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The Washington Merry-Go-Round THE WASHINGTON POST Monday, Jan. 18, 1971 B7 6 Attempts to Kill Castro Laid to CIA By Jack Anderson Locked in the darkest recesses of the Central Intelligence Agency is the story of six assassination attempts against Cuba's Fidel Castro. For 10 years, only a few key people have known the terrible secret. They have been sworn not to talk. Yet we have learned the details from sources whose credentials are beyond question. We spoke to John McCone, who headed the CIA at the time of the assassination attempts. He acknowledged the plots had been discussed inside the CIA but insisted it had been "rejected immediately." He vigorously denied that the CIA had ever participated in any plot on Castro's life. Asked whether the attempts could have been made without his knowledge, he replied: "It could not have happened." We have complete confidence, however, in our sources. The plot to knock off Castro began as part of the Bay of Pigs operation. The intent was to eliminate the Cuban dictator before the motley invaders landed on the island. Their arrival was expected to touch off a general uprising, which the Communist militia would have had more trouble putting down without the charismatic Castro to lead them. After the first attempt failed, five more assassination teams were sent to Cuba. The last team reportedly hid on a rooftop within shooting distance of Castro before they were apprehended. This happened around the last of February or first of March, 1963. Nine months later, President Kennedy was gunned down in Dallas by Lee Harvey Oswald, a fanatic who previously had obtained a Cuban visa in New Orleans and had made a mysterious trip to the Cuban Embassy in Mexico City. Among those privy to the CIA conspiracy, there is a nagging suspicion—unsupported by the Warren Commission—that the U.S. plot to assassinate Castro became aware of the

U.S. plot upon his life and in turn recruited Oswald to retaliate against President Kennedy. To set up the Castro assassination, the CIA enlisted Robert Maheu, a former FBI agent with shadowy contacts, who had handled other undercover assignments for the CIA out of his Washington public relations office. He later moved to Las Vegas to head billionaire Howard Hughes' Nevada operations. Maheu recruited John Roselli, a ruggedly handsome gambler with contacts in both the American and Cuban underworlds, to arrange the assassination. The dapper, hawk-faced Roselli, formerly married to movie actress June Lane, was a power in the movie industry until his connection with racketeer Willie Bioff in a multimillion-dollar Hollywood labor shakedown. The CIA assigned two of its most trusted operatives, William Harvey and James (Big Jim) O'Connell, to the hush-hush murder mission. Using phony names, they accompanied Roselli on trips to Miami to line up the assassination teams. The full story reads like the script of a James Bond movie, complete with secret trysts at glittering Miami Beach hotels and midnight powerboat dashes to secret landing points on the Cuban coast. Once, Roselli's boat was shot out from under him. For the first try, the CIA furnished Roselli with special poison capsules to slip into Castro's food. The poison was supposed to take three days to act. By the time Castro died, his system would throw off all traces of the poison, so it would appear to the victim of a natural if mysterious ailment. Roselli arranged with a Cuban related to one of Castro's chefs to plant the deadly pellets in the dictator's food. On March 13, 1961, Roselli delivered the capsules to his contact at Havana's posh Fontainebleau Hotel. A couple of weeks later, just about the right time for the plot to have been carried out, reports out of Havana said Castro was ill. But he recovered before the Bay of Pigs invasion

on April 17, 1961. The first assassination attempt failed on Castro's life.