

8 August 1961

Dear Allen:

Having reflected at some length on our telephone conversation of this morning, I am afraid there are several things I must say to you. They can be summed up in the statement that I will not allow what was in effect an accusation of misconduct to stand without the strongest denial I can make. What you said this morning was that in the weeks leading up to the Cuban invasion, and again in connection with the draft agreement we discussed yesterday, I have been guilty of making plans or conducting negotiations either without informing you or in a manner to commit you prior to consultation or else involving substantive positions unacceptable to you.

As to the Cuban matter, it cannot be denied that during the weeks of almost continuous policy review and of military planning and replanning many decisions had to be made quickly and papers were more than once prepared just in time for policy meetings. That this happened was, however, a result and a reflection of the pace of events and the pace of the decision-making process and I will not accept responsibility for a pressure of time that was the result of circumstances beyond our control.

What is more serious to me than the matter of timing is the suggestion that positions were taken or that plans were made that did not reflect your best judgment and that were in some degree responsible for the failure. I must say to you flatly that I am aware of no position taken during the policy discussions, or no recommendation made to higher authority, and of no operational decision prior to the landing with which you were, to my knowledge, in disagreement at the time. Undoubtedly, there were decisions which, as you look back on them after the event, should have been made differently but I must deny any recollection of things done contrary to your wishes or instructions (except, of course, as we were all affected by decisions external to the Agency.)

Coming to the matter of the Memorandum of Understanding, I would like to remind you of the circumstances surrounding its submission to you yesterday morning. To begin with, the whole move to effect a more formalized and closer coordination of the handling of certain projects as between the Pentagon and this Agency was initiated by Messrs. Land and Killian. At their request certain papers were drafted by Charyk. When this whole project was discussed with me by these gentlemen, I wrote a memorandum which was in effect an argument against the proposal.

Moreover, I consistently made clear that I was most doubtful about any personal participation, either in the near future or later. Messrs. Killian and Land on their initiative took this matter up with the Secretary of Defense and later with General Taylor. During the period when these various conversations took place I believe I advised you on every occasion of every conversation in which I was personally involved.

Sometime after the middle of July, the Secretary of Defense asked Charyk to draft the specific documents that would be required to put his proposal into effect. One of these was the one dated 20 July which I sent you yesterday morning. I myself did not receive it until sometime after it was drafted. I refrained from submitting it to you when I received it because I was told Charyk would have to consult further within the Department of Defense and that the draft might be changed. I, too, suggested one change in wording and it was not until yesterday, August 7th, that I finally received word from Charyk that the wording was final and the paper was ready for submission to you and the Secretary. It is my belief that it reached you some hours before it reached the Secretary of Defense.

I clearly was guilty of one major miscalculation in that it never occurred to me that this paper, which proposed so little defacto change in the status quo, would raise any major issue in your mind or that it would be so displeasing to you. Since (as you told me) you decided that this required the most careful review by you, and since the Secretary of Defense was prepared to accept it on the assurance of Charyk and Vance, it was inevitable that he should sign off on it before you had finished your considerations.

It is obviously unfortunate from every point of view that this matter was handled in a manner so displeasing to you. I cannot agree, however, that there was any impropriety whatsoever in my actions, nor will I tolerate the implication that I pursued this negotiation either with any intent of concealment from you or for any improper motives of personal aggrandizement.

Having felt compelled to state my position in such strong terms in this letter I must conclude by offering my resignation to be accepted

by you if you so desire. More specifically, I would ask that you accept my resignation if you continue to have doubts of the sort you expressed this morning about my conduct. It is neither pleasant for either of us nor is it in the interest of the Agency that I should remain if there cannot be a mutual confidence between us.

Very sincerely yours,

Richard M. Bissell jr.

Richard M. Bissell, jr.

The Honorable Allen W. Dulles
Director of Central Intelligence
Washington, 25, D. C.

16 August 1974

This is, in its own way, an historical document. What Bissell is referring to is the first formal agreement [redacted] on overhead reconnaissance. To anyone who has followed the NRO struggles, this letter by Bissell foreshadows the aura of misunderstandings which have marked the whole mess.

W Elder
Walter Elder

Approved for Release
Date 1 OCT 1982

Enclosed is an envelope labelled "Brisell letter to AWD" - re Cuban Missile Crisis. It was sealed and in AWD's papers. About 15 Mar. 1971, I saw RM Brisell and told him that this unopened envelope was in AWD's papers. He asked me to open it, which I did today - 23 Mar. 1971. The writing on the envelope (not in AWD's handwriting ^{is wrong} - it is about a misunderstanding between AWD & RMB, about a paper drafted in Defense after the Bay of Pigs. AWD apparently had been upset at what he thought RMB had done regarding the paper. RMB defends himself and tenders his resignation. AWD has lost confidence. The letter is dated 8. Aug. 1961. I do not think the letter today has any particular relevance to anything and seems to me to have no historical importance.

When I told Brisell about the contents below he
said it related to a memorandum Nov. 4? 7? 1963
of no consequence WJG Sept/71

Wayne G. Jackson
23 Mar. 1971

Bisaced letter to AWD

re: ~~Suburban Assembly Station~~

Bay of Pigs

NRO agreement WE

Dick Bissell letter