

Secret War in Cuba: The Bay of Pigs Invasion, 1960-1961

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ABSTRACT

While the 1961 U.S. invasion of Cuba—dubbed the “Bay of Pigs Invasion”—has received much public scrutiny, academic scholarship on this topic has lagged. One of the obstacles to scholastic investigation derived from the classification of primary material, which remained unattainable to academia for decades. Consequently, first accounts on the Bay of Pigs Invasion initially emerged under a cloud of secrecy and with some confusion. In contrast, this essay principally relies on primary sources from the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), some declassified in 2016. The article argues that when sponsoring an indigenous resistance on the island proved unachievable, the CIA grew to favor an amphibious invasion made up of a proxy land force of Cuban exiles. This important historical case study in unconventional warfare, contrived and executed in an era of strategic competition, stands apart as a failure, but with applicable lessons in the modern era.

KEYWORDS

bay of pigs, Cuba, guerrilla warfare, covert action

Overview

In the early 1960s, the United States backed several Cuban resistance movements to oust the communist dictator, Fidel Castro. The culminating event of this support resulted in what is more commonly known as the Bay of Pigs Invasion. This historical case study stands apart as a disastrous failure due particularly to the poor strategic concept adopted by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). The CIA’s approach evolved into a conventional land force made up of Cuban exiles who would then attempt to reinsert themselves into Cuba via an amphibious invasion. When executed, Fidel Castro responded quickly in a matter of days with ten times the number of troops, killing and capturing the entire CIA-backed force. As a case study on U.S. support to resistance, this article addresses how and why the Secret War in Cuba developed and eventually failed. It principally utilizes declassified sources.

Background

The United States relationship with Cuba became inextricably linked following the Spanish-American War in the late nineteenth century. Cuba fought a third war for independence from

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Spain in 1895 to 1898. Watching its small neighbor fight European imperialism, the United States enthusiastically intervened in Cuba, commencing the Spanish-American War. A few months later, at the Treaty of Paris in 1898, Spain relinquished all rights to the territory.

After two years of military occupation, the U.S. Congress signed the Platt Amendment in 1901, which created an unequal treaty between the United States and Cuba. While the United States withdrew its Army garrison, the Platt Amendment allowed for U.S. dominance over Cuban policies and markets. Through the Platt Amendment and later treaties, the United States maintained its authority over Cuban sovereignty until 1934.

For sixty years, the Cuban economy became dominated by American companies, including those in the retail, banking, oil, food, and trade industries. Meanwhile, income generated for Cubans primarily was derived from tourism and sugar exports. A growing number of Cubans held animosity towards the United States as interfering with their sovereignty and dominating the economy. With the rise of Marxist ideology during the Cold War, Cuba grew ripe for revolution.

Fulgencio Batista

Fulgencio Batista came to power in 1933, dominating Cuban politics for two decades. He had previously served as Chief of Staff of the Cuban armed forces. Batista held two terms as president, from 1940-1944 and, after a successful coup d'état, from 1952-1958. Batista's primary external support came from the United States—the U.S. government, U.S. business, and the American mafia. In accordance with the Truman doctrine and a strategy to contain communism, the CIA assisted Batista in building a secret police force designed to eliminate communist movements. Batista reigned through fear and retribution and a number of resistance movements sought his overthrow. On New Year's Eve 1958, as his legitimacy plummeted, Fulgencio Batista fled the country and his government collapsed.¹

Fidel Castro

Fidel Castro was a lawyer and politician in Havana. He formed a group called “the Movement” in 1952, which published an underground newspaper called *El Acusador*. A revolutionary with socialist ideology, Castro, nevertheless, avoided an alliance with the growing communist party in Cuba—the Popular Socialist Party. The CIA and State Department feared Castro was communist and began investigating his ongoings from 1948 onward.²

On 26 July 1953, Castro, with his brother Raul and 150 armed comrades, attacked an army barracks in Santiago in an overtly iconic attempt to free political prisoners. Castro failed miserably. Half of his forces were killed during the fighting and most of the remaining were executed. Castro was publicly tried as a criminal, but due to domestic concerns and the popularity of what Castro had attempted, he only served two years in prison. Additionally, Castro's public trial only served to grow his popularity among dissidents. His followers became known as the 26 July Movement (or M-26-7).

Directly after his release from prison in 1955, Castro left Cuba and established a headquarters in Mexico.³ Three years later, he returned with eighty highly motivated supporters. Most of Castro's force did not survive initial contacts with Batista's army, but he then embarked on a guerrilla warfare campaign—attacking Batista's government at weak points, followed up with a highly successful media campaign. While his resistance only consisted of a small armed component, he simultaneously allied itself with vibrant undergrounds in urban centers. The declared aim of Castro and M-26-7 was put in simple terms—revolution—for which the many Cuban resistance groups could agree.

By the CIA's estimates, the majority of Cuban public opinion supported a revolution by 1957. Batista was no longer able to restore order to the mounting unrest. Opposition included rebels supporting the previous President Carlos Prío, Castro's guerrillas, domestic political opposition parties, workers' unions, and even some in Batista's military.⁴ By August, the capital in Havana was rife with public demonstrations, strikes, and publicized terrorist attacks.⁵ After only a short time in power, Batista had proven himself very unpopular with many segments of the population. By default, Castro absorbed widespread popularity through resistance to Batista. Castro also wielded two strong subordinates who proved themselves central to his revolution: one was his brother Raul; and the other was Ernesto Che Guevara, a Marxist revolutionary from Argentina.

Castro's revolution succeeded in 1959, triumphantly marching into Havana unopposed. Afterward, he consolidated his power and control as a dictator. One of Castro's immediate goals was the nationalization of foreign-owned businesses, principally those owned by persons in the United States. America responded with sanctions and denunciation of Castro's regime. Castro reciprocated by establishing diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union and Communist China. To America's alarm, the Soviet Union became an overt external sponsor to Cuba, both economically and militarily.

Diaspora

Once Castro consolidated power into a dictatorship, he immediately alienated many other revolutionaries, some of whom opposed communism and desired democracy and continued relations with the United States. Others wanted socialism and not a dictatorship. As summarized by one scholar, "a number of leaders who shared power with the 26th of July in Castro's early governments held democratic, liberal principles; many of them had fought dictatorship in Cuba even before Batista."⁶ In 1959 and 1960, Cuba realized a large exodus of dissidents. A diaspora comprising influential Cubans, of over 100,000 settled primarily in Miami, Florida.

Hundreds of political movements evolved within the diaspora, with divergent aims against the Castro regime. Their ambitions ranged from regaining privileges (like family estates) to complete regime change. Cuban exiles included right-wing supporters of Batista, as well as democratic enthusiasts who opposed both Castro and Batista. However, none of

the dissidents had enough charismatic leadership to unify resistance to Castro abroad, let alone at home.⁷

Although there were hundreds of groups, several primary ones emerged as important to the eventual invasion. These groups would tentatively unify under the Cuban Revolutionary Council.⁸

Cuban Revolutionary Council

The Cuban Revolutionary Council (or *Consejo Revolucionario de Cuba*) was formed in March of 1961, just three weeks before the invasion. Its formation was highly influenced by the desire of President John F. Kennedy to demonstrate united opposition to Castro. Consequently, this organization served as the organization to represent the confederation of the various resistance movements. Some of these movements were actually pro-Batista and sought to reinstate the Batista regime. José Miró Cardona, the former Prime Minister of Cuba, emerged as the central leader whom the groups could agree on supporting. While Cardona was marked as the provisional president following Castro's demise, the disparate groups actually had a number of other objectives, many incongruent with one another.

People's Revolutionary Movement

The People's Revolutionary Movement (or *Movimiento Revolucionario del Pueblo*) consisted of former 26 July Movement members who had thereafter become dissatisfied with Castro after he assumed power. It formed in May 1960 under the leadership of Manuel Ray, a former government Castro official and Minister of Public Works who disagreed with the increasing communist ideology of the Cuban government. Ray eventually joined the Cuban Revolutionary Council just prior to the invasion.

Democratic Revolutionary Front

The Democratic Revolutionary Front (or *Frente Revolucionario Democrático*) was a resistance led by Miro Cardona. This organization was initially headquartered in Mexico but eventually founded a chapter in New Orleans, Louisiana. It consisted of five major anti-Castro groups, and opposition to Castro may have comprised its singular identifying theme. U.S. statesman Charles Thayer would describe it as a "highly artificial organization without any genuine political solidarity and the tendency to fall apart at the slightest provocation."⁹ In October 1961, the Democratic Revolutionary Front finally merged with the Cuban Revolutionary Council.

Movement for Revolutionary Renewal

As Cuban resistance attempted to centralize, the Democratic Revolutionary Front aligned with the People's Revolutionary Movement and the two formed the Movement for Revolutionary Renewal (or *Movimiento De Recuperacion Revolucionaria*). The leader of the

Movement for Revolutionary Renewal was Manuel Francisco Artime, a former Castro supporter. As it received CIA sponsorship, the Movement for Revolutionary Renewal took on more of an armed component structure and would form the basis for Brigade 2506 which would invade Cuba.

Brigade 2506

Brigade 2506, sometimes referred to as the Cuban Brigade, as well as the Blindado Battalion, evolved into the armed component of resistance. Recruitment for the Cuban Brigade began in May of 1960 from anti-Castro organizations like the Democratic Revolutionary Front. It consisted of “students, workers, former Castro supporters, former Army personnel, professionals, the rich, the poor, and the middle class.”¹⁰ The number 2506 represented the secret identifier for Carlos Rafael Santana Estavez, a member who died in a training accident in Guatemala in September 1960.

At first, the CIA sent forty men from Brigade 2506 to train on a small island in the Caribbean. Initially, the training focused on guerrilla warfare. Then, in the summer of 1960, the CIA began airlifting Brigade members to training camps in Panama and eventually later to Guatemala. Training was supervised by American professionals, and the volunteers received excellent equipment.¹¹ By November 1960, the plan changed entirely from guerrilla warfare to a conventional invasion. This transformation may have occurred due to the large numbers of available Cubans recruited by the Brigade.¹² As the Brigade grew and formed, political leadership remained with Manuel Artime. Artime also led the Movement for Revolutionary Renewal organization. Military command fell to José Alfredo Pérez San Román, commonly referred to as Pepe.

Recruitment was overt. The Brigade made public statements about their undertakings, which, in hindsight, appear incongruent with the secrecy required for the upcoming invasion. On 6 February 1961, Artime held a news conference in his house in Miami. He stated that the United States was training Brigade 2506, made up of 1,400 to 1,500 members. He also confirmed that the U.S. Army, Navy, and Air Force were conducting the training in various locations within the United States.¹³ In short, it was no secret to Castro that the United States was planning an invasion.

Officers in Brigade 2506 consisted of about 375 personnel. Each received about 13 weeks of training, which initially included guerrilla warfare. Additionally, many of these officers already had guerrilla warfare experience from their fights against Batista. As time progressed, the CIA attempted to train Brigade 2506 to operate as a conventional force and “wean” the officers from their “marked inclination to guerilla operations.”¹⁴ Table 1 indicates the general organization of the Brigade prior to the invasion.¹⁵

Ground Forces (1,511 persons)		
Unit	Personnel	Weapons
Headquarters and Service Company	156	Rifles
Heavy Weapons Company	114	50 caliber MGs 81 mm mortars 4.2" mortars 75 mm recoilless rifles Flamethrowers 2.5-ton trucks
(5) Infantry Companies	175 each	30 caliber MGs 60 mm mortars 57mm recoilless rifles Browning Automatic rifles ¼ ton trucks
Airborne Infantry Company	177	Browning Automatic rifles Rifles
Tank Platoon	24	M41 Tanks
Boat Section	36	Unknown
Intelligence/Recon	68	Rifles
Air Forces		
15 x B-26 light bombers		
10 x C-54 transports		
5 x C-46 transports		
Sea Forces		
(2) Landing Craft Infantry		11 x 50 caliber MG each 2 x 75 mm rifles each
(3) Landing Craft Utility		2 x 50 caliber MG each
(4) Landing Craft, Vehicle, Personnel		50 caliber MG each
(7) Chartered commercial freighters		3 x 50 caliber MG each

Table 1. Brigade 2506 Ground, Sea, and Air Forces

The closer the invasion became, the more the CIA advocated for a conventional defeat of Castro in pitched battle. In the five months of training leading up to the operation

(between November 1960 and March 1961) conventional tactics became prioritized over everything else. The concept of operations included insertion by sea and air, constitution of a land force, and then a conventional fight to defeat Castro's army. By one CIA estimate, "at no time did the Brigade once organized receive training to fight as a guerrilla force."¹⁶ However, should the desired direct confrontation result in defeat, one secondary course of action included dispersion into the hills and countryside, including the Escambrays, Pinar del Rio, and the Oriente. Nevertheless, the CIA offered little-to-no training on the secondary option.

Unconventional Warfare

President Dwight Eisenhower's Anti-Castro Program started 17 March 1960 and was eventually codenamed JMATE.¹⁷ The principal U.S. agent supporting Cuban resistance remained the CIA. Due to Castro's very effective intelligence efforts, the CIA kept the operations close hold, leaving a number of important players out of the planning, including large segments of the Department of State and the Department of Defense, and even the American Embassy in Havana.¹⁸

The CIA's "Anti-Castro Program" had four main lines of effort:¹⁹

1. Create a unified opposition to the Castro regime within the Cuban diaspora.
2. Conduct psychological operations and mass propaganda waged on the loyalties of the indigenous Cuban population to create opposition to Castro.
3. Create resistance on the island who can work in concert with the resistance in the diaspora.
4. Form an armed component of resistance, a paramilitary force made up of members of the diaspora.

In order to fund its efforts, the CIA requested monies in 1960 and 1961 for five principal activities. It requested \$950,000 to support opposition elements in the Cuban diaspora; \$1,100,000 for radio broadcast operations directed against Castro; \$600,000 for publications and press; \$250,000 for intelligence collection; and finally, \$1,500,000 for maritime and air training and equipment to enable a paramilitary force.²⁰

The CIA established a network of U.S. bases and stations to support Brigade 2506 activities. It established a forward operating base in Miami, Florida, at Opa Locka Naval Air Station. The airfield served as a storage point for arms and equipment, as well as the port of embarkation for personnel flights to Central America. It also operated a field and facilities in the Florida Keys, due to their proximity to Cuba. Eglin Air Force Base in Florida supported logistics flights to Central America. Additionally, Vieques, Puerto Rico, provided the original training base for maritime activities.²¹

Support to Resistance

The CIA's initial plans for JMATE mirrored the Jedburgh program utilized in France during World War II. It contemplated the training of small units of two to three persons: (1) a communications expert, (2) a guerrilla warfare trainer/advisor, and (3) possibly a native Cuban from the diaspora. Such a plan, conceived as Jedburgh, should come as no surprise. The CIA agent in charge of training during this period was Gerry Droller (code name Frank Bender), a former member of the French resistance in World War II.²²

From September 1960 through April of 1961, the CIA began inserting agents into Cuba. Seventy personnel deployed in small teams, including nineteen radio operators. All but two of the radio operators succeeded in establishing communications following insertion.²³ However, in the following weeks and months, most were killed or captured.

Material support to resistance had uneven results. Air delivery of support was generally unsuccessful. As a result of poorly trained Cuban pilots, only four of twenty-seven missions achieved their objectives. In comparison, supply runs via sea fared better. Boats from Miami to Cuba delivered 40 tons of arms and equipment.²⁴

The most prominent resistance element by the CIA was identified as a 600 - 1,000-person force operating in the Escambray Mountains of Las Villas Province. However, the CIA never made direct radio contact with these guerrillas and could only relay information through underground organizations in Havana. Due to Castro's well-organized intelligence apparatus both in Cuba and Miami, the armed component in the Escambray Mountains never succeeded in gaining popular support and apparently lasted only for about six months.²⁵

The CIA supported a rather extensive sabotage campaign. Much of this was industrial disruption, including sugar cane fields, warehouses, refineries, railroads, and power stations. The targets were selected to disrupt Castro's support and cause confusion, but, by the CIA's own admission, they had no substantial direct impact on the regime.²⁶

Invasion by Proxy Forces

The real nail in the coffin in the CIA's support to resistance lay in a number of factors. Firstly, the CIA maintained little direct interaction with indigenous resistance—a situation that exacerbated Castro's effective counterintelligence efforts. And secondly, the failure of arial resupply made effective support to armed resistance elements impossible. With little perceived progress in support to indigenous resistance, the Jedburgh approach was generally shelved in favor of an amphibious assault of a proxy army. Planners began to fixate on counting the number of troops, tanks, vehicles, and seacraft required to establish a foothold on the island.²⁷ By November 1960, the plan gelled as a "conventional amphibious assault force of least 1,500 infantrymen."²⁸

In 1961, the CIA established a base of operations in Guatemala as a staging point for the invasion. It also utilized Puerto Cabezas in Nicaragua. Invading from Central America

would maintain the covert sponsorship of the United States. Brigade 2506 stood up its forces for the invasion from bases in Guatemala and Nicaragua from 25 March to 7 April.

Guatemala had officially severed relations with Castro. President Miguel Ydígoras Fuentes offered the CIA use of his nation for conducting psychological operations, establishing training areas, and operating a staging base. Ydígoras' government was quite unstable, and he desired U.S. support to shore up his domestic popularity. Castro may have been sponsoring resistance to Ydígoras at the time. For the President's support, he received a number of payouts in loans and aid, as well as arms and equipment. The CIA actually planned to use Brigade 2506 to back Ydígoras' regime, if needed, and did fly air sorties in support of the Guatemalan army during a revolt in late 1960.²⁹

The CIA chose an airstrip in Guatemala near the city of Retalhuleo for renovation so as to make it large enough to accommodate C-54 aircraft. By 30 September 1960, the U.S. engineers had extended the airstrip to 5,000 feet. The B-26 and C-46 aircraft utilized in JMATE were sold to the Guatemalans as a cover, with Guatemalans then returning these aircraft to Brigade 2506. As sub-components within the JMATE program, the ground training program was code-named JMTRAV, while airfield operations were code-named JMADD (these operational names also served as geographic designations).³⁰

Cuban ground forces in Brigade 2506 received some training by U.S. Army Special Forces. Initially, this occurred at Fort Randolph in the Panama Canal Zone. Training generally consisted of communications and sabotage. Later, in December 1960, the training moved to Guatemala, at which point twenty-one agents and five staff personnel had joined the JMATE project. At this point, the CIA requested 38 Special Forces personnel to assist in training requirements. The U.S. Army was concerned about the legal status of its Soldiers and desired Guatemala to sign a Status of Forces Agreement, which it eventually did. While CIA agents provided a large part of the paramilitary training, Special Forces also conducted training of the Brigade, but they also trained a "Guatemalan Battalion" to "deter the revolutionary activities against the Ydígoras Government."³¹

The CIA maintained considerable interest in roping in Guatemala as a regional sponsor of the Cuban resistance. It wanted both Guatemalan pilots, as well as soldiers, integrated within Brigade 2506. The CIA also desired recruitment of foreign mercenaries to supplement the Cuban ranks, including "Germans, Greeks, and Turks."³² The U.S. State Department vehemently opposed these ideas, and they never took root. In fact, the State Department opposed the invasion of Cuba throughout the planning, primarily based on the potentially negative repercussions to the U.S. reputation internationally.³³

Castro was well aware of the CIA activities in Guatemala. Castro likely had operatives within the diaspora, or at least was collecting intelligence from them. He requested support from the Organization of American States to inspect Guatemala and ensure it was not being used as a staging area for a future invasion. The Organization of American

States agreed but never found any evidence.³⁴ CIA concerns on maintaining secrecy around the future invasion likely hampered its ability to share information with many important U.S. partners.

The tentative diplomatic situation in Guatemala gave rise to the idea of also utilizing Nicaragua as a second staging area. The CIA negotiated with President Luis Somoza Debayle. Somoza was an unpopular dictator, so the CIA kept negotiations clandestine to maintain the U.S. image within the international community. Eventually, in late 1960, Somoza agreed to the use of the airport at Puerto Cabezas. Additionally, he allowed Brigade 2506 airplanes to use Nicaraguan Air Force insignias to mask their origin. CIA operations in Nicaragua became known as JMTIDE, (indicating both the operational designation as well as the geographic location).

The Invasion

In early 1961, the CIA briefed the newly inaugurated President John F. Kennedy on JMATE and the upcoming Cuban invasion. To establish air and maritime control, the U.S. Navy had been tasked to deploy a large amphibious force near Cuba under the guise of a training exercise. In reality, this armada was forward postured to support Brigade 2506. The CIA envisioned the U.S. amphibious component as directly supporting the invasion, with direct use of military capabilities, if required.

While Kennedy gave the go ahead to proceed with JMATE, he subsequently grew increasingly concerned about the ability of the United States to maintain a covert status. The upcoming invasion increasingly relied on U.S. military support, both in terms of air strikes, as well as resupply. As Kennedy's concern over international implications grew, he would become increasingly reluctant to offer direct U.S. support, even the support the CIA had planned. The following map portrays the region and operational situations regarding the invasion.³⁵

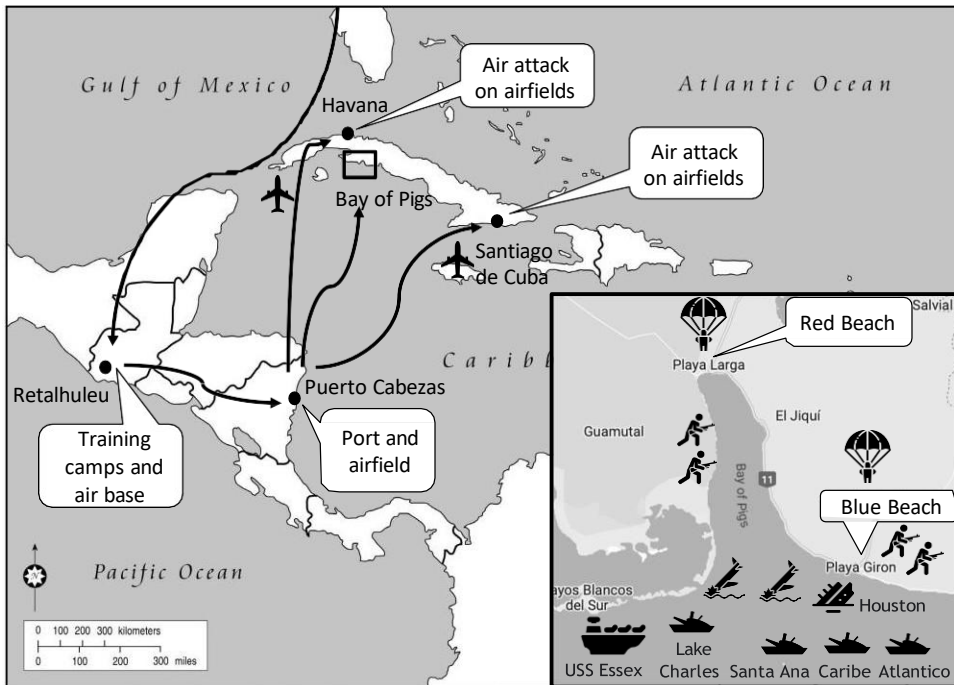


Figure 1. Map of Brigade 2506's Invasion of Cuba at the Bay of Pigs, 15-20 April 1961 (closeup of the Bay of Pigs map data from Google, @2023 INEGI)

On 15 April 1961, the invasion began with Cuban pilots flying air strikes flown in CIA procured planes. These departed from Puro Cabazas Nicaragua. Eight aircraft (half of the 16 originally planned for but scrubbed by Kennedy) left from Puerto Cabezas to drop bombs on airfields in Cuba at Santiago and Ciudad Libertad. These air strikes damaged a number of Cuban planes, but not enough to impede Castro's air force from gaining air supremacy during the invasion.

On 17 April, Brigade 2506 launched four battalions in amphibious assaults on Red Beach and Blue Beach (Red Beach was Playa Larga, and Blue Beach was Playa Giron). Simultaneously, a fifth battalion of paratroopers seized key terrain at Jocuma and San Miguel do Pita. Once Brigade 2506 established the beachhead and the airfield was secured, its forward momentum stalled, and it established a defensive posture. Accounts differ but Brigade 2506 insists that the CIA told them to halt and wait for U.S. air and naval support.

For certain, the United States had promised resupply of the Brigade via air and clandestine maritime aircraft. These did not arrive. While the aircraft carrier USS *Essex* and accompanying task force had deployed to support the invasion force with tactical air support, President John F. Kennedy decided not to utilize overt U.S. military force, and the USS *Essex*, as well as other aircraft in the United States, were told to stand down. With no air cover, two

support ships—the *Houston* and the *Rio Escondido*—were sunk by Cuban planes. Castro maintained air supremacy over the invasion area, as well as artillery fires for which Brigade 2506 had no response. Meanwhile, the Brigade increasingly ran short on ammunition, a situation that exacerbated in the following days.

In a short three days, Castro had mobilized thousands of soldiers in an aggressive counterattack, a force which included members of his Cuban Revolutionary Army Forces, as well as the National Revolutionary Militia. In the preceding years, the Soviet Union had poured 40,000 tons of military equipment into Castro's regime, which he used to organize his army, as well as militia forces.³⁶ Total strength of the attacking forces was overwhelming, including men, tanks, bombers, jets, and artillery. Running short on ammunition and with no U.S. support forthcoming, Brigade 2506 surrendered on 20 April. Casualties included 118 killed, 360 wounded, and 1,202 captured.

Of the captured personnel, a number were executed. For the majority, Castro put on trial 1,189 soldiers from Brigade 2506 and sentenced them to imprisonment for 30 years. Twenty months later, the United States paid \$53 million in food and medicine for their release and return to Florida.³⁷

Aftermath

David had defeated Goliath. The botched invasion of Cuba provided Castro more popular support at home and abroad than ever. The invasion also ensured Castro's cooperation with the Soviet Union and precipitated the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962. Many of the members of the Cuban Brigade blamed the United States for the disaster: no air support came, no resupply occurred, and no promised reinforcements arrived. Additionally, some of the U.S.-provided equipment failed to work properly, including the landing boats and tanks.³⁸ The CIA became especially critical of the Kennedy administration in not providing air cover to the Brigade. As summarized by case officer E. Howard Hunt, the Cuban exiles "were betrayed by America."³⁹

The blame placed on President Kennedy remains misplaced. He inherited a plan with many shortcomings. Castro successfully carried out a popular revolution in Cuba. Ousting Castro would require a similar grassroots effort. Castro's dictatorship alienated many Cubans, and the opportunity certainly existed for a counterrevolution.⁴⁰ However, the title "Bay of Pigs Invasion" implies everything that was wrong with this operation. "*Bahia de Cochinos*" indicates a geographic reference, and the term "invasion" entails a conventional military maneuver. Successful resistance has little to do with either geographic terrain or military maneuver. Instead, resistance competes over human terrain instead of geography; and the population, not armies, remains the center of gravity.

The United States failed to develop support to indigenous resistance in Cuba. Instead, it defaulted to its own proclivity for conventional warfare. By the time Brigade 2506 arrived

in Cuba, it no longer resembled the organization needed to inspire a Cuban uprising. Armed Cuban exiles had become a U.S. surrogate force, rather than an indigenous resistance.

The CIA had grossly underestimated Castro's army and militia, including their strength, capabilities, and morale. It conducted little psychological operations on the population to influence their loyalties. In fact, the CIA appears to have had little access, knowledge, or placement within the Cuban population. Consequently, optimistic assessments that the Cubans would rise up to oppose Castro following the invasion did not have any basis in evidence. An additional criticism of the CIA, which has merit, is that the Agency could not handle an operation of this size and magnitude and simply became overwhelmed by events.⁴¹

Endnotes

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- ¹⁵ Information in this table drawn from Hawkins, 25-26. I've made some assumptions about which weapons Brigade 2506 assigned to individual companies.
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- ¹⁷ Jack B. Pfeiffer, *Official History of the Bay of Pigs Operations: Volume II, Participation in the Conduct of Foreign Policy*, (Central Intelligence Agency, 1979), footnote on page 4.
- ¹⁸ Dunne, Perfect Failure, 453.
- ¹⁹ Jack B. Pfeiffer, *Official History of the Bay of Pigs Operations: Volume I, Air Operations, March 1960 – April 1961*, (Central Intelligence Agency, 1979), 408-410.

- ²⁰ Pfeiffer, *Official History of the Bay of Pigs Operations: Volume I*, 417.
- ²¹ Hawkins, *Record of Paramilitary Action*, 2-4.
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- ²³ Hawkins, *Record of Paramilitary Action*, 7-9.
- ²⁴ Hawkins, *Record of Paramilitary Action*.
- ²⁵ Hawkins, *Record of Paramilitary Action*.
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- ²⁷ Pfeiffer, *The Official History of the Bay of Pigs Invasion: Volume III*, 143-144.
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- ²⁹ Pfeiffer, *Official History of the Bay of Pigs Operations: Volume II*, 35-38.
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- ³⁵ Map created by author. Map created by author. Base map of the Caribbean found at <http://alabamamaps.ua.edu>. Closer map of the Bay of Pigs from <https://www.google.com/maps>. For similar maps, see Norman Friedman, "Debacle at Bahía de Cochinos," *Naval History Magazine*, April 2021. Also see Maria C. Werlau, "The Bay of Pigs – 50 Years Later," *SFPPR News and Analysis*, 20 July 2011. Graphic from Werlau originates from the *Miami Herald*.
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- ³⁷ Johnson, *The Bay of Pigs: The Leaders' Story of Brigade 2506*, 11-13.
- ³⁸ "The Real Story of the Bay of Pigs," *U.S. News and World Report*, 7 July 1963. Accessed from CIA archives.
- ³⁹ Matthew C. Quinn, "Fiasco of 1961 Regretted by New, Young President," *Washington Times*, 17 April 1986.
- ⁴⁰ Thayer, *Guerilla*, 15-16. Also see Chesly Manly, "Donovan Acts as Plan Fails at Bay of Pigs," *Chicago Tribune*, 11 January 1966.
- ⁴¹ Lyman Kirkpatrick, "The CIA Could Not Adequately Handle the Bay of Pigs Operation," found in Haynes Johnson, *The Bay of Pigs: The Leaders' Story of Brigade 2506*, (Greenhaven Press, 2004), 71-74.