them down the streets of Santo Domingo with guns to their backs and they're taking a hundred of them and saying "we're going to kill you" unless these people quit and give up. They haven't eaten in three days and are about ready to give up. The question is what does the United States do? We've done this now for a week—nothing; we've done nothing because we don't want to be partial. But they are firing consistently every hour on our Embassy and when we can locate a sniper we shoot at them and we kill four or five. But the OAS spent all night denouncing us. We finally got a cease fire out of them.

Here's what I think we ought to do: I think we ought to get the CIA to give US name, address, chapter and verse—I don't mean to surface all that, but I mean to show that we got



proof so that a lawyer like you [could] say that this is a case of Cuba doing this job; that's number one. Number two, we ought to have our military forces in sufficient quantity, an adequate number appropriate ready to take that island. If we can get any other forces to join US well and good. Before we act we'll try that, but to take that island so that Castro doesn't take it. Next thing, we ought to try to get a cease-fire. Next, we ought to try to get the OAS to send a team in today instead of sleeping through the day. Next, I think we ought to invite the OAS, any of their countries, or anybody else for that matter who wants to prevent bloodshed and to preserve peace to go in and join with US to be sure it's not just a United States operation. But if all this fails I'm not going to sit here and say I think down the road I can work it out after a Communist government sets up and starts issuing orders....

*Source: Johnson Library, Recordings and Transcripts, Recording of telephone conversation between President Johnson and Abe Fortas, Tape F65.12, Side B, PNO 2 and 3. No classification marking. Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968. Volume XXXII, Dominican Republic; Cuba; Haiti; Guyana, Document 44. This transcript was prepared in the Office of the Historian specifically for this volume. Abe Fortas placed the telephone call to President Johnson; they talked for approximately 15 minutes. This conversation occurred immediately after a meeting on the Dominican Republic in the White House Cabinet Room.*

## **Source 12: Telephone Conversations Between President Johnson and His Advisers, April 30, 1965**

On April 30, 1965, President Johnson held several telephone conversations with his top advisers between 5 and 7 p.m. on a proposed statement to the press regarding Communist involvement in the Dominican crisis. In the first of these conversations with Secretary of Defense McNamara at 5:05 p.m., McNamara expressed his strong belief that the President of the United States should not be the person to “point a finger to the Communists’ participation in this.” McNamara thought President Johnson would have “a pretty tough job proving that the Inter-American system was being menaced by powers outside the republic and were trying to gain control.” President Johnson responded, “We all know they are. What is wrong with my saying it?” McNamara said, “The rest of US can say things like that and we don’t have to prove it, but you have got a handful of people there but you don’t know that Castro is trying to do anything. You would have a hard time proving to any group that Castro has done more than train these people, and we have trained a lot of people and he has trained a lot of people. I think it puts your own status and prestige too much on the line. The rest of the statement I think is excellent, but to say you as President [have] personal knowledge that powers outside the hemisphere are trying to subvert this government or those people, I don’t think you are in a very strong position to say that.”

President Johnson asked if the CIA could document Castro's involvement and McNamara replied that he didn't think so. He thought the CIA might show certain people were trained in Cuba, but not that Castro was directing the training. (Johnson Library, Recordings and Transcripts, Recording of telephone conversation between President Johnson and Robert McNamara, Tape F65.14, Side A, PNO 6)

At 5:40 p.m. McNamara and President Johnson resumed their telephone conversation about the press statement. President Johnson opened the conversation by saying, with a sense of urgency, “I have this feeling if we don’t take over that island within the next 24 hours or before the last man folds, we never will. I may be wrong, but if I am wrong I want you to tell me.” McNamara responded by again expressing his objections to a statement that includes a sentence “people trained outside [the Dominican Republic] are seeking to gain control.” Bill Moyers, who was in the President's office at the time of this conversation, added that he thought such a sentence was unnecessary and to include it “would raise the prestige and status of the Cubans because it declares publicly that “we believe the Communists are behind this.” (Ibid., Recording of telephone conversation between President Johnson and Robert McNamara, Tape F65.14, Side A, PNO 7)

By 6 p.m. when President Johnson talked to McGeorge Bundy on the telephone, the final draft of the press statement was still not approved by the President's top advisers. During their conversation Bundy promised the President that he would have a statement before the close of business that evening. President Johnson fearing that would be too late responded:

“I think while we were talking yesterday we ought to have been acting. I think we ought to have been doing yesterday what we did today. I think we finally got some people doing something today. I think they're going to have that island in another 24 hours. I think we've got no basis for any action. I think this statement is a predicate and kind of puts your hand up your dress. Morse has just made his speech; he compliments US but he said our only basis of action is to keep the Communists from taking over. We won't even admit that there's anybody down there, that there is any conspiracy. We have run under the table and hid and told them nothing ... I know that when we go all day in a hot situation like this without saying anything, and wait until late in the evening until they [the OAS] act, I know that we are going to look like we are just a bunch of interveners and not peacemakers at all.”

Bundy replied that he still felt the President could get his point across by “hinting to these things ... by sticking to our existing position.” The conversation ended with the President saying he really wanted to deliver a statement and hoped his advisers would soon reach agreement on a draft. (Ibid., Recording of telephone conversation between President Johnson and McGeorge Bundy, Tape F65.14, Side A, PNO 10)

At 6:25 p.m. McNamara placed a telephone call to President Johnson. Again they debated the contents of what would become the fourth paragraph in the final version of the statement. President Johnson informed McNamara that Rusk had voiced his objections to the President's statement saying “there are disturbing signs” in the Dominican Republic because to do so would be to “take on the liberals” and “the Communists.” McNamara agreed and advocated that the President deliver a statement without reference to the line in question, even if it was “just a handout to the press.” But President Johnson did not completely agree. He said: “What worries me, Bob, is that I'm not being quite honest with them. I think we do know and every citizen of this country knows that there are disturbing signs there, and there are people trained outside in there, and I think if I don't say so it looks like I'm concealing it and trying to cover up.” McNamara said that with or without the sentence in question he thought any statement would be worthwhile. The conversation ended with President Johnson undecided about whether he should deliver the statement. (Ibid., Recording of telephone conversation between President Johnson and Robert McNamara, Tape F65.14, Side B, PNO 2)

At 6:30 p.m. President Johnson telephoned Rusk to seek his approval on the latest version of the statement. This version replaced the word “powers” with the word “people” in the sentence “powers trained outside the Dominican Republic are seeking to gain control of the rebel movement,” a veiled reference to Cuba. Rusk said he agreed with this change because “it separates the Bosch people from the Communists.” Mann and Ball who were in Rusk's office at the time of this telephone call concurred. (Ibid., Recording of telephone conversation between President Johnson and Dean Rusk, Tape F65.14, Side B, PNO 3)

President Johnson held one last telephone conversation with McGeorge Bundy at 6:35 p.m. before he decided to deliver his statement at 7:07 p.m. in the Theater at the White House. The text of the statement is in *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Lyndon B. Johnson*, Book I, pages 465–466. During this conversation Bundy told the President he still

felt that the latest version of the statement might commit the President to a “civil war against Communists that aren't in charge.” Bundy said that although the CIA had identified eight Communist-trained rebels, “nobody has yet said that anyone of these Communists is actually in command of a column.” Bundy said he “wasn't sure that these Communists were that much in control of this messy movement,” and he “wouldn't this evening point the finger that hard at the Communists.” After Bundy and the President “doctored down” the language by removing the words “disturbing” and “dangerous elements” from the fourth paragraph, the President asked one last question: did Bundy think delivering the statement would “handicap” them. Bundy said, “no, not too much.” With that response the President ended the conversation. (Johnson Library, Recordings and Transcripts, Recording of telephone conversation between President Johnson and McGeorge Bundy, Tape F65.14, Side B, PNO 4) The portions of the conversations printed here were prepared in the Office of the Historian specifically for this volume.

*Source: Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968. Volume XXXII, Dominican Republic; Cuba; Haiti; Guyana, Document 48.*