

January 23, 1987

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: REINTERVIEW OF JOSEPH F. FERNANDEZ, FORMER STATION
CHIEF, CIA, COSTA RICA

As stated in a previous memorandum, Fernandez was interviewed on January 21, 1987, from approximately 1330 hours to 1600 hours at the CIA Headquarters, McLean, Virginia.

Upon returning to the Office of the President's Special Review Board, documents were reviewed which involved message traffic travelling to and from Fernandez. The review of these documents made it evident that a reinterview of Fernandez was needed. Therefore, [redacted] of the CIA IG was contacted and was asked to make Fernandez available for another interview on this date (January 21, 1987).

At approximately 1840 hours, January 21, 1987, Fernandez was reinterviewed. Present during this interview were: Michael S. Russell, Brian M. Bruh, and CIA Legal Counsel, [redacted]. It lasted until approximately 2120 hours.

During the first portion of the interview, Fernandez denied much of a relationship with Oliver North. He initially said that he met North only one or two times and never directly communicated with him. After the questioning continued for a while, and he was asked to identify each of the message traffic (Exhibits 1-11) he admitted he in fact was the "Joe" referred to in communications and that he both received messages from and sent messages to North directly from April 1986 through most of the rest of the year. See separate memo dated January 24, 1987, from Brian M. Bruh. Fernandez further acknowledged that many of the shipments that he assisted North and Ralph Quintero deliver to the contras were lethal ones. He believes that the Contras making up the Southern Command could not have survived without their assistance. He has no idea whether or not any of the other Chiefs of Station for the Agency in Central America supported the Contras in the same manner he was.

Fernandez was asked if he was familiar with the name Copp. Fernandez stated that he was not. Fernandez was asked if he was familiar with the name Richard Copp. Fernandez stated that he was not. Fernandez did say that he was vaguely familiar with the name as he had heard it in the American Embassy in Costa Rica,

however, it really did not mean anything to him. Fernandez was shown message traffic (marked Exhibit 1) which in essence relates that a "Ralph" is expected by "Joe" during the month of May 1986. The message traffic itself appeared to be from a Dick Copp. Fernandez stated that he can only assume that the Joe mentioned in the message traffic is himself. Fernandez, at this point, took the opportunity to make it very clear that he had never spoken with a Richard Secord via telephone, personally, or any other way of communication.

Fernandez expanded on what he felt the above Exhibit was in reference to. Fernandez stated that the message traffic probably involved the Point West Airstrip which was an airstrip project of particular interest to Ambassador Tambs.

Fernandez was shown Exhibit 2. This memo again appears to be from a Dick Copp and involves assistance by a "Joe" regarding guards at the Point West Airfield. Fernandez stated that the Ralph noted in the Exhibit 2 is, in fact, Raphael Quintero. Fernandez stated that he assumes that the Joe noted in the memo is himself. Again, Fernandez stated that the airfield in question was an airfield which was the airfield project of interest to Ambassador Tambs.

Fernandez was shown Exhibit 3. Exhibit 3 appears to be from a "Joe" with an ending of, "Regards, DV." The transmission itself deals with two pilots being detained by authorities in Costa Rica. The pilots were apparently detained due to the fact the Costa Rican, as well as DEA officials, felt the pilots were involved in drug trafficking. Fernandez stated that he was familiar with the incident but said that he did not write the memo in question. He acknowledged that the regards section noting DV were the sign-off initials that he used for message traffic. However, he stated he did not write this particular memo. Fernandez opined that the message was probably sent by Raphael Quintero. Fernandez stated however, the information contained within the message traffic was factual.

Fernandez was shown Exhibit 4. The memo itself involves a message traffic from a Dick Copp. The message traffic reflects that an attempted drop of supplies was aborted on or about 4-11-86. Fernandez stated that the delivery itself was a delivery of lethal equipment to the Contras. Fernandez stated that the person by the name of Steele in the message traffic was a military group commander.

Fernandez was shown Exhibit 5. Exhibit 5 reflects message traffic apparently from Copp. The message traffic itself reflects that a Joe had requested two drops totalling about 39,000 pounds to the Southern Front troops. Fernandez stated that the drops were never made. Further, Fernandez stated that

he had no idea to whom Copp was writing. Fernandez indicated that he had, in fact, assisted in the anticipated drops in that he had passed along the coordinate information from the Southern Commander to Raphael Quintero.

At this point, Fernandez was asked how message traffic such as the above noted Exhibits would have come into existence. Fernandez stated that the message traffic that he produced was from a machine manufactured by TRW. The machine was provided to him by NSA. He said that the equipment was equipment that could provide a cryptic relay utilizing cryptic tape. Fernandez stated the tape was changed every day.

Fernandez was shown Exhibit 6. This memo is dated 6-16-86 apparently to Joe from North. The message traffic itself dealt with air drops to the Contras. Further, it is obvious that the air drop had the support of, knowledge of, and assistance of Joe as well as North. Of particular note, in this message traffic itself the sender (North) indicated that "to facilitate, have asked Ralph Quintero to proceed immediately to your location. I do not think we ought to contemplate these operations without him being on the scene. Too many things go wrong that then directly involve you and me in what should be deniable for both of us." Fernandez stated that obviously this message traffic is from North to him. Fernandez stated, however, that he cannot remember the message traffic itself. Fernandez stated he would have had to have received this memorandum. (In essence, Fernandez is informing the interviewers that although he cannot specifically recall the memo, he is sure he received it.)

Exhibit 7 is a transmission from Copp to person(s) unknown involving an "Ilonpongo drop." The message also states that, "Joe has provided the necessary inputs." Fernandez stated that the "Joe" mentioned in this message is himself. Fernandez was asked who the people noted in the memorandum are. Fernandez stated that the Ralph is Raphael Quintero, Max is Max Gomez (aka, Felix Rodriguez) and Bustillo is the Air Force Commander of one of the Contra units. Further, he stated that the Captain Lopez noted in the memorandum is the FDN representative at Ilonpongo in charge of the FDN warehouse. At this point, Fernandez stated that, although he is aware that the message traffic involved Max (aka, Felix Rodriguez), he (Fernandez) asserts that he has not had personal contact with Rodriguez since 1971.

Fernandez was shown Exhibit 8. Exhibit 8 is message traffic apparently to Joe dated 4-15-86. The message traffic involves a delivery of ordnance to be used by the Contras. The shipment itself consisted of some 500,000 rounds of ammunition, 11,000 hand grenades, as well as blasting caps and detonation cord for C-4 explosives. Further, the cable is asking "when and where do you want this stuff. We are prepared to deliver as soon as you

call for it. Is there an UNO/FARN communicator being placed in Ilopongo? If so, please have this guy coordinate with Ralph Quintero that we have things wired together. Also wish to note my guys are flying without any intel. Can we do something about getting them the radar profiles of NIC AAA Radars, etc."

Fernandez initially stated that he "thinks" that the above memo (Exhibit 8) was forwarded to him by North. Fernandez did change his statement and stated that the message was in fact sent by North. Fernandez stated that as a result of this request for Radar assistance he forwarded a cable to Headquarters CIA requesting Radar assistance. Fernandez stated that he received assistance from Headquarters CIA. He said he then forwarded the information to Raphael Quintero.

Fernandez was shown Exhibit 9. Exhibit 9 is from Joe dated 4-12-86 with the final sign-off of "Regards, DV." (Fernandez stated earlier that these initials were his sign-off initials.) The memorandum itself outlines the anticipated drop of lethal equipment to the Contras. The author of the report states in the report, "My objective is creation of 2,500 man force which can strike northwest and link up with quiche to form solid southern force. Likewise, envisage formidable opposition on Atlantic Coast resupplied at or by sea. Realize this may be overly ambitious planning but with your help, believe we can pull it off." Fernandez advised that he did author this message and that the message was forwarded by him to Ollie North.

At this point Fernandez was asked who received the message traffic such as the above Exhibits. Fernandez stated that messages such as the last Exhibit were messages that were only transferred to Raphael Quintero or Oliver North. He stated that he at no time informed his immediate boss (Allen Fiers) of information such as the above.

Fernandez did state that if a shipment of arms were received by the Contras; he would create an intelligence document reflecting that the Contras had received lethal equipment. However, the intelligence report itself did not describe the detailed "who, what, when, where" of the delivery.

Fernandez was asked at this point why he was so "close" to Ollie North. Fernandez stated that it could be described as a friendship and a common goal. Further, he said both he and North had much frustration over their inability to provide sufficient help with the Contra effort. He said he and North became good personal friends. On one occasion, North and his family visited with him and his family in Costa Rica and later on, the North's reciprocated when the Fernandez family visited with them in the Washington, D.C., area. The children became good friends.

Fernandez said that his office received a Unit Citation in April 1986.

Fernandez stated that in a meeting in San Salvador in May 1986, he as well as other Chiefs of Station were informed by Jay K. Gruner (Fiers boss) to stay away from contact with private benefactors to the Contra effort. Fernandez stated that they directed that any contact between the private benefactors and the Southern front Contra members must be a legal contact. Fernandez stated that he was not informed, however, to cease and desist with contact with North.

Fernandez stated that in September 1986, there were six resupplier flights to the Contras. The flights themselves originated in Ilopongo; flew across Honduras to the Atlantic; south along the Nicaraguan coast, and then into the Nicaraguan drop zone. This route was much more hazardous than the one the L100 was able to do but they had no choice due to the inability of the airplanes to fly the same long distances the L100 could. The flight then retraced the above flight pattern. Fernandez stated that he was knowledgeable of and assisted in drop zone information regarding the six flights in September 1986. He stated however, that although the seventh flight was following the same flight pattern, he was not aware the flight was taking place. He stated this seventh flight was in fact the Hasanfus flight. He reiterated that he was not aware that the seventh flight was taking place. The six flights that he was aware of contained lethal equipment.

Fernandez stated that he first met Ollie North in August 1984 and that a friendship between he and North ensued. Fernandez stated that in approximately April 1986 he and North became dedicated to the resupply of the Contras.

Fernandez was asked if he informed any of his superiors of his assistance to North. Fernandez stated he did not. At this point, Fernandez stated that he did not tell the CIA IG investigators of his above assistance to North. He stated that he now believes his career with CIA is finished. Fernandez stated that Ambassador Lewis Tambs did not know the details of what he and North were doing. He stated he would give Tambs intelligence reports as the kind noted earlier in this report. He would also give Tambs intelligence briefings as he would with the rest of the "Country Team."

Fernandez stated that North never informed him the origin of the money going to the Contras.

Fernandez was shown Exhibit 10. Exhibit 10 apparently is from Dick Copp. The bottom of the message traffic has handwriting on it. Fernandez stated that the handwriting basically detailed the quantity and type of ammunition being forwarded to the Contras.

Fernandez was asked if he was familiar with a Robert Owens. Fernandez stated that he was introduced to Owens in Ambassador Tambs office. Fernandez stated that Owens was working for some foundation (not further identified). Fernandez stated that he understands that Owens was in Costa Rica as early as 1982. Owens was described as having amazing contacts with intelligence sources. Fernandez stated that he assumed Owens was being paid by the American Heritage Foundation, or some similar foundation. Fernandez stated that Owens would always volunteer information that he had obtained to Fernandez. Fernandez stated that it was apparent through his contact with Owens that Owens did have contact with Ollie North. However, Fernandez was not sure as to the extent of Owens contact with North.

Fernandez was shown Exhibit 11 which was an Exhibit dated 5-2-86. Although this memo was not fully explored with Fernandez in one portion of the memo it reads, "Joe says not to fight it." In essence, this was apparent that Fernandez was in fact giving advice to individuals on how to deal with CIA.

Fernandez advised that there were efforts to obtain several Maule Aircrafts. This due to the fact that the Maule had a very short takeoff and landing approach. Further, Fernandez stated that the Maule Aircraft that was procured was basically used for getting wounded in and out of an area. The plane was valuable and unfortunately could not be used after one flight. The pilots were Ernesto Kirmey and Robert Bollone.

Fernandez said that he did not perform any of the above for any personal or financial gain. He said that the only time he ever met Admiral Poindexter was in Costa Rica in early 1986 prior to his involvement with North and the Contras.

Fernandez said that he never told the Director, CIA, William Casey about what his assistance to the Contras was and is not aware that anyone ever informed Casey. He further said that he never informed his superiors in the Agency, to include Alan Fiers and Jay Gruner of his contacts with North. Further, he never informed him of his assisting the Contras, in an admittedly prohibited way, with lethal equipment. He said that he did not think it was the type of thing to ask his bosses for permission to do. He just did it.

Fernandez stated that he could only assume that Ollie North was working with approval of his superiors.

Brian M. Bruh

Michael S. Russell