

IGIN/ACTION

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

AIRGRAM

SOC II-2 DOM REP
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1	REP	AF
A	EUR	FE
A	CU	INR
	P	IO
3	FBO	AID
PM 5/10	1	16A
IR	COM	FRB
T	LAB	TAR
R	XMB	AIR
MY	CIA	NAVY
SD	USIA	NSA
4	10	3
FBI	N3L	6

A-17
NO.

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HANDLING INDICATOR

TO : Department of State

INFO : Amconsulate Santiago de los Caballeros

FROM : Amembassy SANTO DOMINGO DATE: 16 Jan 69

SUBJECT : \$25,000 ALCOA Robbery Provides Insight into Dominican Police Methods

REF :

1. SUMMARY:

At approximately 5:15 a.m. on the morning of December 26, four gunmen held up a group of Dominican employees of ALCOA Exploration Company, a wholly owned subsidiary of the Aluminum Company of America, and made off with slightly more than \$25,000 of company funds. The American character of the company involved has provided the opportunity for an unusual and illuminating insight with respect to Dominican police methods. This would appear to suggest certain valid questions with respect to the feasibility of at least some aspects of our Public Safety program in the Dominican Republic.

2. On December 24, officials at the ALCOA mining property located at Cabo Rojo on the distant southwest coast of the Dominican Republic, communicated to their main office in Santo Domingo payroll currency needs and the specific denominations of the bills desired. Approximately \$25,000 was requested. Although this request would normally have been transmitted over a microwave system, mechanical defects resulted in its being communicated by

GROUP 3

Downgraded at 12-year intervals; not automatically declassified

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Content and Classification Approved by: The Ambassador

Clearances:

POL - Mr. Haahr AID - Mr. Robinson PS/D - Mr. Ruiz
(All in draft)

JAN 17 PM 2 45

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Santo Domingo A-17

Page 2

open radio, which was admittedly susceptible of being monitored by other parties.

3. At approximately 5:15 on the morning of December 26 a chartered bus was at the Santo Domingo headquarters waiting to take the messenger bearing the currency to the airport. En route to the airport the bus was to pick up various other company employees scheduled to travel to Cabo Rojo. After the company cashier had delivered the money to the messenger but before the latter had entered the bus, four armed men are reported to have appeared on the scene and to have taken the money at gunpoint. The cashier, seeing what was happening, stepped inside the building, locked the door, ran to an upstairs office, locked himself in and phoned the police.

Notified of the robbery, the American manager of the company dressed and arrived upon the scene approximately 30 minutes. The first police arrived on the scene approximately 30 minutes later, when two police agents in a patrol car drove up to inquire what had happened. Upon being told of the robbery, they advised that it would be necessary for someone to file a complaint at the police station. The American manager of the company dispatched two trusted local employees for this purpose. Soon thereafter an estimated 50 uniformed and plainclothes police arrived at the ALCOA office. In view of the fact that company personnel were waiting at various points around the city for the bus to take them to the airport, the American manager had dispatched one of the employees present during the robbery with the bus to pick them up and take them to the airport. When this fact was made known to the police, they quickly telephoned the airport and had the individual in question arrested in order to prevent his "escape".

Seven long-time ALCOA employees present at the time of the robbery were all detained for questioning by the Dominican police. Four were soon released but the other three were stripped of their clothing, placed in solitary confinement and periodically questioned and beaten. From the outset, the obvious thrust of the interrogation was to force them to admit that there had been no armed robbery but rather an "inside job". The police apparently quickly adopted the theory that a small group of company employees had plotted to make off with the payroll funds using a feigned robbery as the occasion to hand off the money to confederates who would remove it to a place of safekeeping.

On the afternoon of December 26, the police approached ALCOA with a request for vehicular transportation to allow them to conduct the investigation. ALCOA made available a company stationwagon. That night the police again requested use of the vehicle, this time allegedly to investigate a clue in the town of Azua located approximately halfway

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