

November 7, 1962

**Report from the Swiss Ambassador to Cuba
(Stadelhofer) to the Division of Political Affairs,
Swiss Foreign Ministry, About the Transfer of the
Remains of Major Anderson**

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Summary:

The Swiss Ambassador to Cuba (Stadelhofer) describes the difficulties he has faced in overcoming the misunderstandings between the Cuban, U.S. and Swiss governments in attempting to return the coffin and remains of Major Anderson.

Credits:

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Embassy of Switzerland Havana, November 7, 1962
In Cuba

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To the Division of Political Affairs
of the Swiss Foreign Ministry
Berne

Transfer of the remains of Major Rudolf Anderson

Mister Ambassador,

Following up on my quick report on the 5th of this month, I am taking the liberty to inform you further on details that seem important.

Reason and sense of the engagement of this embassy is still not fully clear to me even after the termination of the mission. There was probably, despite the apparent agreement between all the parties involved, a persistent misunderstanding. It appears that Secretary General U Thant and the American entities viewed the acceptance of the coffin by the embassy for the transfer to Guantanamo base as the most practical solution. It is about 130 km from the province Pinar del Rio, which is located in the West of Cuba, and where the remains were, to Havana. The distance Havana - Santiago de Cuba is 1000 km and from there to the American naval base it is about another 80 km. Since the Cuban domestic air traffic was interrupted and the train connections between the capital and the Eastern province are complicated, it would have required a 1100 km long road trip, for which, besides the fact of the enormous expenditure of time, there was not a single official car from the American inventory of the Foreign Interests Service that would have been in sufficiently good conditions.

Decisive was that, which various discussions showed with clarity, the Cuban government for political reasons and referring to its national honor, was unwilling to allow the transfer to the naval base. Therefore - and that was also practically easiest - the transfer to the nearby American mainland was the only option.

Settling the matter required 8 audiences with the [trans. note: Cuban] Foreign Ministry, three of which were with Dr. Roa, plus one long phone conversation with him, as well as six phone conversations with Washington. Dr. Roa expressed already during the first conversation on Friday, 2 November, and during the one on Sunday with significant pungency, that he gave U Thant the Cuban consent to enlist me as the Swiss representative, but not the embassy as protecting power for the USA. He added that the Cuban government preferred Switzerland's appointment with the repatriation modalities over the U.N. and the ICRC because of the high reputation that our country enjoys.

To be sure and to prevent unpleasant last-minute surprises if possible, I explicitly asked the question on Saturday, 3 November, if the Cuban side desired to have a record of delivery drafted, I added that I would be happy to waive such a document, since some photographs would fulfill the same purpose. Dr. Roa asked me thereupon to prepare a draft, which I handed over in the afternoon (see attachment III). Although the final drafting per se was planned for Sunday 10 a.m., the Chief of Protocol could not inform me over the phone of the amendment the Prime Minister required until 13.10. It boiled down to the fact that the description of the cause of death should have been determined bilaterally, i.e. covered by my signature. In extraordinarily tough, but never hurtful negotiations that lasted almost an hour, I was

able to achieve the version of the fourth paragraph that is known to you. [...]

Due to the negotiations with Dr. Roa I did not arrive at the airport on Sunday, 4 November, until [UN aide] General [Indar Jit] Rickhy [Rikhye], the envoy sent by Secretary General U Thant, was preparing to leave the airplane, i.e. at exactly 3 o'clock. The Chief of Protocol, who had to wait for the fair copy of the delivery record, arrived at about 15.45. The transfer ceremony was simple, but fairly dignified. Although, it was originally planned to allow either the foreign correspondents also or no one from the press, there were some Cuban journalists and photographers. They were, however, not called up by the Foreign Ministry, but had gained access on their own initiative. The local press gave wide publicity to the affair and also printed the Cuban version of the record of delivery. [...]

The fact that Ambassador Lindt managed, in the shortest time, to organize a cargo plane, contributed crucially to the success of this mission. The point that the upper part of the plane was newly painted and endued with the Swiss Cross made a strong impression on the [trans. note Cuban] Foreign Ministry and moreover on the public. [...]

The Swiss Ambassador
[Handwritten signature: Stadelhofer]

Attachments:

Conformation note of 3 November, 1962

Informally submitted questions

Draft of the record of delivery from the Embassy

Copy of the record of delivery