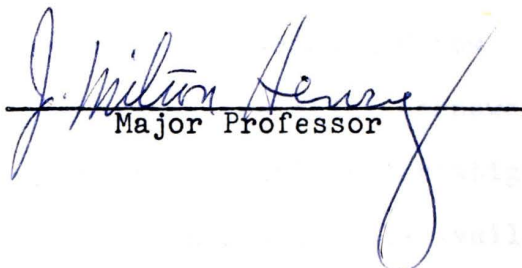


**THE UNITED STATES ROLE IN THE BAY
OF PIGS INVASION**

EDWARD R. SNEED, JR.

To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting a Thesis written by Edward R. Sneed, Jr, entitled "The United States Role In the Bay of Pigs Invasion." I recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of History.

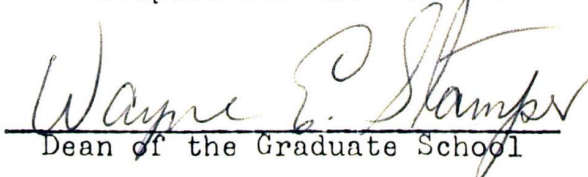

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We have read this thesis and
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ABSTRACT

The Bay of Pigs Invasion is considered by many in the United States and abroad to be one of the greatest blunders in the history of American foreign policy. A great argument still exists as to the actual involvement of the United States. Such questions as who actually formulated the ideas, who planned the invasion and how deeply committed was the United States are still unanswered.

These are the questions that this writer investigates in this research. It is an attempt to present all available information with regard to the many conflicting opinions. Strife still continues between the Cuban refugee leaders and the chief United States officials over these questions. The refugees claim that more United States aid was promised than delivered. This may have been true. However, with the lack of communication and organization between the two Presidential Administrations and between the Administrative Departments one can easily understand the source of the problem.

Another grave problem resulted from faulty intelligence reports. The whole idea of success was so badly misconceived that one needs to examine all the elements to determine why the invasion was allowed to happen.

Following the disaster, President Kennedy accepted the blame for the tragic event. He did, as he and others admitted, confess to have learned several vital lessons. He even admitted that grave mistakes would have been made in Laos if the Cuban disaster had not happened when it did. In short, the Bay of Pigs fiasco should have been one step toward a more realistic foreign policy.

THE UNITED STATES ROLE
IN THE BAY OF PIGS INVASION

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the Faculty of the Graduate School
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

On Monday, April 17, 1961, at three o' clock in the morning, an invasion force of about 1400 Cuban exiles landed at the Bay of Pigs (Bahia de Cochinos) on the southern coast of Cuba. Within thirty minutes, another landing was made at Playa Larga on the other end of the bay.¹ The landing forces met with no opposition for the first hour. They were able to get the light guns and six tanks ashore with ease.² Shortly the echoes of M-1 rifles and bazookas could be heard on the beach.³

The small amount of air cover came after daybreak. It included fifteen B-26's and cargo planes of many varieties. Paratroopers were dropped from C-47's at a road crossing twenty-five miles inland.⁴ The small group of Castro's forces that moved toward the beach suffered heavy casualties for the first twenty-four hours.⁵

¹Karl Meyer and Tod Szulc, The Cuban Invasion (New York: Frederick Praeger, 1962), p. 7.

²"Inside Story of the Cuba Fiasco," U.S. News and World Report, L, May 15, 1961, p. 44.

³Meyer and Szulc, loc. cit.

⁴"Inside Story of the Cuba Fiasco," op. cit., p. 45.

⁵"In Cuban Invasion: The Fatal Mistakes," U.S. News and World Report, L, May 29, 1961, p. 76.

Castro's faster and better aircraft then began to appear. They included armed T-36 and T-37 jet trainers that could fly between 450 and 600 miles per hour.⁶

The slow B-26's which had flown six hundred miles from a base at Puerto Cabezas, Nicaragua, were virtually helpless. The United States navy jets, that had accompanied them to Cuba, had withdrawn about five miles from the beach.⁷

Then came the turning point! Fifty-four Soviet tanks in Castro's army, which could have been stopped by air power, went untouched.⁸ It was at this stage that Cuban anger was aroused. Their leaders claimed that they had been promised air cover in case of heavy opposition.⁹

The Cubans never seriously thought about failure because the optimism of the Central Intelligence Agency was so high. The refugees were certain that the United States had planned to use reserve power if the invasionary forces met strong resistance.¹⁰

For seventy-two hours, Operation Pluto, as the attack was called, trudged its ill-fated destiny to defeat.

⁶"Inside Story of the Cuba Fiasco," loc. cit.

⁷Ibid.

⁸"In Cuban Invasion: The Fatal Mistakes," loc. cit.

⁹"Inside Story of the Cuba Fiasco," loc. cit.

¹⁰Ibid.

As a result, the Bay of Pigs invasion became one of the greatest military blunders in history.¹¹

Seldom had a powerful country like the United States been trapped in such a dangerous fiasco. The military consequences revealed that the Joint Chiefs of Staff had given their approval. The result was that their accepted plan met defeat at the hands of an unstable revolutionary army guided by a newly empowered dictator.¹²

The organization that had the greatest responsibility for organizing and financing the operation was the Central Intelligence Agency. By looking at this agency's role in the affair and its relation to the Cuban refugees and other government offices, one can begin to determine the causes of this disastrous failure.

¹¹Meyer and Szulc, loc. cit.

¹²Ibid.

CHAPTER II

THE ROLE OF THE EISENHOWER ADMINISTRATION

In the spring of 1959, following an address to the American Society of Newspaper Editors, Fidel Castro talked with Vice President Nixon. Shortly after this conversation, Nixon called Castro a "captive of the communists." This belief (in the form of a memorandum) was spread among Eisenhower's top officials. Many State Department officials, however, still had hopes that Castro could be turned away from Communism.¹³

Instead of moving away from Communism, Castro did just the opposite. He began to make open attacks upon the United States. After his trade deal with Russia in 1960, the United States officials were obviously aware that Cuba had become a totalitarian state.¹⁴

By March of that year, other Eisenhower officials began to agree with Nixon. The plans for a possible invasion were then put into action.¹⁵ The Central

¹³"Where the United States Went Wrong on Cuba," U. S. News and World Report, L, May 8, 1961, p. 54.

¹⁴William Appleman Williams, The United States, Cuba, and Castro (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1962), p. 139.

¹⁵"Where the United States Went Wrong on Cuba," loc. cit.

Intelligence Agency was given the right to lead the operation.

The Central Intelligence Agency was organized in 1947. Congress gave it the power to collect and interpret intelligence information for the military departments and the National Security Council. It was also granted the power to engage in espionage and sabotage with the advice of the National Security Council. It had previously brought about the downfall of the communist regime of Guatemala in 1954. It had claimed anticipation of the British-French-Israel invasion of Egypt in 1956 and the Hungarian revolt of the same year. It had also directed the unfortunate U-2 flights.¹⁶

The Central Intelligence Agency's leader, Allen Dulles, got his Phi Beta Kappa honors at Princeton. He entered the foreign service in 1916. After receiving a law degree from George Washington University, he joined his brother, John Foster, in law work. During World War II his intelligence work led to the capture of the famous German spy, "Cicero."¹⁷

It is thought by some that the Central Intelligence Agency, which had accomplished many missions, persuaded

¹⁶"The C.I.A.," Time, LXXVII, April 28, 1961, p. 14.

¹⁷Ibid.

the President and other ranking officials that the overthrow of Castro could be accomplished.¹⁸ If this is true, what factor had the greatest influence on the Central Intelligence Agency?

Upon close examination it appears that Central Intelligence representatives had been in close contact with Cuban refugees. Many like Batista's former Premier, Manuel Antonio de Varona, and his Minister of Education, Aureliano Sanchez Arango, had found refuge in the United States. These refugees, largely professionals and businessmen, were not typical of the Cuban people as a whole.¹⁹ This right wing element of the Cuban exile group had much influence on Eisenhower's Administration. They had little or no appeal to the masses of impoverished Cubans, and therefore, they were not in position to organize a resistance movement.²⁰

Another thing which prompted this operation was that many officials did not conceive that Castro held any great power. Judging from the number of Cuban exiles in

¹⁸Williams, op. cit., p. 140.

¹⁹Theodore Draper, Castro's Revolution (New York: Frederick Praeger, 1962), pp. 60-61.

²⁰Ibid., p. 64.

the United States, they figured that the Cuban people were ready for a massive revolution. They believed that Castro was too weak to prevent an invasion.²¹

The Deputy Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, Richard M. Bissell, was placed in charge of the operation. The Pentagon was to give military supplies and assistance. The Joint Chiefs of Staff were to review the operation, and the President would give final approval.²²

In June, 1960, the United States government officials began to contact Cuban refugees. Five Cuban leaders with no connection to the old Batista regime were called to a meeting at the Commodore Hotel in New York City. They were introduced to a Central Intelligence agent, Roy Bender. Bender informed them that an anti-Castro coalition would have the secret but strong backing of the United States.²³

As later related by one of the liberal leaders, Manuel Artime, Bender claimed to represent a large company that wanted to bring a downfall of communism in Cuba.

²¹Keith Wheeler, "Hell of a Beating in Cuba," Life, L, April 28, 1961, p. 17.

²²Mario Lazo, "Decision for Disaster: At Last the Truth About the Bay of Pigs Invasion," Reader's Digest, LXXXV, September, 1964, p. 244.

²³Wheeler, loc. cit.

Bender stated, "This has nothing to do with the American government."²⁴

Bender then wanted to know what Arttime felt about the future of Cuba. Arttime asserted that Cuba needed a truly democratic government.²⁵

Bender listened with interest as Arttime told him of the ideas he had for an uprising in the Oriente Province. Bender then responded, "Why not an uprising all over the island?" Arttime felt that there was a lack of men and weapons for such an undertaking.²⁶

Bender continued:

Well, Arttime, what if I told you that we have men who will help you prepare for guerrilla warfare and others who will prepare men to fight in a conventional war with army training?²⁷

Bender asked Arttime if he could get the men out of Cuba to be trained for the operation. To this the Cuban replied, "Yes."²⁸

²⁴Haynes Johnson, The Bay of Pigs (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1964), p. 30.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Ibid., p. 31.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Ibid.

Bender gave Arttime a number to call if he ever needed him. He told the Cuban liberal to fly to Miami where he would receive further information. The Central Intelligence agent also saw that Arttime had a plane ticket and that his hotel bill was paid.²⁹

Upon departing Bender again reminded Arttime:

I am not a member of the United States government. I have nothing to do with the United States government. I am only working for a powerful company that wants to fight communism.³⁰

Within two weeks after the New York meeting, the five Cuban leaders drew up a charter and had it published in Mexico. It was called the Frente Democratic Revolucionario Manifesto. The new leader of this group was Dr. Manuel Antonio de Varona.³¹ In short, this organization was to unify the five Cuban factions that existed in the United States. The previous groups had included: Movimiento de Recuperacion Revolucionario, the Asociacion Montecristi led by Justo Carrillo; and the Frente Nacional Democratico of Aureliano Sanchez Arango. Generally, the new coalition represented the Center of the exile group. However, the Right still retained dominance and the Left had not yet

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Ibid.

reached large numbers in the United States. Arttime, who had been put in charge of military operations, was the coordinator with the Central Intelligence Agency.³²

United States backers were hopeful that the Frente would bind the revolutionary groups together. To the disappointment of the American officials, the Cubans continued to quarrel among themselves. As a result, some anti-Castro groups were left out, thus creating less chance for success.³³

The Frente Revolucionario Democratico was led by a five man Executive Committee. Because of the bickering among the Cubans, the Central Intelligence Agency preferred to work with one leader of the committee. In the meantime, Aureliano Sanchez Arango, angered by the dominance of the Central Intelligence Agency, withdrew his organization.³⁴

Varona, the coordinator of the groups, allowed the Frente to become very dependent on the Central Intelligence Agency. The invasion force which the United States sponsored did not represent the political aspects of the Frente. Most

³²Draper, op. cit., p. 70.

³³Wheeler, op. cit., pp. 17-18.

³⁴Draper, loc. cit.

of those in the military operation were typical of professional military men who had served in Batista's army.³⁵

The Frente began soliciting volunteers to join the anti-Castro army.³⁶ Two induction centers were established in Miami on a volunteer basis. Crowds of men explained why they fled Cuba and why they wanted to fight. Single volunteers received \$175 a month and married men \$225 plus \$25 for every child. This money came from some Cuban exiles and from American contributions that were available.³⁷ It was estimated that the Frente received from \$130,000 to \$520,000 monthly to be used in recruiting and for political expenses.³⁸ Once the volunteers had been processed through the Florida staging base, they disappeared to secret training bases.³⁹

The training site remained a secret until a Guatemalan congressman inquired into unusual operations in the coffee hills of Retalhuleu. By the latter part of

³⁵Ibid., pp. 70-72.

³⁶Wheeler, op. cit., p. 18.

³⁷"Cuba: Anti-Castro Landings," Newsweek, LVII, April 24, 1961, p. 62.

³⁸"Cuba: the Massacre," Time, LXXVII, April 28, 1961, p. 22.

³⁹Wheeler, loc. cit.

1960, the opposition press in Guatemala published information describing the refugee training that was being backed by the United States.⁴⁰

It was certainly true that training camps had been established in Guatemala. The Central Intelligence Agency had made arrangements with rancher-businessman Roberto Alejos of Guatemala to use his coffee estates called Helvetia and La Suiza at the town of Retalhuleu. He also received compensation for the use of his cotton plantation of San Jose Buenavista. These were to be the training sites for the Cuban refugees. Also, Alejos helped the CIA get the airstrip at Retalhuleu resurfaced.⁴¹ With a crash program this airport was finished within eighty days.⁴² It would serve as a landing site for B-26 bombers and large transport planes.⁴³ The project cost the CIA an estimated one million dollars. Finally, with Alejo's aid, two more camps were established, one at San Juan Acul, near the Mexican border, and the other in Dos Lagunas in northern Guatemala.⁴⁴

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹"Cuba, the Massacre," loc. cit.

⁴²Don Gwiggins, "Guatemala's Secret Airstrip," The Nation, CXCI, January 7, 1961, p. 8.

⁴³Wheeler, loc. cit.

⁴⁴"Cuba, the Massacre," loc. cit.

At the different camps all mail leaving was heavily censored. Even with fairly tight security measures, Castro's spies moved through the camp. One even made movies of the training and had them shipped to Havana.⁴⁵

It was estimated that between 5,000 and 7,000 Cuban refugees were receiving intensive training. Instruction in the areas of guerrilla fighting, the use of explosives, and radio operations were emphasized.⁴⁶

In addition to guerrilla training, the Eisenhower Administration's plans provided for an "air cap" by United States Navy jets.⁴⁷ The air cap referred to air protection for ships and landing craft.⁴⁸ It was also assumed that the refugees would be protected by American naval forces and American supplies.⁴⁹

While these plans were developing, new anti-Castro leaders, Manuel Ray and Jose Miro Cardona, appeared in the United States. Cardona, Castro's Premier and Ray, his Minister of Public Works, had fought for democratic social reform. When they realized that Castro was taking all political and intellectual freedom away from Cubans, they

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Wheeler, loc. cit.

⁴⁷U.S., Congressional Record, 87th Cong., 1st Sess. (1961), CVII, No. 8, 10336.

⁴⁸"Inside Story of Cuba Fiasco," op. cit., p. 46

⁴⁹New York Times, June 12, 1961, p. 1.

decided to go underground. They formed the "Movimiento Revolucionario del Pueblo" to fight "Fidelismo-communista."⁵⁰

Ray had often been called Castro's sabotage expert. The Utah University graduate, who built the Havana Hilton, more than anyone else had used methods to break the resistance of Batista's followers. Now his new organization of social reformers presented a great threat to Castro.⁵¹

Ray's organization generally proposed a new land reform. They were seeking "a capitalist revolution within a democratic framework." The failure of this group to get mass support had led to Batista's and Castro's dictatorships.⁵²

They immediately showed sabotage strength against Castro. It was based on "internally-directed sabotage and underground resistance." When Ray reached the United States in October, 1960, he was received by Batista Cubans as a dangerous Leftist.⁵³ The Right and Center claimed that Ray and other Castro associates were also Communists.

⁵⁰Draper, op. cit., p. 73.

⁵¹"What Went Wrong," The New Republic, CXLIV, May 1, 1961, p. 3.

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³Ibid.

It was obvious that these Left leaders were not aware that Castro had been a Communist. Castro, himself, had made special attempts in the first months of his rule to guarantee to the Cuban people that he was not a Communist. However, the latest Left exiles were met with much opposition from the earlier arrivals.⁵⁴ Thus the Central Intelligence Agency granted little aid to Ray's underground movement.⁵⁵

Large scale anti-Castro opposition had taken place in the Camaguey Province. Castro and some of his followers had shown public concern over the opposition. This resistance owed very little to United States help.⁵⁶

With resistance evident, the invasion plans did not give it serious enough attention. The plans would have been more logical to bring Castro's downfall "as if it were a house of cards," or if, the United States had given more armed support. The underground was to aid in some capacity after the invasion force had gained a foothold. After the landing was established, a "de facto" anti-Communist government was to be established and recognized by the United States. The question is asked now--what then?⁵⁷

⁵⁴Draper, op. cit., pp. 73-76.

⁵⁵"What Went Wrong," op. cit., p. 4.

⁵⁶Theodore Draper, Castroism Theory and Practice (New York: Frederick Praeger, 1965), p. 242.

⁵⁷Ibid.

This raised a serious doubt with regard to the United States' position. Should the primary exiles in the United States or the underground of Ray's Movimiento Revolucionario del Pueblo lead the fight against Castro?⁵⁸ With United States Presidential reassurances of support, Ray's group reluctantly united with the conservative groups.⁵⁹

During the summer and fall of 1960, Eisenhower studied the plans from time to time. In late November, the last time he reviewed it, a special working plan had not yet developed. The Under Secretary of Defense James Douglas, who was an unofficial military advisor under the "non-committal category of collateral cold war activities," was carefully observing the project and giving the Central Intelligence Agency the military talent and gear that it requested. Neither he nor the Joint Chiefs of Staff (whose connection with the project was less formal during this time) thought that much good would come from an attack made by the Cubans alone. For one thing, the resources available only allowed the training of approximately three hundred men and the air power included only a dozen planes. This did not seem like enough to defeat a tough, well

⁵⁸Draper, loc. cit.

⁵⁹"What Went Wrong," loc. cit.

armed regime, and Douglas repeatedly emphasized this point. Certainly Douglas and the others directly concerned assumed that a landing in force could not happen unless the expedition was protected on the beach by the United States Navy. Eisenhower, the Supreme Allied Commander in charge at Normandy, understood that air power would be needed.⁶⁰

Meanwhile, official planning continued under the Deputy Director of the CIA, Richard Bissell, an economist and former head of the Mutual Security Agency. Through his plans, the Cuban leaders were assured that a landing could be made under favorable conditions.⁶¹

At one time, Bissell's group suggested that the United States give air and naval cover for a landing, but in the first assault, only Cuban exiles be allowed to go ashore. If the Cubans failed on their own, American forces would land. President Eisenhower opposed this plan to use American troops, at least temporarily. Vice President Nixon, however, talked in favor of it.⁶²

By late fall the plans for guerrilla warfare had been abandoned. Instead of guerrilla warfare, an invasion force

⁶⁰Charles Murphy, "Cuba: The Record Set Straight," Fortune, LXIV, September, 1961, pp. 96-97.

⁶¹New York Times, April 21, 1961, p. 4.

⁶²"Cuba: the Consequences," Newsweek, LVII, May 1, 1961, p. 27.

of two to three hundred men with air support would be used. Some of the Cuban leaders believed that there were three reasons for this decision. First, it would be extremely difficult to give the guerrillas military supplies by air drops. Secondly, Castro was receiving large quantities of military goods from Communist countries. Finally, Castro's grip on the people was much firmer than originally calculated. These reasons would make guerrilla operations much more difficult to succeed.⁶³

On November 4, 1960, two days before the Presidential election, the Cubans were informed of the changes in plans. Full scale invasion training was to be enacted.⁶⁴ The guerrilla force was to be reduced to sixty and everyone else would be trained in World War II style.⁶⁵

It is now believed that a "Special Group" that made key intelligence decisions chose to do away with the guerrilla activities. This group was composed of high intelligence officials. Allen Dulles, the CIA Director, was the chief official. Others "usually" included the Under Secretary of State for political affairs, the Secretary and Deputy Secretary of Defense, and a coordinating

⁶³Johnson, op. cit., p. 53.

⁶⁴Fred Cook, "CIA--the Case Builds Up," The Nation, CXCVII, June 22, 1964, p. 616.

⁶⁵Johnson, op. cit., p. 54.

man for the White House--during Kennedy's Administration it was McGeorge Bundy. It appears now that President Eisenhower may not have been fully aware of the decision to halt the guerrilla operations.⁶⁶

Several months after the invasion, Eisenhower asserted in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, that his administration had made no definite plans for an invasion of Cuba. He stated that it was difficult to get "cohesive leadership" among the Cuban exiles; therefore, it would have been impossible to go on with the invasion. He further expounded, "There was absolutely no planning for an invasion in my administration."⁶⁷

A former official under Eisenhower in the White House had this comment:

I'm sorry to say the General is in error. I not only know there were plans for an invasion while he was in office, there are documents to prove it.⁶⁸

One American training officer had this comment about the Eisenhower administration plan: "We know that Ike would never undertake a military operation except with the determination to win."⁶⁹

⁶⁶Cook, op. cit., p. 617.

⁶⁷New York Times, September 12, 1961, p. 1.

⁶⁸Ibid.

⁶⁹Ibid.

By the end of November attempts were being made to drop supplies for the anti-Castro freedom fighters in the Escambray Mountains. Cubans continued to be trained in isolated areas of Louisiana, Florida, and Guatemala.⁷⁰

The CIA began to use a fifty-kilowatt radio station that had been constructed on Swan Island, 110 miles off the coast of Honduras and four hundred miles southwest of Cuba. Allen Dulles claimed that it would be used to fight both Trujillo and Castro.⁷¹

Also in November, 1960, Castro, through his propaganda machinery, began to warn the Cuban people that an invasion could be coming any day from Guatemala. He used this excuse to complete the spread of communism throughout the country. All workers were required to join a reserve military unit or be identified as "traitors."⁷²

Rather than strongly uniting behind Castro's government, the people became scared. They held their money and numerous people requested visas to leave the country. The propaganda of the United States' Radio Swan had a great effect on the people. Fear spread throughout Cuba.⁷³

⁷⁰Lazo, op. cit., p. 245.

⁷¹Dwight D. Eisenhower, The White House Years, 1956-1961 (New York: Doubleday Company, 1965), p. 533.

⁷²"Invasion Jitters," Time, LXXXVI, November 7, 1960 p. 47.

⁷³Ibid.

As a result of the shortage of consumer goods, housing, and personal freedom it appeared that great opposition was mounting against Castro by the end of 1960. The small businessman had especially begun to fear the increased socialism. Even with this opposition, a large number of the poor masses still had hopes for Castro's reforms. An overestimate of this hostility helped lead to the final decision for invasion.⁷⁴

Dr. Justo Carrillo Hernandez, Castro's former Agriculture and Industry head, felt that only force could bring the Communists' downfall. However, he was well aware that anti-Castro forces could not equal Castro's 200,000 men armed with 28,000 tons of equipment. He emphasized instead an underground movement to encourage many of these people to oppose Castro. When Castro had been forced to leave the country during his guerrilla days, he commanded less than nine hundred armed men. In short, it was Castro that used the underground to rid Cuba of Batista.⁷⁵

There was much evidence to indicate that Castro was fearful of an overthrow. The large number of high government officials and the growing discontent of the people were good indications of this fear. By November the

⁷⁴Boris Goldenberg, The Cuban Revolution and Latin America (New York: Frederick Praeger, 1965), pp. 237-238.

⁷⁵Justo Carrillo Hernandez, "I Give Castro Six Months," U.S. News and World Report, L, January 16, 1961, pp. 36-37.

government's lack of confidence was apparent. All revenues payable to the government were to be checks payable to a man named Gustavo Marin. The money was sent through Marin's account in Dublin, Ireland. Some was placed in a Soviet bank in London. This could have been a plan for possible retreat.⁷⁶

As Eisenhower's Presidency came to an end, it was obvious that the invasion force would not be ready before he left office. Bissel was encouraged to move ahead with preparations for an invasion, but he was told to be prepared to fall back on the lesser alternative of simply giving a supply of reinforcements for the anti-Castro guerrillas in the mountains.⁷⁷

It was well known that Castro was getting a large supply of Soviet jet fighters, and the Cuban pilots to fly them were being instructed in Czechoslovakia. Secondly, Castro was methodically exterminating his enemies in the mountains, upon whose help the invasion depended. The only way to save them was by direct air supply of guns and ammunition. The Cubans and the Americans got the feeling that the invasion should come in the early spring or never.⁷⁸

⁷⁶Ibid., p. 37

⁷⁷Murphy, loc. cit.

⁷⁸Ibid.

At this point, there began to evolve a great transition regarding the Administration's policy toward the projected invasion. The election campaign had forced the discussion of the Cuban issue.⁷⁹ Kennedy took a firm stand toward Cuba when he criticized the Eisenhower Administration for making economic sanctions too little and too late. He appeared to advocate publicly what Eisenhower's Administration was doing privately--"preparing for the overthrow of Castro."⁸⁰

On October 20, 1960, Senator Kennedy publicly had given his support to the exiles fighting to overthrow Castro. He also had asserted on that day that the United States should consider seizing all Cuban assets in the United States, which were approximately \$200,000. He then stated that the Organization of American States and European allies must aid in getting Communism out of the Caribbean. Furthermore, he claimed that President Eisenhower's embargo on Cuban imports was an empty gesture. It would, he said, only force Castro closer to Russia rather than bring his downfall.⁸¹

⁷⁹Williams, op. cit., pp. 147-150.

⁸⁰Maurice Zeitlin and Robert Scheir, Cuba: Tragedy in Our Hemisphere (New York: Grove Press, 1963), p. 192.

⁸¹New York Times, October 21, 1960, p. 1.

Nixon claimed that Kennedy's proposals on dealing with Castro were "dangerously irresponsible." It could, as he stated, lead to civil war within Cuba followed by Soviet intervention. He also claimed that our friendship with other Latin American countries would be jeopardized because of our treaty agreements not to intervene.⁸² This statement is somewhat ironical since Nixon, a hardliner toward Cuba, had proposed the training of exiles as early as April, 1959.⁸³

On November 18, 1960, President-elect Kennedy was officially told of the guerrilla training camps in Guatemala. Shortly after this time, he agreed to continue plans for the invasion although he left open the possibility that they might be cancelled.⁸⁴

The question stands as to whether President Eisenhower would have carried out the invasion. He had organized and trained the exiles. However, the decision to launch such an attack would possibly conflict with "Eisenhower's most central character traits." His opposition to Great Britain and France in the Suez Crisis of 1956 is an example of his personal restraint as a national leader. Further,

⁸²New York Times, October 23, 1960, p. 1.

⁸³Williams, op. cit., p. 152.

⁸⁴Andres Suarez, Cuba: Castroism and Communism, 1959-1966 (Cambridge, Massachusetts, The M.I.T. Press, 1967), p. 122.

as a result of his military background, he would not have let the invasion fail for a lack of American aid. However, he still would have been reluctant to send American troops as indicated by the veto of Bissell's plan. Another reason why he may have been reluctant to enter Cuba is because of his lack of confidence in the CIA after the U-2 failure.⁸⁵

Surely President Eisenhower had begun the training of Cuban refugees. However, Eisenhower's Administration made elaborate plans to destroy the Soviet Union. Would Eisenhower have been at fault if Kennedy ordered an all nuclear attack on Russia?⁸⁶

Certainly it cannot be decided exactly what President Eisenhower had in mind because the whole program was to be initiated by a new President. After reviewing the many conflicting statements of Eisenhower, his officials, and refugees, one still wonders what action he would have taken.

⁸⁵Williams, op. cit., p. 147-152.

⁸⁶Arthur Larson, Eisenhower (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1968), p. 89.

CHAPTER III

KENNEDY INHERITS THE INVASION PLAN

Upon taking the office of President, Kennedy was briefed fairly regularly on the Cuban situation, along with that in Laos. As the time for his decision approached, the Cuba problem was increasingly on his mind.⁸⁷ Since the invasion plans were complete, the pressure to initiate them was strong. He was informed that they had been constructed under the direction of his predecessor, a man of great military ability. In the election campaign he had also demanded strong action to overthrow Castro. He now had the chance. If he stopped the plans, he would be putting his amateur judgment against that of Eisenhower and his military experts. Kennedy only needed assurance. This the CIA was willing to supply. Therefore, he accepted the advice of his military and intelligence advisors.⁸⁸

He made it clear that he was going to follow a hard line toward Castro. He favored stronger economic sanctions, including the seizure of Cuban assets within the United States. Not only would goods from the United States

⁸⁷Murphy, loc. cit.

⁸⁸Cook, loc. cit.

continue to be boycotted, but the new President tried to prevent a third country from shipping American goods to Cuba. Thirdly, he stated:

We must attempt to strengthen the non-Batista, democratic, anti-Castro forces in exile, and in Cuba itself, who offer eventual hope of overthrowing Castro. Thus far these fighters for freedom had virtually no support from our government.⁸⁹

Kennedy proceeded to get his own advisors and the Joint Chiefs of Staff to study the plan. They studied exiles' plans, logistics, weapons, and combat readiness to decide if the planned attack stood a reasonable chance of success. The Joint Chiefs decided the plan was "marginal" but did have a good chance of stopping Castro.⁹⁰

President Kennedy soon discovered that there existed within his administration the same disagreements that had plagued action by the Eisenhower Administration. On one side were the "actionists" who favored an attack on Castro's regime. This included the CIA and high military officials.⁹¹

⁸⁹"If Castro is Counting on a Deal with Kennedy," U.S. News and World Report, L, January 16, 1961, p. 38.

⁹⁰"Cuba: The Consequences," loc. cit.

⁹¹"Where U. S. Went Wrong on Cuba," op. cit., p. 55.

They were often questioned by the "how-not-to-do-it crowd." This group included three key advisors: Walt W. Rostow, McGeorge Bundy, and Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.⁹²

Three conflicting views by the top White House officials, the CIA, and the State and Defense Departments had a varying effect on the President. The CIA wanted enough military and economic aid to gain control of at least part of Cuba. The State Department was concerned over political repercussions in this hemisphere.⁹³

There were several points against intervening in Cuba. It could cause uncertainty among other Latin American countries. It could cause Russia to intervene. It could provoke Russia into retaliation in Iran or Laos. The worst result would be failure.⁹⁴

The Secretary of State, Dean Rusk, pointed out early that direct intervention or open aid might mean that the United States would be blamed for violating the United Nations Charter and Organization of American States treaties.⁹⁵ Article fifteen of the Organization of American

⁹²Ibid.

⁹³New York Times, April 11, 1961, p. 1.

⁹⁴"Where U. S. Went Wrong on Cuba," loc. cit.

⁹⁵"Cuba: The Consequences," loc. cit.

States Charter forbids nations actively to intervene in the internal affairs of any other country.⁹⁶ In view of these arguments, President Kennedy requested that none of the exile troops could leave from the United States and no United States nationals could participate in the invasion.⁹⁷

In early January, the operational plan, calling for a landing on the south coast of Cuba near Trinidad, was finally materializing. The country there was open with good roads going into the Escambray Mountains and the needed link-up with the anti-Castro guerrillas. Also, in the scheme were plans to send radio broadcasts and to drop pamphlets from airplanes to notify the anti-Castro Cubans in the cities and villages to demonstrate as the invaders hit. The CIA continued to assert that an uprising would follow the invasion if the beachhead could maintain itself.⁹⁸

The plan required surprise strikes by the United States on Castro's airfields in order to destroy the few jet trainers before they could get into the air. A United

⁹⁶New York Times, April 11, 1961, p. 1.

⁹⁷"Cuba: The Consequences," loc. cit.

⁹⁸Murphy, loc. cit.

States carrier was to be close by to supply these attacks or any others that might be needed in an emergency.⁹⁹

This air help was desperately needed because the B-26's to be used for bombing the beachheads had to operate from a staging base in Central America. Consequently, the round trip of six hours would lessen the attack time to forty-five minutes because of fuel supply.¹⁰⁰

The tactical plan also provided that an anti-Castro government be set up which would receive recognition and material help from friendly nations. Then a drive through Matanzas of Las Villas would split the island in half. The underground would then be established to step up sabotage and produce uprisings against Castro.¹⁰¹

The underground movement was, however, greatly handicapped by the conflict between the CIA and Ray's Movimiento Revolucionario del Pueblo. In February, Bender, the CIA coordinator, called the leaders of the conservative Frente and the Movimiento Revolucionario to Washington. He encouraged them to cooperate more with each other. He also produced a list of twenty-six names, and asked them to

⁹⁹Ibid.

¹⁰⁰Ibid.

¹⁰¹"Inside Story of the Cuba Fiasco," op. cit., p. 44.

select ten to choose a provisional Cuban President. Since they did not recognize six of the names, they failed to comply with Bender's request.¹⁰²

Finally, after two weeks had passed, the Cubans on their own met in room 125 of the Manhattan Hotel Commodore, where they worked out their differences. The final agreement came at the Skyway Motel when Jose Cardona was chosen to head the Frente and Movimiento Revolucionario. Carr, the CIA agent there, recommended that this man be the head of the later provisional government.¹⁰³

The new organization was called the Cuban Revolutionary Council. The Cardona coalition repeatedly emphasized internal revolution for which it claimed that people were willing to help. However, what was to be done with the small professionally trained invasionary force? It was decided that an agreement between the Frente and Movimiento Revolucionario that Castro should be opposed by an invasionary force as well as internal opposition. Both Varona and Ray signed the agreement. In the final preparations in early April the Cuban Revolutionary Council gave top priority to the invasion force rather than the underground.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰²"Cuba, the Massacre," loc. cit.

¹⁰³Ibid., pp. 22-23.

¹⁰⁴Draper, op. cit., pp. 94-100

On the surface, two different lines were pursued simultaneously, one for the Revolutionary Council, another for the invasion force. The former implied that some re-examination had taken place in the Kennedy Administration; the latter amounted to an expression of modified Nixonism. The difference between these two lines is the key to what was wrong with the conception, as well as the execution, of this invasion.¹⁰⁵

In early April Cardona asked that all Cubans take up arms against Castro:

We must conquer or we shall die choked by slavery. In the name of God we assure you all that after the victory we will have peace.¹⁰⁶

Cardona then rejected the reports that an invasion was already underway. He frankly stated instead that the revolution would have to come from within the country.¹⁰⁷

This last statement by Cardona could have had a multi-purpose. It could have been used to stir internal revolts or to draw attention away from the possibility of an invasion. It also may have been used as propaganda to justify an invasion that was claimed to be for the sake of the masses.

Many diplomatic observers were doubtful that Castro had the support of more than half of the Cuban people.

¹⁰⁵Ibid., p. 100.

¹⁰⁶New York Times, April 9, 1961, p. 1.

¹⁰⁷Ibid.

They felt that the Cuban Revolutionary Council had a good chance of organizing forces against him.¹⁰⁸

After Cardona's announcement, Castro's army began to reinforce its defenses. Rather than resisting, the people were somewhat bewildered with the anxiety of a possible new conflict.¹⁰⁹

The underground movement in Cuba was in the end given little attention. This left the United States and the revolutionaries with no sure organization or guarantee of internal opposition to Castro. By limiting the attack to one beachhead, the people of Cuba could visualize only a small invasionary force. Risking one's life under those circumstances would hardly have been worth the risk. As a result, all chances for victory were placed on the success of the invasion.¹¹⁰

The President, although accepting the invasion theory, was inwardly doubtful of the plan from the start. He very likely believed the force was too small. He may have been hesitant to initiate an underhanded job that would create an international uproar.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸U.S., Congressional Record, 87th Cong., 1st Sess. (1961), CVII, No. 4, 4733.

¹⁰⁹New York Times, April 9, 1961, p. 4.

¹¹⁰Draper, op. cit., pp. 100-101.

¹¹¹Murphy, loc. cit.

On April 4 at a State Department meeting, practically everyone associated with high decision making was present to review Bissell's final summary of the situation. The following people were present: Secretary of State Dean Rusk; Secretary of Treasury Douglas Dillon, Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Lyman Lemnitzer, Allen Dulles; Kennedy's personal aid, McGeorge Bundy; Paul Nitze, Kennedy's specialist on strategic planning at the Pentagon; Thomas Mann, the assistant Secretary of State for Latin-American Affairs; and three of Kennedy's specialists in Latin-American matters--Adolf Berle, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., and Richard Goodwin. The only outsider was Senator J. W. Fulbright, Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. He had previously been Kennedy's favorite choice for Secretary of State. The President sought Fulbright's approval, but the Senator rejected the plan.¹¹²

Fulbright told the President that the Castro government was "a thorn in the flesh but not a dagger in the heart." He further predicted that the invasion would be a catastrophe even if Castro were overthrown. He favored isolating Castro from the other nations in the hemisphere.¹¹³

¹¹²Ibid.

¹¹³Richard Rudman, "How Not to Run an Invasion," The New Republic, CXLVI, May 21, 1962, pp. 23-24.

President Kennedy inadvertently disregarded Fulbright, and listened to the remainder of Bissell's plan.¹¹⁴ As Bissell continued, neither he nor Dulles believed as many think that Castro's forces would break on the first invasion. They did believe that internal uprisings in Cuba would be enough to sustain a beachhead. This would be enough to permit organization of an anti-Castro government to be supported by the United States.¹¹⁵

There were three reasons for Kennedy's agreement to this plan. First, the CIA had a record of past success. One of the best examples is the successful overthrow of the Communist regime in Guatemala in 1954. The past successes allowed the CIA to become overconfident. They were certain that the hatred of Castro was widespread in Cuba. Finally, the CIA leaders had become so involved that their emotions tended to cloud their judgment.¹¹⁶

The military leaders, like the CIA men, were overly confident in their plan. Both Lemnitzer and Admiral Arleigh Burke, Chief of Naval Operations, had given their approval in writing to the President on two conditions: that the

¹¹⁴Murphy, loc. cit.

¹¹⁵Stewart Alsop, "The Lessons of the Cuban Disaster," Saturday Evening Post, CXLVI, June 24, 1961, p. 68.

¹¹⁶Ibid.

CIA's political estimate was correct and that the anti-Castro forces would control the air over the battlefield.¹¹⁷

The Joint Chiefs and the CIA informed President Kennedy that chances of success in the Cuban invasion would be greater than had prevailed in the Guatemala venture.¹¹⁸

The President then asked each individual present at the meeting to give his opinion either for or against.¹¹⁹ Without exception, those giving opinions favored the invasion. Berle, particularly outspoken, said, "a power confrontation with Communism in the Western Hemisphere was inevitable."¹²⁰

Only one, Schlesinger, did not give his opinion. While sitting near the end of the table, he did not volunteer his ideas. His opinion at the time may have had a great impact upon the President who was obviously disturbed by Senator Fulbright's discord.¹²¹

Two men not present, Under Secretary of State Chester Bowles and United Nations Representative Adlai Stevenson, were opposed to the operation.¹²²

¹¹⁷Ibid.

¹¹⁸Ibid.

¹¹⁹Ibid.

¹²⁰Murphy, loc. cit.

¹²¹Alsop, loc. cit.

¹²²Murphy, loc. cit.

Kennedy made two important decisions at the meeting: the United States would give no air support; and the B-26 bombers could be used in only two attacks before the invasion.¹²³

After more consideration that night, Kennedy requested a smaller meeting the next day. Rusk, McNamara, and Dulles attended. It was here that Kennedy finally decided to go ahead with the invasion. He also ordered that under no circumstances would American forces be used.¹²⁴

He then sent Berle and Schlesinger to New York to acquaint the Cuban leaders with the decision. The Cubans agreed to go along with the invasion regardless of the final ultimatum.¹²⁵ It is now uncertain who these Cubans were. Dr. Varona claimed, after the invasion, that President Kennedy never informed the Revolutionary Council of the altered plan to stop the use of United States air cover and naval protection. He also claimed that they never knew the date nor the landing site of the invasion.¹²⁶

¹²³Ibid.

¹²⁴Alsop, loc. cit.

¹²⁵Ibid.

¹²⁶"Who Bungled the Cuban Invasion?--Another Version," U.S. News and World Report, LI, July 31, 1961, p. 57.

There were several changes that had taken place during the April meetings. As a result, another landing site was decided upon. The new site would put them closer to the Escambray Mountains for retreat if the beachhead could not be easily held with American air support.¹²⁷

The Bay of Pigs landing would put the refugees within fifty miles of the mountains where anti-Castro forces were staying. It was an obvious misconception that the major portion of the landing force could make it such a distance. This quick decision was not thoroughly examined.¹²⁸

Rusk insisted that the entire operation be kept unspectacular and suggested that the direct role of the United States be minimized as much as possible. This required moving the attack to a less accessible and less populated area where Castro's reaction might be slower and less successful. The only vulnerable airfield in Cuba with the capacity to take the invader's planes was one in poor condition near the Bay of Pigs on the Zapata peninsula about one hundred miles west of Trinidad. This move did not end last minute curtailments ordered by the White House.¹²⁹

¹²⁷Alsop, op. cit., p. 70.

¹²⁸Ibid.

¹²⁹Murphy, op. cit., p. 227.

Even the plans to arouse the Cuban people with leaflet raids and radio broadcasts were removed from the strategy. Again this was done because the State Department was afraid that there would be too obvious a showing of United States involvement.¹³⁰

Regardless of the changes no one seemed to be aware of the most important question:

If the United States is not willing to insure success, should a comparative handful of Cuban refugees be permitted nevertheless to risk American prestige on a venture which clearly might fail.¹³¹

Obviously no one wanted to give the answer:

If the President refuses to take any risk of committing American forces, then the whole operation should be called off.¹³²

As mid-April arrived, the CIA officials who favored the operation pleaded for many reasons that it was "now or never."¹³³ Castro had strongly increased his attempt to capture rebels in the Organes Mountains of the Pinar del Rio Province. Also thirty thousand men were sent into the Escambray Mountains to annihilate opposition there.¹³⁴ The Castro government continued to receive large shipments of

¹³⁰Ibid.

¹³¹Alsop, loc. cit.

¹³²Ibid.

¹³³"Cuba: The Consequences," loc. cit.

¹³⁴New York Times, April 11, 1961, p. 11.

Soviet tanks, planes, and ammunition. The President of Guatemala, Miguel Ydigoras, was under heavy political pressure from Communists to remove Cuban exiles from the training camps.¹³⁵ Disbanding and disarming those who were ready to go probably would have required force. Even so, the demobilization of the trained guerrillas would have been a staggering blow to all who opposed Castro; and the guerrillas in the United States would be a future source of trouble.¹³⁶

As President Kennedy evaluated the total situation for the last time, the temptation to proceed was irresistible, no matter how great his doubts. His top intelligence and military leaders all agreed to go ahead. The plan that they accepted called for no direct United States aid. If, for any reason, the absence of United States support created serious doubts about victory, then the Joint Chiefs and the CIA should have been the first to recognize this.¹³⁷

Some claim that Kennedy's aides, like Schlesinger, should have been more forceful with their objections. Under the circumstances of the preparations, they knew little

¹³⁵"Picking Up the Pieces," The Economist, CIC, April 29, 1961, p. 441.

¹³⁶"Cuba: The Consequences," loc. cit.

¹³⁷Meyer and Szulc, op. cit., p. 113.

about Castro and guerrilla warfare. They yielded their inexperience to the CIA's assumed knowledge.¹³⁸

It still appeared that Kennedy's assistants followed Fulbright's lead. However, they were new and unsure of their position and influence. If the experts were right they would have "looked foolish after the fact."¹³⁹

As a result of these events, Kennedy made the most humiliating decision of his initial year as President. He informed his top officials that he approved the invasion plan.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁸Ibid.

¹³⁹Ibid.

¹⁴⁰Ibid.

CHAPTER IV

THE INVASION

The training of the Cuban recruits in Guatemala was well underway. The refugees were greeted at the training bases by American officers and were given excellent American weapons.¹⁴¹

The man in charge of both Americans and Cubans was named "Frank." The small artillery expert who hailed from California was called "Ray." The veteran paratrooper was referred to as "Sam." The intelligence supervisor, "Nick," came from New Mexico. "Bob" taught the use of mortars and machine guns. A fellow named "Pat" was the security officer.¹⁴²

Without a doubt, the man in control of the camp was Frank Bender, a man of German heritage who had aided the French underground in World War II. In order to check on plans, he flew frequently to Miami, Washington, and New York.¹⁴³

¹⁴¹Manuel Penabaz, "We Were Betrayed," U.S. News and World Report, LIV, January 14, 1963, p. 46.

¹⁴²Ibid.

¹⁴³Ibid., p. 47.

The main base, Trax, constructed by the United States government, appeared to be a small city with asphalt streets, electric lights, and quarters for five hundred men. Most of the land it occupied had been rented from Roberto Alejo, a good friend of the Guatemalan President, Miguel Ydigoras Fuentes, and a brother of the Guatemalan Ambassador to the United States.¹⁴⁴

Large stockpiles of bombs were stored at six bases in Guatemala, and in Puerto Cabezas, Nicaragua, and Swan Island off the Honduran coast. Unmarked C-54's, C-46's, and C-47's had brought fifty freight loads of rockets, bombs, guns, and ammunition to Puerto Cabezas. United States C-124's had brought huge cargoes of rations, blankets, medical supplies, and guns to Guatemala City.¹⁴⁵

One of the most modern pieces of equipment aided in communication controls. It took six men to operate. The American officers said that it should be destroyed rather than allowed to fall into the hands of the enemy.¹⁴⁶

The troops were told that there would be plenty of ammunition to stop Castro's tanks and ground forces. The next phase would be to win over the Cuban people. Finally,

¹⁴⁴Ibid.

¹⁴⁵"Cuba: The Massacre," op. cit., p. 20.

¹⁴⁶Penabaz, loc. cit.

the exile leaders would be organized into a provisional government and would be recognized by Latin American countries as well as the United States.¹⁴⁷

A general organization of the refugees was called in Miami by the Cuban Revolutionary Council on April 1. Many Cuban nurses and doctors who had volunteered were requested to leave for a hospital ship that was being supplied somewhere in Cuba. Medical supplies in Miami had been greatly drained by the Cubans.¹⁴⁸

The volunteers were taken in trucks to the Opa-Locka airport, put aboard unmarked transport planes and taken to Guatemala. While in flight, they were given khaki uniforms and were stripped of their own clothes and identification.¹⁴⁹ This was part of the CIA's security measures. It was obviously a farce since nearly all Cuban families in Florida knew of the mobilization plans.¹⁴⁹

The atmosphere became so feverish within the last ten days before the invasion that much additional equipment and supplies were furnished to the neglected underground movement of Manuel Ray's. His strong plea for underground support was finally being seriously acknowledged.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁷Ibid.

¹⁴⁸Meyer and Szulc, op. cit., p. 118.

¹⁴⁹Ibid.

¹⁵⁰Ibid.

Explosives and weapons being transported in small boats were given air protection from Key West. This greatly encouraged the sabotage movement.¹⁵¹

The underground activities got underway the week of April 10. Many stores and buildings in Havana were destroyed by explosives. Large department stores, sugar mills, and warehouses were key targets. This movement was too little and too late to mount a major underground movement. Too much emphasis had been placed on the single invasion concept.¹⁵²

On April 10, the troops were taken to Puerto Cabezas, Nicaragua. The CIA had supplied six old ships. Three were fishing boats and three were Liberty ships from World War II. The crews consisted of Cubans and a few United States merchant marine misfits and drunkards. "We carry you, land you, and leave you," a crew member expounded.¹⁵³

Of the 1400 men, only 135 had previous training as soldiers. The largest single group was composed of 240 students. The remainder of the invasionary force consisted of businessmen, lawyers, doctors, landowners, fishermen,

¹⁵¹Ibid.

¹⁵²Ibid., p. 119

¹⁵³Penabaz, loc. cit.

and peasants. Their ages ranged from sixteen to sixty-one. Most of the men averaged twenty-nine.¹⁵⁴

The ships sailed on April 11. All troops received a copy of the plans. The invasion was to begin at Bahia de Cochinos, ninety miles southeast of Havana. The second and fifth battalions were to land first at Playa Larga under the leadership of Emeido Oliva. The other soldiers would land at a place not as deep in the bay, Playa Grande.¹⁵⁵

According to Manuel Penabaz, the Cubans were certain of direct United States aid.

Most important of all, our leaders had been assured of United States air cover, the backing of the United States navy, and if needed--of United States land troops as well. No one expected our forces alone to conquer Castro's forces of 300,000 militia and regulars.¹⁵⁶

At dawn on April 15, the B-26's coming from Central America bombed three Cuban airfields. The attack was on the whole a success. Half of Castro's B-26's and Sea Furies and four of his T-33 jets were destroyed or damaged and thus prevented from taking part in the battle.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁴Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., A Thousand Days (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1965), p. 268.

¹⁵⁵Penabaz, loc. cit.

¹⁵⁶Ibid.

¹⁵⁷Murphy, op. cit., p. 228.

To cover the real events there was an attempt to prove that the bombing prior to the invasion were by defecting Castro pilots. An old Cuban B-26 landed in Miami. The pilot gave the "cock and bull" story that he had bombed Castro's airfields. Corroded electrical equipment, unfired guns, and dusty bomb-bay doors plainly indicated that the plane had not been involved in an air raid.¹⁵⁸

Castro immediately claimed that the pilot was not a defector but had come from the United States. He described the air raids as being a "thousand times more cowardly" than the Japanese bombardment of Pearl Harbor.¹⁵⁹

The United States officials avoided questions on the point of the origin of the B-26 planes. Two of the three landed in Miami. At the United Nations meeting, Adlai E. Stevenson said:

These pilots and certain other crew members have apparently defected from Castro's tyranny. These two planes to the best of my knowledge were Castro's own air force planes and according to the pilots took off from Castro's own air force field.¹⁶⁰

Stevenson then presented a picture of a plane with Cuban markings which landed April 15 in Miami. The Cuban

¹⁵⁸"Cuba, the Massacre," op. cit., p. 19.

¹⁵⁹Cyril Falls, "Fidel Castro at Bay," The Illustrated London News, CCXXVIII, April 29, 1961, p. 700.

¹⁶⁰New York Times, April 17, 1961, p. 1.

Foreign Minister, Raul Roa, displayed a photograph of American guns captured in Cuba.¹⁶¹

Stevenson struck back at Roa by saying that many of the people involved in the invasion were old friends of the Cuban Foreign Minister.

They make a rather impressive list, the first Provisional President of the Revolutionary Government, Dr. Manuel Urrutia; the first Prime Minister, Dr. Jose Miro Cardona, the first President of the Supreme Court, Dr. Emilio Menendez.¹⁶²

Secretary of State Rusk, after conferring with Stevenson, decided that a second Nicaraguan strike would place the United States in an awkward international position. He proposed halting air strikes until the planes could fly from the beachhead.¹⁶³

President Kennedy then ordered Bissell to halt the air strikes scheduled for the invasion. Bissell was shocked. Since Allen Dulles was absent, the CIA Deputy Director Charles Cabell and Bissell went to the State Department to get Rusk to reconsider the orders. Cabell was greatly concerned about the vulnerability of the troops on the

¹⁶¹"The Abortive Invasion of Cuba by Anti-Castro Revolutionaries," The Illustrated London News, CCXXXVIII, April 29, 1961, p. 698.

¹⁶²"Cuba, the Massacre," op. cit., p. 20.

¹⁶³Schlesinger, op. cit., p. 273.

beach. Rusk, not impressed, called the President, but there was no change in plans. Upon returning to his office, Bissell ordered the B-26 commanders to halt the bombing plans.¹⁶⁴

President Kennedy was obviously making conflicting decisions. Several days before the attack, he publicly stated that no United States forces would intervene in Cuba. This obviously was to help protect the American image. The whole purpose of the Cuban affair, however, was to promote an anti-Communist uprising.¹⁶⁵

Certainly the President's open announcement of no United States intervention lessened the morale of potential saboteurs. If President Kennedy had put himself in the place of the anti-Castro Cubans, he would have been less likely to rebel after being flatly refused aid.¹⁶⁶

Another conflicting decision involved the plan to destroy Castro's small airforce with the B-26 bombers from Guatemala and Kennedy's orders not to "impair the credibility" of the American Ambassador to the United Nations, Adlai Stevenson. Stevenson was "not to be lied

¹⁶⁴Murphy, op. cit., p. 230.

¹⁶⁵Alsop, loc. cit.

¹⁶⁶Ibid.

to nor to lie." When the Ambassador received word from the State Department concerning the April 15 air attacks by defectors, he assumed that it was true. The Cubans, knowing the defection tale was a fake, accused the Americans of aggression and demanded that Stevenson expose one of the B-26 pilots who was in Florida waiting interrogation by the United Nations.¹⁶⁷

The invasion itself was still underway. The raid of the fifteenth had destroyed most of Castro's airforce. However, three of Batista's T-33 jet trainers had survived. The B-26 bombers were helpless against these jets. Consequently the ship Rio Escondido was to be later destroyed by them. Thus the essential element, control of the air, was proven to be lost.¹⁶⁸

Castro had already begun to retaliate. He killed twenty-nine people who were thought to be plotting his assassination. Among these were his past Agriculture Minister, Humberto dori Marin, and three Americans. Many people whose loyalty was doubted were forced into temporary concentration camps. With this deterrent the expected mass rebellion failed to develop.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁷Ibid.

¹⁶⁸Ibid.

¹⁶⁹"Cuba, the Massacre," op. cit., p. 21.

This would also keep these leaders, including Miro Cardona, from having any part in guiding the landing and underground operations of the invasion.¹⁷⁰ On April 16, a fleet of black painted ships left New Orleans for Cuba equipped with artillery and radar. The same day, Cardona and other members of the Revolutionary Council were sent to a secret location in Florida in readiness to move into a portion of "free Cuba."¹⁷¹

There was also much concern in Miami over the disappearance of three to five thousand members of the "liberation army" who did not participate in the attack on Cuba. It was believed that they were being held by United States authorities. Defense Minister Varona and Ray, the underground coordinator, were prevented from using the telephone during the attack.¹⁷²

They were allowed to listen to radio reports on the air attacks. Some were so furious that they threatened to leave at the risk of being shot by armed guards. They did manage to call Adolf Berle, the President's Latin American coordinator.¹⁷³

¹⁷⁰New York Times, April 26, 1961, p. 1.

¹⁷¹"Cuba, the Massacre," loc. cit.

¹⁷²New York Times, April 26, 1961, op. cit., p. 1, 3.

¹⁷³Ibid.

As a result, Berle and Arthur Schlesinger flew to Miami to discuss the friction. After reassuring words, the leaders were sent to Washington for a private meeting with the President. He expressed his deep regret and tried to ease the tension with the Cuban officials.¹⁷⁴

The invaders had embarked from Puerto Cabezas in Nicaragua.¹⁷⁵ They soon heard a Cuban radio broadcasting angrily that several planes had bombed the airports of Santiago, Havana, and various military bases. After this bulletin, Castro announced a restatement of Kennedy's policy of "strict neutrality" in Cuba's internal affairs. This awakened some doubts in the minds of the anti-Castro Cubans. A feeling of anxiety fell over many of the soon to be invaders.¹⁷⁶

United States destroyers escorted the Cuban ships to within six miles of shore. A United States aircraft carrier was near but stayed about thirty miles offshore.¹⁷⁷

Shortly before the 2:00 A.M. invasion on April 17, reconnaissance planes flew over the beaches and reported all serene. The landing force of 1,325 men met no

¹⁷⁴Ibid.

¹⁷⁵"Inside Story of the Cuba Fiasco," op. cit., p. 44.

¹⁷⁶Penabaz, op. cit., p. 48.

¹⁷⁷"Inside Story of the Cuba Fiasco," loc. cit.

opposition for the first hour. They were able to get the light guns and six tanks ashore with ease.¹⁷⁸

The landing site, Playa Larga, joined a narrow road and a railroad bed from the beach to the airstrip of Jaquey Grande, a distance of twenty-four miles. The whole area was surrounded by swamp and infested with mosquitoes. The swamp made the advance difficult but it prevented Castro's forces from flanking them.¹⁷⁹

Initial contact with land brought the following comment from one of the ship's captains, "The sky is ours, too!" He assumed that Castro's air force had been destroyed.¹⁸⁰

At 6:00 A.M. one of Castro's B-26 bombers began shelling the cargoes being unloaded on the beach. Two B-26's belonging to the invasionary force then appeared. They radioed about their lack of fuel and headed back to Nicaragua. Shortly, a Sea Fury flew over. It was like the British made planes Batista had used against Castro. It circled twice and flew away. Another B-26 flew over the landing barge. It was shot down with small arms.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁸Ibid.

¹⁷⁹"Inside Story of the Cuba Fiasco," loc. cit.

¹⁸⁰Penabaz, loc. cit.

¹⁸¹Ibid.

After reaching the beach, heavy fire came from enemy aircraft. One ship, the Houston, still loaded with mortar shells, armored vehicles, and the electronic communications-control center was hit by airpower and sunk. The Rio Escondido was also sunk.¹⁸²

Kennedy became alarmed when Castro's forces were making strong resistance. He ordered Bissell to let the B-26's attack the airfields at will. Most of the pilots had been in the air so long that they could not complete their new orders.¹⁸³

The B-26's coming from Nicaragua began to attack in pairs at one hour intervals. They were left with only enough fuel to last twenty-two minutes. That left thirty-eight minutes of each hour without air cover of any kind.¹⁸⁴

That afternoon Castro's battalions advanced among ten or twelve tanks. Only mortars were available because the antitank mines were sunk with the Houston. Many of Castro's troops were killed. Most of them were only boys of about fourteen years. Many of the tanks were stopped and Castro's infantry began to run.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸²Ibid.

¹⁸³Murphy, op. cit., p. 235.

¹⁸⁴"The Air Will Be Ours," U.S. News and World Report, LIV, February 4, 1963, p. 34.

¹⁸⁵Penabaz, loc. cit.

The United States radio "Swan" continued to announce statements to arouse the people to revolt:

The invaders are steadily advancing on every front. Throughout all Cuba, people are joining forces with the underground rebels fighting Fidel Castro. Castro's forces are surrendering in droves. It is reported that Raul Castro has committed suicide.¹⁸⁶

In the President's office Tuesday night, Bissell made it plain that the invasion would fail unless the United States airpower was used. He asked that the carrier Essex's planes, just off the Cuban coast, be used to save the operation.¹⁸⁷

The meeting lasted until 2:00 A.M. A compromise was finally made. Jets could be used from 6:30 to 7:30 Wednesday to get all the ships unloaded on shore. The next morning there was a time mix-up and Castro shot down two B-26's.¹⁸⁸

This was, however, the most successful day for the anti-Castro air force. It badly damaged a Castro convoy of fifty troop trucks and three tanks. In addition, estimates of 800 were killed; but the limited number of planes could not sustain even light losses. Eight of the fifteen planes were destroyed and five others were badly damaged.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁶Ibid.

¹⁸⁷Murphy, loc. cit.

¹⁸⁸Schlesinger, op. cit., p. 278

¹⁸⁹"The Air Will Be Ours," op. cit., p. 36.

Despite heavy bombardment from Castro's B-26's on the second day, the exiles still held land for six miles north of the bay, including the airstrip on Giron Beach and the road junction at San Blas.¹⁹⁰

All the battalions began to run out of ammunition. Word was received that Castro's forces were mounting a huge offensive to encircle the Bay of Pigs.¹⁹¹

On the morning of the third day, more B-26's flew over. One of these attacked Castro's troops before being shot down while the others flew away. It was later discovered that the pilot shot down was Leo Francis Berle of Boston, the American supervisor at Nicaragua. That day he had been informed that the invasion forces were to be left alone. Possibly in "anger and frustration he had determined to uphold his own honor at least."¹⁹²

The Cuban fliers claimed that four American pilots were killed in combat. They consisted of two in each plane following the exhaustion of the Cuban fliers.

Herrera, the operations officer, stated this about the Americans:

¹⁹⁰Penabaz, op. cit., p. 49.

¹⁹¹Ibid.

¹⁹²Ibid.

I heard an American pilot radio that the antiaircraft fire was hotter than any he had gone through in Korea. Then there was an explosion--and he was gone. He was my drinking buddy.¹⁹³

Then the other American pilot radioed for help. He said please send air cover. Jets are in the area. Soon, with one engine afire, his plane fell in the water.¹⁹⁴

Suddenly it came over me that I was alone. I realized, at last, that the so called air cover would never come. I had a sad feeling--a feeling of betrayal.¹⁹⁵

The paratroopers that had taken the airstrip of Jaquez Grande were soon defeated. The amphibious forces that came from the beaches never saw the airstrip. The B-26 that attempted to land there crashed in drifts of sand that covered the runway.¹⁹⁶

The Soviet made tanks rolled in untouched.¹⁹⁷ The land forces were scattered. A few men attempted to reach the Escambray Mountains, fifty miles east.¹⁹⁸

On Wednesday afternoon Bissell got a message from a gallant Brigade Commander, "I have nothing left to fight with and so cannot wait. I am headed for the swamp."¹⁹⁹

¹⁹³"The Air Will Be Ours," loc. cit.

¹⁹⁴Ibid.

¹⁹⁵Ibid.

¹⁹⁶"Cuba, the Massacre," loc. cit.

¹⁹⁷"In Cuban Invasion: The Fatal Mistake," loc. cit.

¹⁹⁸"Cuba, the Massacre," loc. cit.

¹⁹⁹Murphy, op. cit., pp. 235-236.

Another desperate plea was received:

We are under attack by two Sea Fury aircraft and heavy artillery. Do not see any friendly air cover as you promised. We need jet support immediately.²⁰⁰

Kennedy, realizing that the invasion was a failure, made a strong statement warning Russia to stay out of Cuba in the future.

You are under a serious misapprehension in regard to events in Cuba. The Castro dictatorship is an alien dominated reiteration of the American contention that Dr. Castro's government is under Soviet domination. Many Cubans have found the denial of liberties intolerable and have turned to resistance against Dr. Castro. In the event of any military intervention by outside forces we will immediately honor our obligations under the inter-American system to protect against aggression.²⁰¹

On April 20, Kennedy announced to the press that the United States restraint was not inexhaustible. This release came after the rebels had failed and after the President had conferred secretly with Dr. Cardona.²⁰²

Pierre Salinger, Kennedy's press secretary, asserted that the main reason the Cubans had visited the White House was to persuade President Kennedy to use his influence with

²⁰⁰"Cuba, the Massacre," loc. cit.

²⁰¹New York Times, April 19, 1961, pp. 1, 2.

²⁰²New York Times, April 21, 1961, p. 1.

the Organization of American States to give medical care to the captured and wounded.²⁰³

Kennedy's speech warned Castro that the United States would not tolerate a large Communist arms build-up in Cuba nor executions of American citizens. Unlike earlier announcements, Kennedy did not rule out the possibility that the United States might act alone if necessary to protect its security.²⁰⁴

²⁰³Ibid.

²⁰⁴Ibid.

CHAPTER V

THE QUESTION OF UNITED STATES AIR COVER

American naval and marine forces were nearby but were forbidden to be used by President Kennedy. His other vital decision prevented Cuban fliers from making air strikes on Castro's air force. The attacks were supposed to come simultaneously with the invasion. Many experts believed that the failure to initiate these air attacks caused defeat of the refugees. As a result, Castro's planes were allowed to operate and without major opposition.²⁰⁵

The following judgment was implied by many informed sources:

Disaster at the Bay of Pigs was due directly to failure to destroy or to counter Castro's air force. With adequate air support, the invasion could have succeeded and Castro-style communism could have been removed from the Western hemisphere. There would have been, then, no opportunity for Russia's Khrushchev to plant in Cuba the missiles that brought the world near the point of nuclear war last October.²⁰⁶

²⁰⁵"The Story of How President Kennedy Upset the Cuban Invasion," U.S. News and World Report, LIV, February 4, 1963, p. 29

²⁰⁶Ibid., p. 30.

The air attack planned for April 17 did not take place. This allowed Castro's planes to destroy supplies, men, and ships. It also prevented the refugee planes from landing on the beaches to refuel.²⁰⁷

One member of the Cuban Revolutionary Council, Manuel Antonio de Varona, went to the Guatemalan training base in February, 1961. He talked with the American commander, "Colonel Frank," about the feasibility of 1,500 men invading a country guarded by thousands of armed soldiers. Bender assured him not to worry. He claimed that every car and truck in Cuba would be halted. He told Varona that a lack of air cover would be suicidal. Varona assumed that this American, who had been placed in control, knew what he was talking about.²⁰⁸

On February 10 or 12, Colonel Frank informed the revolutionary force of the basic plan. It consisted of a landing by the refugees, then within five days 30,000 American marines would join them. The marines were to be aboard the aircraft carrier Boxer and other vessels in Puerto Rico and Florida. He then reiterated there would be "American air cover during the invasion." He further stated that the naval escort would come to their aid if necessary.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁷Ibid.

²⁰⁸"The Air Will Be Ours," op. cit., p. 33.

²⁰⁹Ibid., p. 34.

Several Cuban fliers claimed that they had continued assurance of air support from the American advisors. The three included: Gonzalo Herrera, a Cuban airlines flyer who controlled operations of the B-26 squadron of the Liberation Air Force; Julio Gonzales Rebull, a Liberation paratrooper; and Alfredo Caballero, one of the B-26 pilots.²¹⁰

They stated that the entire air force of the refugees contained fifteen B-26 bombers, four C-54 transport planes and five C-46 transport planes. The tail guns were removed to allow room for more fuel to sustain the flight from Nicaragua. They were well aware that the B-26's could not go into battle alone without tail guns.²¹¹

The CIA agents told the revolutionary fliers not to worry about the Soviet Migs. In the event they were used, the United States F-104's or other war planes would shoot them down.²¹²

One American advisor, known to them as George of Washington, strongly assured them that Castro's planes would be destroyed. This made Caballero feel certain that the United States would give air protection.²¹³

²¹⁰Ibid.

²¹¹Ibid.

²¹²"Cuban Post-Mortem," U.S. News and World Report, L, May 8, 1961, p. 55.

²¹³"The Air Will Be Ours," loc. cit.

Dagoberto Darias, an officer of a transport vessel during the invasion, claimed that they were promised air support. This promise was received by radiogram on April 18 from the American flagship directing the operation. On the morning of April 17, Darias had spotted twenty-two jets with the revolutionary insignia. This proved to him that the United States was prepared to give air cover.²¹⁴

The Cubans did not know the official identity of the American advisors to the Liberation Air Force. After the invasion had failed, two pilots sent to Washington recognized some of the advisors dressed in military uniform.²¹⁵

On April 12 President Kennedy publicly stated that United States military forces would not aid the refugees "under any conditions." He went on to emphasize that strong precautions would be taken to prevent "any American" from being involved in anti-Castro operations within Cuba.²¹⁶

In January, 1963, Robert Kennedy claimed that President Kennedy never withdrew United States air cover. In fact he stated that there were "never any plans made for United States air cover."²¹⁷

²¹⁴Ibid.

²¹⁵Ibid.

²¹⁶New York Times, April 13, 1961, p. 1.

²¹⁷"Robert Kennedy Speaks His Mind," U.S. News and World Report, LIV, January 28, 1963, p. 62.

When asked if there was air cover from Central America, he answered:

But you had U. S. air cover. There was never any plan to have U. S. air cover. I mean it was never suggested by the military. It was never considered.²¹⁸

Following this contradictory statement Kennedy asserted before answering any more questions that he must set the record straight on air support. He said that one air attack was carried out on Cuban airports the Saturday before the invasion. A great turmoil erupted in the United Nations over the United States involvement. This world-wide revelation was contradictory to the pre-invasion plan. Another air attack on the airports was to follow Monday morning.²¹⁹

The President, in light of world condemnation, asked whether another air raid should take place. He ordered a cancellation unless the organizational leaders considered it of vital importance to take place. If so, they were to consult him further about it. Therefore, it was not the air cover for the beaches or landings that was postponed. The reports even showed that the airports were attacked later that day.²²⁰

²¹⁸Ibid.

²¹⁹Ibid.

²²⁰Ibid.

Kennedy could not have cancelled the air cover for the invasion because it was not in the plans. The second air attack on Castro's air fields that finally occurred late Monday afternoon was postponed. The postponement left three B-26's to attack in the dark without night equipment. As a result only one of the three airfields under assault was actually hit.²²¹

There was, according to Kennedy, air cover to come from Central America. All planes from there were used according to plan. Without a doubt those planes were inadequate. This had nothing to do with any late decision by the President or anyone else.²²²

Herrera was told by American advisors that air strikes were halted for fear of killing civilian personnel, and because they were having an adverse effect on public opinion in Latin America. Herrera issued a strong protest that the job of destroying Castro's air force had not been completed. He was told by American officials not to worry because air cover would take care of everything.²²³

In summary the President did not cancel air cover for the Bay of Pigs invasion. He did halt the "air strike"

²²¹"The Story of How President Kennedy Upset the Cuban Invasion," op. cit., p. 32.

²²²"Robert Kennedy Speaks His Mind," loc. cit.

²²³"The Air Will Be Ours," loc. cit.

that had been scheduled to destroy the few planes that remained in Castro's air force. The first assault on Saturday had knocked out a substantial number of Castro's planes. The second attack was to demolish the rest just prior to the invasion.²²⁴

²²⁴"The Story of How President Kennedy Upset the Cuban Invasion," loc. cit.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

Following the failure of the invasion, the question was asked--what went wrong? At a cabinet meeting the day after the catastrophe, President Kennedy gave three reasons for the failure. First, the Cuban patriots had been overly optimistic about a quick uprising. Secondly, both the Cubans and the Americans had not realized Castro's military strength and his ability to move swiftly and effectively. Thirdly, someone who knew the exiles' secret plans warned Castro as to the time and place of the landing. He let them get on shore and then tore them to pieces.²²⁵

Kennedy later informed his press secretary, Salinger, that Castro only had to read the newspapers to know what was developing. He did not put the responsibility for the failure on the press, but he did maintain that some of the stories were "irresponsible and aided the enemy."²²⁶

Conversely, Kennedy was one of the first publicly to propose aid to the Cuban refugees while campaigning for the

²²⁵"Cuba: The Consequences," op. cit., p. 26.

²²⁶Pierre Salinger, With Kennedy (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1966), pp. 146, 150.

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Presidency. By bringing the problem of the refugees to the world's attention, he put the Eisenhower Administration "on the spot." In so doing the interest of the nation was also jeopardized.²²⁷

Senator Thomas Dodd felt that the invasion failed because the United States government had not sternly decided to settle for anything less than victory. He likewise claimed that the press aided Castro. He said the Communists could read American papers to find out where the soldiers were training, what type of equipment they had, and what the invasion plans were.²²⁸

Senator Joseph Clark believed the fatal mistake occurred when President Kennedy refused to use air support as in the Eisenhower plan. As Senator Hugh Scott said, the plan failed because President Kennedy not only refused to give United States air power, but also refused naval forces and American supplies.²²⁹

The bitter young Cuban refugees put most of the blame on the CIA. They believed that Communist double agents

²²⁷The Wall Street Journal, October 24, 1960, p. 12.

²²⁸U.S., Congressional Record, 87th Cong., 1st Sess. (1961), CV, No. 5, 6596.

²²⁹U.S., Congressional Record, 87th Cong., 1st Sess. (1961), CVII, No. 8, 10336.

infiltrated the circle of refugees that worked most closely with the CIA.²³⁰

According to the Cuban refugees, CIA men like Frank Bender "called all the signals." They picked the Cuban who was put in charge of the invasion and excluded other refugee forces that disagreed with the CIA's choice. Many trained officers such as Major Ricardo Lorie Valls, once Chief of Arms supply for Castro, and Major Pedro Diaz Lang, once chief of Castro's air force, were given no place in the invasion.²³¹

The plan itself grew too large for the CIA. Although this organization made most of the plans, there was much confusion on the part of everyone.²³²

The CIA's only objective was to return Cuba to Batista conditions which was characterized by economic dependency on the United States and American capital investments. Sixty percent of its economy was controlled by United States investors. This was one possible reason why the outside invasion headed by many ex-Batista men was used rather than Ray's extensive underground movement.²³³

²³⁰"Cuban Post-Mortem," op. cit., p. 54.

²³¹Ibid., p. 55.

²³²New York Times, August 1, 1961, p. 4.

²³³John Gerassi, The Great Fear in Latin America (New York: Collier Books, 1965), p. 279.

The CIA also estimated that an attack by 1,300 men would bring instant defeat of a Communist police state defended by 300,000 troops. On the merits of this estimate, the United States gave full approval for the operation.²³⁴

In order for a large country successfully to intervene in a small nation, it must take a large enough action to guarantee its absolute success. The Department of State published a pamphlet two weeks before the invasion that outlined the huge supply of Communist equipment going to Cuba. It also pointed out that Castro's military troops of 250,000 to 400,000 were second only to the United States in the Western Hemisphere. Such a document should have left no misconception of the dangers for a small scale invasion.²³⁵

It resembled an intricate offensive play in football drawn out on the chalkboard with little regard as to how the defensive team would react. The President became aware of the defensive team's resistance too late.²³⁶

If the President had been aware of the total and appalling truth in time, it now seems that he would have corrected some of the errors. One such flaw was that

²³⁴U.S., Congressional Record, 87th Cong., 2nd Sess., (1961), CVII, No. 12, A6321.

²³⁵John Plank (ed.), Cuba and the United States (Washington, D.C.: The Bookings Institute, 1967), p. 33.

²³⁶Theodore Sorensen, The Kennedy Legacy (New York: MacMillan Company, 1969), p. 182.

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virtually the entire invasionary force was committed to one place with the assumption that the Cubans would rise against Castro.²³⁷

Confusion seemed to be another serious problem. Aboard a ship off the coast of Cuba, for example, a rebel captain commanding a guerrilla force that was to go ashore in his native Oriente Province, unbelievably read sealed orders instructing him to land in a province he hardly knew. "He sailed away."²³⁸

It had been classified as bureaucracy at its worst. As in the case of Adlai Stevenson, it was a matter of the right hand not knowing what the left was doing. In order to have essential success, there must be close planning between political and military leaders. Neither of these departments were the chief organizers as they should have been. The Joint Chiefs of Staff failed to be dogmatic in the expression of their ideas. To aid secrecy, their viewpoints in the top meetings were given orally rather than in writing.²³⁹

On May 19, General Lemnitzer had to recount the fatal mistakes before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Senator Wayne Morse was the Subcommittee chairman. According

²³⁷U.S., Congressional Record, 87th Cong., 2nd Sess., (1961), CVII, No. 12, loc. cit.

²³⁸Ibid.

²³⁹New York Times, August 1, 1961, loc. cit.

to Lemnitzer, the invasion of Cuba with 1,400 men in one landing was finally approved by the CIA, not the military. He asserted that air support to prevent initial destruction of the invading forces was an integral part of the plan.²⁴⁰

Upon leaving the hearings on May 19, one committee member, Senator Albert Gore, was very angry. He asserted to newspapermen that the Joint Chiefs of Staff should be replaced.²⁴¹

Senator Wayne Morse questioned the legality of the Bay of Pigs invasion on the grounds that it violated United States codes forbidding foreign military recruitment.²⁴² According to the "Advise and Consent" clause of the Constitution, Senator Morse felt the Subcommittee on Latin American Affairs should have been informed by the State Department about the details of the April 17 invasion.²⁴³ He did admit, however, that General Lemnitzer gave the subcommittee a good review.²⁴⁴

²⁴⁰"In Cuban Invasion: The Fatal Mistakes," loc. cit.

²⁴¹Ibid.

²⁴²U.S., Congressional Record, 87th Cong., 1st Sess., (1961), CV, No. 5, 6580.

²⁴³U.S., Congressional Record, 87th Cong., 1st Sess., (1961), CVII, No. 6, 8028.

²⁴⁴"In Cuban Invasion: The Fatal Mistakes," loc. cit.

The Senators were informed by other high ranking military men that if the United States Marines, for example, had invaded Cuba, they would have had adequate air support. It was asserted that they would have had absolute guarantees of this or they would not carry out an operation with a strong chance of failure.²⁴⁵

In conclusion, this Bay of Pigs incident can be compared to a watered down invasion of Egypt during the Suez Crisis of 1956. Poorly managed as it was, the Suez invasion would have been successful if Eisenhower had not halted three allies--Britain, France, and Israel. The Cuban failure was self-inflicted.²⁴⁶

The invasion was well planned, but after many officials in Washington had changed the plan, it developed into a fiasco that would have embarrassed the Albanians. When Kennedy looked for the person at fault, he saw himself everywhere and nowhere. One official who had served under Kennedy and Eisenhower had this to say:

Cuba was a terrific jolt to this new crowd because it exposed the fact that they had not really begun to understand the meaning and consequences of action--the use or misuse of power, in other words.²⁴⁷

²⁴⁵Ibid.

²⁴⁶Murphy, op. cit., p. 96.

²⁴⁷Ibid.

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