

Chapter 1 PLANS, A BATTLE . . . AND FAILURE



Mr. President, I know you're doubtful about this, but I stood at this very desk and said to President Eisenhower about a similar operation in Guatemala, 'I believe it will work.' And I say to you now, Mr. President, that the prospects for this plan are even better than our prospects were in Guatemala.

— Allen Dulles to
President Kennedy¹

In January 1961, President Kennedy and his advisers began to review plans developed by the Eisenhower administration for the military overthrow of Cuban Premier Fidel Castro. In April, Kennedy approved an invasion by 1,200 Cuban expatriates.² It failed. With hindsight, a member of the administration described it as “the most screwed up operation there has ever been.”³ Next, Kennedy ordered Operation MONGOOSE, until that time the largest covert operation undertaken by the CIA. That failed, too.

This chapter describes the main events of the Bay of Pigs through the beachhead collapse. It reviews, as part of that description, the Guatemala success (in 1954) which shaped the plans, and it reviews the CIA's contract with the Mafia to assassinate Castro at the time of the invasion.⁴

BACKGROUND

In 1959 the international arena, in American popular and elite conception, was the scene of a cold war: America and its allies were opposed by the forces of the Sino-Soviet bloc. After Castro overthrew the Cuban dictator, Batista, he began, in the eyes of American policymakers, to grow increasingly anti-American and pro-Communist, spurning efforts by Washington to establish good relations.

This official viewpoint is described in a background memorandum provided by the State Department:

When the Castro regime came to power in 1959, the United States looked upon it with sympathy, recognized it almost immediately, and welcomed its promises of political freedom and social justice for the Cuban people. We made clear our willingness to discuss Cuba's economic needs. Despite our concern at the Cuban regime's mounting hostility toward the United States and its growing communist

tendencies, we attempted patiently and consistently from early 1959 until mid-1960 to negotiate differences with the regime.

Elements in the Castro movement engaged in anti-American activities during the revolution against Batista. Soon after it came to power in 1959, the Castro government turned away from its previous promises, permitted communist influence to grow, attacked and persecuted its own supporters in Cuba who expressed opposition to communism, arbitrarily seized U.S. properties, and made a series of baseless charges against the United States. It ignored, rejected or imposed impossible conditions on repeated United States overtures to cooperate and negotiate. In 1960 Cuba established close political, economic, and military relationships with the Sino-Soviet bloc, while increasing the pace and vehemence of measures and attacks against the United States. We did not take measures in our own behalf to isolate Cuba until July 1960.⁵

To American policymakers, Castro, whom many had originally hoped was only a socialist and a nationalist, exhibited his true colors as a Communist revolutionary established in the Western Hemisphere, ninety miles from American shores. He threatened to spread Communist revolution in Central and South America and challenged traditionally claimed (Monroe Doctrine) American hegemony by allying himself with the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union and other Communist nations had agreed to buy Cuban sugar and to supply Cuba with foreign aid and arms.

This evolution did not mean that the American government would attempt, automatically, to overthrow Castro by military force. People who believed that Castro had become an urgent problem that needed a solution, and who had a solution in mind, set out to sell both ideas. The CIA promoted Castro as a serious threat, defined the objective to be his elimination, and proposed the solution (a covert operation directed by themselves).

The key mover at the CIA was its deputy director for plans (the CIA's designation for espionage and clandestine operations), Richard Bissell. In a phrase later coined to describe some of the men in the Kennedy administration, he was an "action intellectual." A former member of the economics faculty at M.I.T. and Yale, he was an unusually gifted man, equally admired for analytical brilliance, his articulate mastery of material, and his ability to get things done. Within "the agency" (as the CIA called itself), he was considered likely to become the next director. He had developed the U-2 spy plane, one of the CIA's major contributions to improved intelligence about the Soviet nuclear threat. He did it in absolute secrecy and in two years (the air force, which had campaigned for the assignment, estimated it would take seven years). He came to government service from an elite background: independent wealth, Groton, Yale. He did not need to be cautious, and he was not there to push papers. He had an abiding intention to use human intelligence to understand the world and to shape history. He had gained experience with this type of work as an outstanding administrator and planner with the Marshall Plan, reconstructing the economies of Europe. He had the

sense of mastery to take responsibility for the evolution of Latin America. And he had the intellectual ability and nervous energy to welcome such a challenge: he was constantly pacing, fidgeting with paper clips, moving quickly, flipping through briefing memos at high speed, taking in and recalling it all.⁶

The director of the Central Intelligence Agency was Allen Dulles, another holdover appointment from the Eisenhower administration, where his relationship with his older brother, John Foster Dulles, the secretary of state, had helped to give the CIA and its covert operations a major role in American foreign policy. He had achieved a distinguished record in espionage and counterintelligence during World War II, and he was widely regarded as America's foremost intelligence expert. He loved the details of spying, "tradecraft" as it is known, and would spend major portions of his time reviewing the minute details of the various activities of his individual spies. A quiet man, a pipe smoker, he relished the impression of mystery and of knowing more than he would reveal. Two of the CIA's great successes during his tenure were the overthrow of the Mossadegh government of Iran (replacing him with the Shah of Iran) and the overthrow, in 1954, of the left-leaning government in Guatemala. People in Washington knew Allen Dulles had masterminded both overthrows, but they did not know how these feats were accomplished. The mystique of the CIA's magical power to accomplish such things was one he nurtured. He was not known as a good administrator, nor did he consider this his metier.⁷

Dulles met with President Eisenhower in March 1960 to review CIA-developed options for covert operations against Castro. He was seeking guidance and an official mandate for planning. He presented Eisenhower with a few ideas for minor sabotage which Eisenhower realized, as Dulles knew he would, gave no chance to be more than minor harassment. Eisenhower responded that if Dulles were serious about overthrowing Castro, the CIA should come back with a "program." Thus the instruction to begin became a presidential instruction. This maneuver to induce Eisenhower to initiate the instruction he wanted was not malicious: it was a small, polished detail of the tradecraft of managing presidents, a skill that senior civil servants learn well.⁸

With this mandate, the CIA drafted a four-part proposal to (a) create a Cuban government in exile; (b) mount a propaganda campaign against Castro from secret, covertly funded, transmitters; (c) build covert intelligence and "action capability" networks on the island; and (d) develop a paramilitary force for future guerrilla action. Eisenhower approved the proposal on March 17, 1960.

But the president's attitude was casual, even unenthusiastic. He did not consider Castro a major threat. He was willing for the CIA to develop plans and then to have a look at them.⁹

Vice-President Richard Nixon, who had announced he would run for the presidency, took a strong personal interest in the project and urged Eisen-

hower to eliminate Castro before election day.¹⁰ Nixon judged rightly the role Castro would play in American politics. The need for greater toughness against Communism did become a major issue in that election: Kennedy, now remembered for initiatives to reduce the dangers of the cold war and increase selective cooperation with the Soviet Union, in fact was a hard-liner in the campaign. He charged the Eisenhower administration had allowed a "missile gap" to develop in the Soviet Union's favor. And he criticized it for allowing a Communist government to come to power in Cuba. Prior to his last televised debate with Nixon, and unaware of the Eisenhower administration's planning, Kennedy's aides issued a statement to toughen his challenge, calling for "strengthening anti-Castro forces in exile . . . who offer eventual hope of overthrowing Castro."¹¹ Kennedy's aides later claimed he had gone to bed before the statement was discussed with him. It made Nixon furious as he thought Kennedy had been briefed on the CIA plans. (His charge of duplicity, in his *Six Crises*, prompted the rebuttal from the Kennedy White House.) He was unable to breach intelligence to reveal what the Republican administration had been doing and defend himself, and he felt forced to oppose military intervention in their televised debate. The exact phrasing used by a Kennedy aide (Richard Goodwin) may have gone further than the candidate would have gone. But the tone of the campaign, and the statement, exemplified a truth of American politics that Kennedy carried with him in later discussions of whether to abort the invasion: in America, a politician had a good campaign issue if he charged insufficient toughness against Communism by an incumbent administration.¹²

The CIA's plans had grown by the time Allen Dulles and Richard Bissell briefed President-elect Kennedy on November 18, 1960.¹³ After the go-ahead from Eisenhower they had tried a great many things. These were not working. Underground networks established by the Cubans were almost always penetrated by Castro.¹⁴ Arms drops were frequently intercepted. As Richard Bissell later described their problem: "I think that every team we sent in was picked up within a few days. . . . [The political exiles in Miami] all claimed large and organized followings on the island. Well, they may have had vague sympathizers on the island, but they had no way of communicating with them securely, no command and control over them, and therefore there were no internal underground cells to which we could send supplies, or with which we could establish communication. It was a mess."¹⁵

The CIA's covert operations and supplies, together with those provided by private right-wing American groups, might produce several bombings a week in Cuba, but there was no obvious effect save the rate of executions of the traitors and terrorists Castro's police captured. The Castro regime, if anything, seemed able to survive. And Castro's influence appeared to grow: by July 1960, American embassies throughout Latin America were reporting that Castro was exciting interest in revolutionary approaches. The Eisenhower ad-

ministration countered by beginning (in September 1960 at Bogota, Columbia) a modest program for economic development and social change, funded at \$500 million.¹⁶

With Castro to receive increased arms shipments from the Soviet bloc, including MIG jets, an initiative to overthrow him by a covert operation now appeared to require expanded capability, and this needed to be available quickly. Thus, during the administration transition period, primarily at Bissell's direction, the plan grew, without formal authorization, to envision a concerted military effort. Dulles and Bissell told the president-elect what they were doing. He expressed willingness for them to continue, and even enthusiasm, but he was also unwilling to commit himself until he took office in January.¹⁷

During a transition meeting on January 19, 1961, Eisenhower spoke favorably to Kennedy about the Cuba project: America had a "responsibility" to "bring it to a successful conclusion." The endorsement was ambiguous but probably contributed to a favorable framework for its initial evaluation. Eisenhower was America's most respected military leader: his judgment on a military matter would carry weight.¹⁸

The first CIA plan, the Trinidad plan, was presented in outline on January 28, 1961; it called for landing 1,200 troops at the town of Trinidad on the southeast coast of Cuba, a dramatic "shock" invasion in daylight. The Trinidad area was thought to include a large number of disaffected people who would join the invaders to create an impression of momentum.¹⁹ Moreover, the site was near the Escambray Mountains, a natural fallback for guerrilla operations if the assault began to fail. (The Escambray Mountains previously had been used as a base by Castro in his guerrilla war against Batista. In 1960 the mountains were the location of anti-Castro guerrillas being supplied by CIA airdrops.)²⁰

The Guatemala Model

To understand the rationale of the Trinidad plan, it is necessary to review the overthrow of Jacobo Arbenz, the president of Guatemala, designed by the CIA in 1954. The CIA intended to repeat this earlier operation, an explicit case of learning from experience: Dulles and Bissell sought to transfer a past success, to draw on their understanding of a low-cost method to topple a Latin American government. Semiofficial historians of Kennedy's decision (Schlesinger, Sorenson) later portrayed the Bay of Pigs as an operation that should never have been approved. They understated the CIA's case. It had sophistication, and a track record that did not depend on battlefield victory or on a spontaneous mass uprising, which the White House hoped to ignite.

To overthrow the democratically elected Arbenz government, the CIA

approached several expatriates to consider which to install in his place. It finally struck a deal to support Lt. Col. Carlos Castillo Armas, a former Guatemalan soldier who had been sentenced to death for an unsuccessful coup attempted in late 1950, had escaped from prison, and fled to neighboring Honduras. At the same time, a new American ambassador with experience in anti-Communist work in Greece, John Peurifoy, was dispatched to Guatemala to plan and coordinate covert operations within the country.²¹

The plan was to conduct psychological and political warfare. Secretary of State Dulles and the State Department orchestrated a major propaganda campaign against the Arbenz regime, initiated an Organization of American States resolution opposing Communist influence in the hemisphere, dramatized a shipment of arms purchased by Arbenz from Communist-bloc sources, and signed defense treaties with the governments of Nicaragua and Honduras.²² By the time the invasion occurred, the Arbenz government and all of Latin America were intended to understand that the power of the United States was committed — although in unknown ways — and to believe the fate of the Arbenz government to be sealed. Preparation also included secret radio transmitters, run by the CIA and broadcasting across the border, carrying fictitious messages to a (nonexistent) large underground. The transmissions were clearly audible throughout Guatemala and were designed to play on the nerves and morale of Arbenz and his key supporters. They did panic the government (which learned of the invasion preparations in Nicaragua as early as January 1954) into mass arrests, torture, and murder of suspected collaborators in the urban middle class, further alienating supporters. (The McCarthy period in the United States, when there was no realistic danger of invasion, provides a basis for grasping the fear the CIA began to generate within the Guatemalan government and among its supporters.)²³

Technological tricks of psychological warfare were designed to create the impression that a small invasion force was large and ominous. Several bombers, P-47 fighters, and C-47 transports were assembled, and 150 troops trained, in Nicaragua. The small Castillo Armas "army" crossed the border on June 19, 1954 and stopped a few miles inside the country to wait for the government to collapse. Several small bombing raids were directed against Guatemala City targets (e.g., army barracks), and there were leaflet drops over the capital. The propaganda radio stepped up its messages and the CIA adroitly engaged its technological weapons, selectively jammed the communications of the Guatemalan army and fed false orders and reports of a larger invasion over its radio network. Thus, believing his country under major attack, Arbenz found himself unable to learn what was happening or even to control his own troops. The army was not eager to fight, especially faced with the possibility such resistance would only bring invasion by American troops. The early air strikes were taken to be a token of what might follow. Defeat was considered inevitable. With the army in disarray, except for desultory

shooting, there was little combat. The main clash, the "Battle of Chiquimula," left a total of seventeen dead on both sides.²⁴

Luck was also on the CIA's side. A Guatemalan pilot defected. He refused to broadcast an appeal to his fellow pilots, out of fear of reprisals against his family. But the CIA operatives showed initiative, got him drunk, and persuaded him to talk about what he would say if he felt free to make an appeal. Secretly, they tape-recorded him, then spliced the tape and broadcast it. Arbenz, fearing more defections, grounded the remainder of his air force.²⁵

Within eight days the army top command forced Arbenz to resign. The head of a new three-man government, Colonel Diaz, vowed to continue the fight and thus was not satisfactory to the United States. In two days, after the CIA dropped two bombs on the main military barracks and destroyed the government radio station, a meeting with Ambassador Peurifoy produced a more acceptable and staunchly anti-Communist head of government, Col. Elfezo Monzon. The ambassador personally negotiated the paperwork of the formal transition to Castillo Armas at a meeting in San Salvador, and Castillo Armas arrived at the capital aboard the ambassador's private plane.²⁶

The CIA strategy was to produce a victory by psychological demoralization and political destabilization, not by a military defeat. Faced by an apparently massive invasion, the dimensions of which it could not evaluate, and which was backed by an ominous association with the power of the United States, the Arbenz government — as Richard Bissell interpreted it — "lost its nerve."²⁷ Scared and demoralized, key elite supporters abandoned Arbenz rather than die for his hopeless cause. American embassy contacts with the military aided the plan, both in the transfer of power and in encouraging them to block a last-ditch Arbenz plan to distribute arms to proregime peasants.

Leaving aside the issue of whether historians will eventually conclude this to be an accurate appraisal of why the CIA won in Guatemala, what is crucial here is that it is what the CIA *thought* happened.²⁸

To use this same plan against Cuba did not depend upon history learned secondhand from documents. It was personal knowledge. Allen Dulles was CIA director throughout this period. In 1954 his special assistant was Richard Bissell, later chief Bay of Pigs planner. Frank Wisner, deputy director for Plans in 1954 (the operational head for Guatemala) had resigned in 1958, but his assistant, beginning in April 1954, was Tracy Barnes, who was to be special assistant to Richard Bissell during the Bay of Pigs. The deputy director of the CIA at the Bay of Pigs, General Charles P. Cabell, held the same position during Guatemala. The propaganda operation was run by the same man (David Phillips). E. Howard Hunt (later of Watergate repute) was chief of political action for Guatemala and served in the same capacity for most of the Bay of Pigs operation. The CIA station chief in Guatemala City ("Jake Engler") was Hunt's superior during the Bay of Pigs. In 1960 and 1961 the old team, enthusiastic to repeat its earlier success, went into action again. The

speed with which they mounted their new operation reflected this unique and superb institutional memory.

From the Guatemala success several lessons carried forward—in addition to knowledge that this bold and clever plan could work. Each, while not a dramatic lesson, nevertheless confirmed understandings that were to continue in 1961 planning, although to mixed effect.

1. American activity violated several formal treaty commitments made in earlier decades by the United States.²⁹ But it was apparent that few Americans would be upset by overthrow of a pro-Communist government, whatever international laws proscribed.

2. The operation remained “plausibly deniable.” No journalist published hard evidence that the CIA was involved. Alert journalists suspected this was more than a patriotic action by the Guatemalans themselves, but they made little effort to prove it, or at least little headway. Eisenhower’s official denial was accepted. Such press loyalty did not continue in 1961.

3. Both the United Nations and the Organization of American States proved ineffectual instruments of collective security to safeguard Guatemala’s national boundaries against foreign aggression. No one, of course, believed such organizations would be effective, but the United States maneuvered to assure the impotence of the guarantees of international charters and to keep even official inquiries from being launched.³⁰ And the Soviet Union sent no aid and engaged in no reprisals. In Latin America, the United States was reassured that it could overthrow Communist (or potentially Communist) governments without third parties coming to the aid of the target country.

4. When several of the invader aircraft were disabled or shot down, CIA Director Allen Dulles—as we have seen—gained ready assent from President Eisenhower for emergency resupply from American stores, despite State Department objections.³¹ Although it did not in itself determine these same planners’ expectations of Kennedy, the experience did not contradict general knowledge that a politician, once committed, might change earlier restrictive guidelines rather than allow such an operation to fail.

5. Eisenhower, and other politicians, learned that covert operations were a useful method for cold war interventions in underdeveloped countries. After the Guatemala success, the role of CIA covert activities in American foreign policy expanded.

Another event after 1954 probably favored use of the Guatemala model and worked against direct introduction of American troops. In the 1950s, Americans prided themselves on their idealism and on their moral superiority to crass power politics, specifically, moral superiority to the Soviet Union. A Soviet invasion of Hungary in 1956, ostensibly in support of liberation, and the creation of a “puppet government” were widely reported: photographs showing Soviet tanks rolling into Budapest and the shooting of nationalist freedom fighters brought outrage in the American press. Privately, Kennedy

and his advisers probably favored the Guatemala model as a device to deal with Castro that would avoid charges (and a self-image) of cynically undertaking Hungarian-type suppression with American troops.³²

Offstage: The CIA Plan to Assassinate Castro

At this point another chain of events, offstage and then unknown to almost everyone, needs to be described. The CIA’s plan was that Fidel Castro, and perhaps also his brother Raoul, and Ché Guevara (Castro’s military chief), be killed prior to D-Day. Using the Guatemala model alone, Allen Dulles and Richard Bissell felt America had a good chance of success. But with the Cuban government so personalized, and power so dependent on the charisma of one man, they thought they would virtually guarantee the success of the ex-patriates, with minimal loss of life on both sides, if they effected an assassination prior to the troop landings.³³

Work on Castro’s personal elimination, by nonviolent or violent means, began in December 1959 with what Allen Dulles believed was clear authorization from Eisenhower. Various schemes were invented, for example to spray Castro’s broadcast studios with an LSD-like substance and to treat a box of cigars with a similar compound so he would appear publicly disoriented and erratic. Another plan was to dust his shoes with thallium salts to cause his beard to mysteriously fall out and produce heightened mental instability. (I return to this element in their calculations—their psychological assessment of Castro—later.) But these ideas were recognized as more clever than likely to be effective. A box of Castro’s favorite cigars was treated with botulism toxin, although it was not delivered successfully.³⁴

Planning to use a hit-man or team of hit-men, contract killers, began in July 1960. By August, Richard Bissell was using intermediaries to negotiate a contract with the Mafia.³⁵

The Mafia contract was negotiated through Robert Maheu, a former FBI agent whose private investigation firm included among its clients the reclusive multimillionaire Howard Hughes. Maheu contacted John Rosselli. Rosselli had started out in Chicago under the mobster Al Capone: While not a Mafia chief in his own right, he was the syndicate’s top man in Las Vegas.

Rosselli put the CIA in contact with Momo Salvatore (“Sam”) Giancana, the Mafia chief in Chicago, and with Santos Trafficante, Mafia chief in Florida and former syndicate chief in Havana (under Batista). They agreed to help, but the motives involved were undoubtedly more complicated than patriotism or money (\$150,000 was a figure discussed).³⁶

Schlesinger has speculated that Trafficante decided to be a double agent; the plans never bore fruit, he suggests, because the Mafia chief struck a deal with Castro to use Cuba for drug smuggling to the United States, earning Castro hard foreign exchange, and the Mafia a substantial profit.³⁷ By this

scenario, Trafficante ostensibly went along with the CIA but was obtaining the best of both worlds. He achieved (he thought) a "hold" over the United States government to ward off future prosecution, plus the smuggling profits. And the longer he tried and failed, the longer the situation worked to his benefit.

It is likely that others in the Mafia had other reasons for their involvement. Schlesinger, uncommonly ingenuous, speaks only of their "grudge" at losing \$100 million or more per year because Castro threw them out and closed the brothels and casinos.³⁸ Obviously, there was not only a "grudge"; they wanted to return to business as usual. Doubtless no government official favored returning the mob to power, or would have made promises to that effect. But it would have been clear that such hopes of the syndicate were part of the context of the discussion.

The Mafia finally informed the CIA that recruiting a human assassin for a gangland slaying was too difficult. Castro's security was tight, and it would be a suicide mission. They requested poison pills, and these were used in two serious attempts to kill Castro prior to the invasion, one in March 1961, the other in April, just before the scheduled D-Day.³⁹

Did the president himself know at the time he approved the invasion that the plan included assassination? The CIA says that he did. From everything known about Richard Bissell—and he was widely regarded as an honest man, a gentleman, and a highly professional civil servant—it seems certain he believed he had presidential approval for the assassination. He surmised that it was given in very private, and possibly circumlocutory, discussion between Allen Dulles and the presidents involved.⁴⁰ Dulles, of course, was deceased by the time congressional inquiries opened in the mid-1970s, as were the two presidents. There were no written records of such conversations, but it would be standard tradecraft not to put such things into writing, and from this fact no inference can be drawn.

Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., presents the best brief for Jack Kennedy and his brother Robert, arguing that assassination approval was a misunderstanding, one of those odd mix-ups.⁴¹ Everyone would know, Schlesinger says, that a "king can do no wrong" code ("plausible deniability" is the standard term) should govern any discussions. The president always needed deniability and so he could not utter the exact words of approval himself: magically, by this theory, he was not exactly "tied" to what would follow if he communicated what he wanted without saying it in so many words. Knowing the code, no one—as Richard Bissell put it—would "embarrass" a president by asking him directly, thereby compromising him if he said yes.⁴² A president and his CIA chief (who, it was understood, would take the rap) could also then testify, under oath if necessary, that there had been no formal approval for such an operation.

By Schlesinger's theory, Allen Dulles played a too-subtle verbal game with

the president when they met in private and misunderstood his response. There is no manual for new presidents indicating that when a CIA director says, for example, that he is also discussing alternative ways to "eliminate" Castro by providing financial support to private groups who have that similar purpose (or whatever euphemism might be used), alarm bells should ring in the president's head and he should anticipate that assassination plans will shift into high gear unless he, at that moment, is alert enough to grasp what has just gone past him.

A second route by which President Kennedy may have known of assassination plans was established when Frank Sinatra introduced then-Senator Kennedy to a buxom young woman, Judith Campbell, at a party. It has since come to light that Kennedy started an affair with her that continued while he was in the White House.⁴³ White House logs show more than seventy telephone calls between them from January 1961 through March 22, 1962, when Kennedy stopped the affair after a private meeting requested by FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover.⁴⁴ What was on Hoover's mind was a Mafia connection: Judith Campbell (later Judith Exner) was also the mistress of Sam Giancana, who was sharing her with the president, and may in fact have been using her to have something on the president in case he had trouble with the law. Whether Kennedy knew of assassination plans through this channel is not established.⁴⁵

Another piece of evidence that President Kennedy knew of the assassination plan is that Robert Kennedy later saw—in writing—reference to an assassination plan against Castro. And he said nothing. It seemed not to surprise him or catch his attention, although he was very angry that the CIA was dealing with the mob (and at a time when he was prosecuting them more vigorously than any other administration has wanted to do).⁴⁶ Given that he served with Maxwell Taylor on his brother's top secret postmortem commission—and Allen Dulles said nothing to the commission (on the record) about it—he might have been expected to react strongly if this information were a surprise or a shocking piece of knowledge.⁴⁷

If Kennedy did approve assassination efforts, it seems likely that he was ambivalent about them, since the use of Mafia hit-men was not the idealistic Cuban patriot operation he wanted. This would explain why, after the pre-invasion assassination failed, he became more concerned and tried at the last minute to cut back the operation and further reduce its possible cost.

I think the presumption must be that Kennedy did know and approve; the best evidence (necessarily secondhand) by Bissell is that he did. There is also a documented discussion between McGeorge Bundy (Kennedy's national security advisor) and Bissell, early in the Kennedy administration, about the CIA's assassination capability, and Bundy made no effort to turn it off.⁴⁸ Moreover, Kennedy is on record as later telling a journalist he was being urged openly to order Castro's assassination, contrary to Schlesinger's theory that

such discussions would never occur in the presidential presence.⁴⁹ And it seems quite unlikely, given the caution and experience of Allen Dulles, that he would have left such an issue to chance misunderstanding. But the code of "plausible deniability" has worked the way it was designed to work; there is no direct evidence, and on that basis a leap of faith could exonerate Kennedy.

But a definite answer to this question is not necessary for understanding the consensus favorable to the Bay of Pigs decision by the senior advisers. By their testimony, only Dulles, Cabell, and Bissell—among senior advisers—knew this additional element of the plan. And there is no evidence that Dulles and Bissell themselves counted on this element succeeding—but it did offer added hope that, with luck, the invaders might take control easily.⁵⁰

Evolution of the Plan

Go Ahead.

— John F. Kennedy to
Richard Bissell

Drawing upon this background, we can return to the White House meetings that spring with a clearer understanding of the intellectual framework in which the CIA participants operated.

The CIA's Trinidad plan was a Guatemala-like scenario. B-26 bombers would destroy Castro's air force and his microwave and telephone capabilities (perhaps power plants, if that became necessary), forcing Castro to use radio and enabling the CIA both to learn his plans and to fool and paralyze him with the same technologies used in Guatemala. Two "feint" landings would cause Castro to divide his troops and feel attacked from all sides just as his communications started to go out. CIA broadcasts, in disguise on Cuban military radio networks, would make Castro and his troops dash about the island from one presumed center of crisis to another (railroads and roads were deliberately to be left intact so the defenders would more readily exhaust themselves). Castro would be unable to use radio or television to rally his people. After blocking communications from Havana to the outside world, the CIA planned to fly American and foreign journalists to the beach where it would feed them predesigned stories. Their credible foreign radio broadcasts, allowed to reach Cuba without jamming, would strengthen perception within Cuba that Castro's situation was deteriorating and hopeless.⁵¹

Moreover, with Castro's air force destroyed, B-26 bombers would now roam at will over the island, bombing and strafing troops, barracks, and other targets. Overwhelmed, Castro would lose his nerve, or at least most of his political supporters and the army would consider the cause hopeless. The CIA expected chaos and, with momentum established, popular unrest to organize itself in about a week, with a coup, abandonment, or negotiated settlement to follow.⁵²

This Trinidad plan was discussed by the president and his advisers at several meetings in February and March. Kennedy expressed his favorable attitude in principle, but rejected the specific plan because it was public and dramatic, jeopardizing the secrecy of America's role.⁵³ Moreover, there was no adequate airstrip at the port of Trinidad that could be seized. The CIA proposed to use bombers from Nicaraguan bases against Castro, but to do so would implicate another country in continuing aggression against another Western Hemisphere nation. Kennedy wanted to avoid that; it would create the belief that the United States had given its approval to the other government.⁵⁴

Kennedy, reviewing the plan, asked about infiltrating guerrillas in small bands so their opposition would appear to arise within Cuba, but he later agreed this would be too low-key to effect the desired psychological impact.⁵⁵ Instructed to develop other alternatives for a quiet invasion, the CIA proposed three sites, favoring the Bay of Pigs. The Bay of Pigs lies on the coast of south-central Cuba. It is isolated, sparsely populated, and the area included an airstrip that could be seized. Surrounded by the Zapata swamps, it was accessible by only three roads, built on dikes raised above the swamp, which could be easily mined and blocked against attacking forces: an ideal location for defense. Isolation offered hope that the guerrillas could land and secure their initial beachhead quietly, without opposition or detection. The 1,200 men and most of their ammunition and supplies could be put ashore before sunrise. The rest could follow the next night. An American naval task force would escort the vessels to Cuban territorial waters.

Consideration of the revised plan moved quickly.

The CIA pressed for speed because Castro had purchased MIG fighters from Czechoslovakia, and Cuban pilots were expected to be trained and to return by June. Against such weapons a small, "plausibly deniable" invasion was impossible. The exiles could not use jets to battle Castro's jets or to defend the old B-26 bombers because possession of jets would prove American sponsorship. Their old B-26s were the type of plane America had sold to Batista or that might be purchased by expatriates on the black market.⁵⁶

Moreover, the CIA urged a speedy decision because the rainy season was coming, which would make air operations difficult (the exiles needed to bomb all of Castro's planes on the ground, and to see the targets). Nights were becoming shorter and the troops were impatient and could not be trained further in the rainy season. The Guatemalan government was restive and asked that the expatriate troops leave by the end of April.⁵⁷

The CIA probably exaggerated the need for a decision within a few days. But the tactic was useful and showed a sophisticated grasp of how to get things done by setting a deadline. The CIA's strategy had been to set March 15 as D-Day in its January planning document. This later created the mind-set that "D-Day is being allowed to slip" and the president needed to decide. Pressing the case for approval, Allen Dulles was now explicit about a "disposal

problem." That is, if Kennedy rejected the plan, 1,200 Cuban expatriates would return to America, violently angry that Kennedy had abandoned the fight against Castro and Latin American Communism—a fact that could not be kept secret.⁵⁸ Kennedy would have a serious domestic political problem. It was certain that Richard Nixon would be an aggressive critic: Narrowly defeated for the presidency, an early advocate of the plan, stalking the administration, alert to issues for his 1964 campaign, he was a man with an unerring instinct for the political jugular. And the publicity would send the "wrong message"—of faltering resolve—to the Soviet Union and other countries.

Why Did Kennedy Do It?

CIA will present a revised plan for the Cuban operation. They have done a remarkable job of reframing the landing plan so as to make it unspectacular and quiet, and plausibly Cuban in its essentials.

—McGeorge Bundy,
Memorandum for the President,
March 15, 1961⁵⁹

With this background, we can draw a summary about why Kennedy gave his approval.

A basic psychological truth is that the plan was never fully Kennedy's own plan. He came to office after the camp was established in Guatemala. When, later, he asked rhetorically, "How could I have been so stupid to let *them* (sic) go ahead?" he was expressing what had been his attitude all along. This was not *his* operation but a plan designed and presented to him by holdover appointees from the Eisenhower administration.⁶⁰ His own instincts were competitive, but fitted most comfortably with initiatives that were his own creation: the Alliance for Progress, the Peace Corps.⁶¹ The decision he faced was not how to get rid of Castro; it was what to do about this package on his desk.

It is important to recall the international pressures. Fidel Castro—openly linked with the Soviet bloc—captured imaginations, gave voice to discontent, proved repressive regimes could be overthrown by guerrilla warfare. It was the height of the cold war, the need to "pay any price, bear any burden" (as he put it in his Inaugural Address) defined Kennedy's view of the American role in history as the responsible "guardian" of endangered freedom.

In favor of the operation was Kennedy's instinctive attention to the drama of single men or small bands challenging powerful forces and, in the eyes of history, succeeding. He wrote *Profiles in Courage*, an appreciation of such men. In his favorite novels (by Ian Fleming) a single hero, the agent James Bond, triumphed against the awesome forces of SMERSH. Kennedy believed in acting "with vigor," and contrasted his administration with the dangerous, somnolent passivity of Eisenhower. This was a drama, too, of his own life:

a grass roots movement challenged the established rulers of his own party for the presidential nomination and he won his presidency at a comparatively young age.⁶² While other knowledgeable men disagreed (Senator Fulbright of Arkansas, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, wrote Kennedy cautioning that Castro was "a thorn in the flesh, not a dagger at the heart"), Kennedy was youthfully ready to imagine Castro's challenge would ignite idealistic revolution throughout the western hemisphere, and thus was more willing to help a small group of young, patriotic challengers and to believe they might have a chance, acting boldly and with courage, to capture popular imaginations themselves and succeed.⁶³

As Kennedy worked to make the operation one he could support, he remained at a distance from it, and skeptical. Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev had warned publicly that the Soviet Union would support Cuba's independence.⁶⁴ Kennedy worried that the USSR might respond elsewhere (in Berlin or Laos), and he thought a nuclear "missile gap" then favored the Soviet Union. The world was dangerous not only because Communist revolutionaries had gained a foothold on a Caribbean island.

At the end, Kennedy decided favorably against a background of personal and political success, the activist mood and style of his administration, and the momentum of events. Activist commitments were reinforced by Kennedy's past success: he won the nomination and the presidency by them, and by advocating them. As the rhythm of events and anticipation quickened, the advisers debated and then said yes. As D-Day approached there was both the reassurance of past success and the almost visceral drive to go forward to bring the drama to life.⁶⁵

Central arguments against? Not many (according to Sorenson) were salient to Kennedy if his expectations were fulfilled. He worked on the plan to minimize every risk he could foresee: secrecy for American involvement (at least enough), the guerrilla option if things turned bad.⁶⁶ A quiet landing at a remote spot without press coverage. No overt American military involvement that would provoke the Russians. Ultimately, all his senior advisers approved, and his best experts, with past success at these operations, said it had a good chance. And he thought so too.⁶⁷

But there is still a puzzle, and we will see later that Kennedy may have had deeper, unspoken reservations. Ordinarily cool, analytical, and alert, he later showed strong ambivalence, canceled his own crucial air strike at the last minute, did it without consulting the experts he had relied on throughout, and did so for reasons that were spurious.

Yet even as he considered the plan, his mood varied. At times he was tough and assertive: "We can't go on living with this Castro cancer for ten years more" he declared to one aide.⁶⁸ At another time, when another aide asked him what he thought of the plan, he replied, "As little as possible."⁶⁹ His personal decision process was to try on different postures, experiment to see

how he felt, and search for a plan that would integrate satisfactorily his different reactions and instincts.⁷⁰

We can probably infer that Kennedy was restive about being an "aggressor." As we will see in the next chapter, he worked hard to change the plan so he could see it in other terms.

Perhaps other reservations were not spoken aloud. Wyden speculates that Kennedy and his new advisers resented Ike's remaining influence over them. They resented being trapped by his plan now when, having defeated him and what he stood for, they had obtained power. They could not be rid of the plan directly, but they could distance themselves, withhold the personal involvement that would make it their own and make it work, and allow it to screw up.⁷¹

Another unspoken reservation may have been that Kennedy felt a degree of ambivalent identification with Castro: the passionate, idealistic guerrilla fighter with Kennedy's own spirit who had overthrown a government and spoke, Marxism aside, for many of Kennedy's own ideals. Perhaps, too, Castro stirred jealousy and competition: given a choice, would the Cuban people prefer Castro—or Kennedy and his band of American liberal reformers? ("We're the true revolutionaries," Richard Bissell, a liberal with an affinity to Stevenson and Bowles, told his staff after discussion of the new land reform and social action programs the administration intended to see implemented.)⁷²

Typical analyses of major government decisions do not propose that sexual connotations affect policy choices. Yet it should be acknowledged that sexual metaphors were used openly by these men to discuss their decisions. Kennedy said privately that the advisers who opposed intervention and sent forth a verbal cloud of idealistic objections "lacked balls."⁷³ And later, telling Sorenson that the last-minute equivocators were trying to protect themselves, he said, "everyone is grabbing their nuts on this."⁷⁴ Richard Bissell used sexual metaphor to discuss the secrecy issue: so long as the United States retained a "fig leaf," any outcry would dissipate.⁷⁵ Kennedy's resistance to being drawn in had its analogue in the case of a man being tempted by an affair but unwilling to find himself exposed, naked in public.⁷⁶

A summary of the factors in Kennedy's decision is provided in Table 1.1. An asterisk appears before crucial but erroneous beliefs to be analyzed more fully in the next chapter.

I will return to a detailed discussion in later chapters, but for purposes of this overview the following key events are important: all of Kennedy's senior advisers favored the plan at a final large meeting on April 4.⁷⁷ On April 5, Kennedy met privately with Dean Rusk, Dulles, and Robert McNamara to underscore his prohibition against American involvement.⁷⁸ Kennedy approved the plan, but he then severely reduced a first (D-2) air strike against Castro's planes (from sixteen to six) and did so at the last minute; he abruptly canceled (again at the last minute) all air strikes for the morning of D-Day.

Table 1.1. Why Kennedy Said "Go Ahead"

Situational Effects

1. Castro, as an activist and Marxist sympathizer, was perceived as a threat in the Western Hemisphere, a threat likely to grow rather than diminish, and a threat linked to a powerful and dangerous worldwide Soviet threat.
2. Plans and operational capabilities were already developed, waiting approval. He had to do something with them.
3. The American government had achieved previous success by this model.
- *4. American journalists, and elite opinion, would accept this type of operation and cooperate to retain its covertness.
5. The Soviet Union and other potential allies of Cuba were unlikely to render effective aid.
6. The Soviet Union was unlikely to retaliate by military action elsewhere if the operation retained its "plausible deniability."

Personal Predispositions of Kennedy

1. Kennedy perceived stronger themes of achievement and competition than did others, and was attracted to support dramatic adventures.
 - a. He had a history of personal activist success that produced a faith that his, and perhaps others', activist commitments would succeed.
 - b. He judged Castro a more dangerous and effective competitor in Latin America than did others.
 - *c. He was personally attracted to support of idealistic, activist Cubans.
 - *d. He was ready to believe that the Cuban masses would rally to assure the success of the exile challengers' "New Frontier" cause.
2. He had residual deference to military and CIA expertise for those issues where he had no expertise.
3. He tended to discount idealistic advisers who opposed effective action by worrying about morality.

Key Assumptions About the Plan

1. No downside risk to Kennedy (or U.S.)
 - *a. Secrecy
 - *b. While the plan had some military risk (perhaps a 1/3 chance of success), the men could "go guerrilla" if momentum was not established and a decisive, visible defeat could be avoided.
 - c. No American military involvement would be required.
 - d. Soviet reprisal was unlikely given secrecy and no American military involvement.
- *2. America was in a secondary, support role to patriotic Cubans who were eager to attempt the job even without American military involvement.
- *3. The Cubans were "New Frontier" reformers and idealistic patriots who would promote *Fidelismo sin Fidel*.
- *4. Castro's military response would likely be ineffective.
- *5. A mass uprising was expected because many Cubans opposed Castro's "sellout" of a nationalist revolution to Communism and probably would prefer a Kennedy-style leader.
6. Assassination of Fidel Castro would, if successful, assure low-cost success.
7. There was a serious "disposal" problem if the plan were aborted, with certainty of Republican attacks, especially from Nixon, possibly supported by Eisenhower and Dulles. It would send the "wrong message" internationally.

(continued)

Table 1.1. Why Kennedy Said "Go Ahead" (continued)

Adviser Support

1. He believed all senior advisers supported the plan.
2. The most qualified experts in American government (Dulles, Bissell, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff) endorsed the plan and had (Kennedy thought) the clear understanding that no American forces would be used. The past success of the same CIA team with a similar model in Guatemala lent credibility to their judgment.
- *3. "Bonsai" enthusiasm of final troop readiness and morale report.
4. Kennedy believed Eisenhower endorsed the plan.

Time Pressures—"Last Chance"

1. MIG pilots, due soon, would abort a mission. This was the last chance to mount a small, low-cost, volunteer operation. Later, a president would have to do the job with the air force and the marines.
2. A rainy season was approaching, thus visibility would be reduced and additional training would soon be impossible.
3. Troop morale, at a peak, was likely to deteriorate with further delay.
4. The Guatemala government asked that troops leave by the end of April.
5. Growing momentum of the planning process.

BATTLE NARRATIVE

I will now turn to the overthrow attempt itself.

Air strikes were launched from "Happy Valley," a base in Nicaragua. The first strike, early on Saturday, April 15, sent two B-26s against each of the three military airfields where U-2 spy plane photographs showed Castro's planes to be based: Camp Libertad outside Havana, Antonio Maceo Airport in Oriente Province, and San Antonio de los Banos. Mario Zuñiga flew directly from Nicaragua to Miami International Airport to provide a CIA cover story that he and three other pilots, disenchanted with Castro, had defected and dropped the bombs before they fled. His plane was painted with Cuban Air Force markings (as were all Brigade planes); bullets were fired into it before he left Happy Valley; thirty minutes from Miami—according to plan—Zuñiga opened his cockpit at 1,500 feet, and sought to enhance his story by firing his revolver into one of his engines and feathering it.⁷⁹

Castro, altered by the raids to anticipate imminent invasion, implemented standby plans for immediate police roundup of suspected members of the underground and others whose loyalty was in doubt. He was not sanguine in estimates of his potential opposition: between 100,000 and 200,000 people were arrested and detained.⁸⁰

To coincide with the first raids, the CIA planned a diversionary landing on the east coast of Cuba, in Oriente Province. This feint, carried out near a naval base the United States retained in Cuba (under a long-term lease) at

Guantanamo Bay, was intended to be misinterpreted as the main invasion and to draw Castro's forces.⁸¹ But the expatriate commander, to preserve security, was not told how vital his role was to be. He believed he was resupplying guerrillas and that many others would be involved in similar actions at other points around the island. When he judged he did not have a clear path through the breakers to a landing site, and that he might have been spotted and would face fire if a landing were attempted, he aborted the operation. (Ten men equipped with radio were to have marked the landing site. But four days earlier the team leader, conducting hand grenade instruction, accidentally set off a grenade and blew up himself and his team.) Unknown to the ship's commander, four American destroyers were also in the vicinity to strengthen the ruse by appearing on Cuban radar. That extra trick failed, too: the Cubans did not have radar installations in the vicinity.⁸²

The initial D-2 raids on Saturday morning took place at dawn and were completed by about 6:30 A.M. At 10:30 A.M. the United Nations General Assembly began a regular session. Dr. Raul Roa, Cuba's foreign minister, was in New York City to begin a debate, scheduled for Monday, of Cuba's charges that America was planning an invasion (Cuba was requesting collective security assistance). The United States, as it had during the Guatemala case in 1954, was already implying such charges were blatant Marxist propaganda to discredit the United States falsely. Dr. Roa requested, and received, a special session for that afternoon.

Ambassador Adlai Stevenson, caught by surprise, checked with the State Department, which checked with the CIA, and it sent back assurances the defector was genuine. Stevenson delivered a ringing defense in the world's most public forum, dictated to him over the telephone, acting with assurance that the facts had been "carefully checked."⁸³ His photograph, holding aloft a picture of the Miami plane, appeared, together with his denial, on the front page of papers around the world.

But meanwhile, the American press set to work on the cover story, and it began to fall apart.⁸⁴ The plane had a metal nose cone (Castro's B-26 force had Plexiglas nose cones). One reporter walked close enough to the plane to observe that its machine guns had not been fired. The pilot's name was not released—odd if he were a genuine defector, for Castro would already know it—a mark of a potential CIA cover story. In New York, enthusiastic Cuban expatriate leaders issued statements implying more prior knowledge of the operation than they would have if the cover story (of a spur-of-the-moment defection) were valid.

Stevenson's staff pressed ahead, on Saturday and Sunday, to assemble the technical detail needed to refute totally the baseless Cuban charges when U.N. debate resumed on Monday. No one in Washington called Stevenson directly to inform him the story was a lie. A member of his staff, asking for more facts, was told simply that it "wouldn't be worthwhile to pursue that line of

inquiry any longer." That's when Stevenson concluded he had been set up. A proud man, twice the presidential candidate of his party, his anger made itself felt later that Sunday in a cable to Dean Rusk which gave Rusk an additional basis to urge on the president concern for the "international noise level" problem in New York.⁸⁵

At 1:45 P.M. Sunday, Kennedy gave final approval for the invasion; the ships, south of Cuba, moved to final rendezvous. The CIA fleet consisted of two converted landing craft of its own, the *Blugar* and the *Barbara J.*, plus old merchant boats owned by a Cuban expatriate firm in New York and operated by the firm under contract (the *Houston*, *Caribe*, *Atlantico*, and the *Rio Escondido*).⁸⁶ The crews on the civilian boats were not military volunteers: when told their destination they were given a chance to leave the boats before this final run. They remained on assurance that it would be a night landing, uncontested, and that American ships would be there and "not let them fail."

The ships had moved toward their rendezvous by zigzag routes, to minimize chance of detection. They were shadowed by ships of an American naval task force. Under precisely drawn rules of engagement these American ships were to monitor the invasion craft from a distance, refrain from radio contact, render any navigation assistance needed, defend them and immediately escort them back to a Central American port in the event of attack in international waters.⁸⁷

The principal ships of the American naval task force were seven destroyers, the carrier *Essex* (with an augmented amphibious assault force of 1,200 marines plus a squadron of jet fighters), and the LSD (Landing Ship Dock) *San Marcos*.⁸⁸ The *San Marcos* carried seven smaller boats (three LCUs—landing craft utility and four LCVPs—landing craft vehicles-personnel) loaded with tanks, trucks, a bulldozer, and other heavy equipment. These seven craft were off-loaded and turned over to the Brigade in international waters three miles off the Cuban coast.

When the *San Marcos* off-loading was completed, the boats started forward and paused while teams of frogmen proceeded to the beaches. The frogmen teams were led (against Kennedy's orders) by the two senior CIA operatives with the force, "Rip" Robertson and Gray Lynch. At one of the three landing sites the frogmen's rubber raft hit the off-shore coral reef the CIA's U-2 photo interpreters had thought to be seaweed. Members of a Cuban militia patrol saw the raft coming in and, thinking they were fishermen, drove down to the beach to flash the headlights of their jeep to warn of the reef. The CIA man opened fire with his machine gun (the first shots fired at the Bay of Pigs were fired by an American), his men opened up, and the two Cubans who had come to offer assistance died in a hail of bullets. In the confusion and excitement the order for the full landing to proceed was flashed without remembering to mention the reef. Filled with anticipation, and with

their outboards at full throttle, the first two contingents roared in, puncturing the double bottoms of both boats.⁸⁹

The CIA men now obeyed President Kennedy's order and returned to their boats offshore. There, at 1:00 A.M., a brief message arrived from CIA headquarters: "Castro still has operational aircraft. Expect you to be hit at dawn. Unload all troops and supplies and take ships to sea as soon as possible."⁹⁰

The message did not tell the complete story. Probably to avoid upsetting the men, Bissell did not tell them the reason for this urgent order: There would be no D-Day strike.

The message produced some speed up, but not much. Without knowing the reason for the message, the CIA men only thought headquarters was being cautious. Everyone assumed Castro might have planes that survived the D-2 strikes: That was why a D-Day strike was planned. The men on the scene thought the D-Day raids, coming at dawn, would finish Castro's air power and assure their safety. They saw nothing new in the message.⁹¹

It is doubtful they could have unloaded rapidly in any case. The hulls were punctured on two small boats, and these were out of action. The outboards on eight new fiberglass boats to ferry the men gave problems. When, at the last minute, Kennedy shifted the invasion site from Trinidad (which had a harbor), these boats were airlifted in, but in the rush of events they had not been tested. Now, two refused to start and the propeller of one dropped off and fell to the bottom of the ocean as soon as it was put in the water. The other outboards gave out, at various points, in the middle of the bay: Soon, only two were usable.⁹²

The reef also delayed operations because it required the LCUs and the LCVPs to stop 150 yards offshore and their cargo to be off-loaded by men wading in chest-deep water. Not until almost daybreak did high tide, and a route through the reef finally charted by frogmen at 6 A.M., make it possible to begin off-loading the heavy equipment.⁹³

Contrary to expectations, Castro had watchers posted along his beaches, and he had equipped them with microwave. At a second landing site the invaders were also spotted, and from here an alarm was flashed to Castro just after 1:00 A.M.⁹⁴ He moved swiftly, ordered his remaining planes to attack at dawn, and began moving 20,000 troops toward the invader's position. Ramon Fernandez, the first commander on the scene, was to do a first-rate job: He had learned infantry tactics at the U.S. Army Field Artillery School, Fort Still, Oklahoma.⁹⁵

Castro's senior pilot scored his first kill at 6:30 A.M. Monday when rockets from his British-built *Sea Fury* sank one of the invader ships, the *Houston*. Most of the men got ashore, but supplies, including the field hospital, were lost. Just after 9:00 A.M., a rocket from the *Sea Fury* ignited 200 barrels of aviation gasoline on the *Rio Escondido*. Within minutes the ship blew, sending flames 100 feet into the air, and it went to the bottom along with ammuni-

tion, other supplies, and the communications van. For the remainder of the invasion there were virtually no communications between air and ground forces. The dispersed ground forces, whose hand radios had become wet and inoperative when the men were forced to wade ashore because of the reef, were without effective radio communications.¹⁰⁰

With off-loading stalled, under air attack by Castro's planes equipped with machine guns and rockets, and without American jet support from the carrier offshore, the civilian crews of the *Atlantico* and the *Caribe*, betrayed and scared, headed for open sea at top speed with most of the Brigade's ammunition supply aboard. They had not signed on to fight, had been assured the invaders would control the air, and were without antiaircraft weapons for defense. Two of their sister ships were sunk, one exploding in their sight and its crew members possibly killed. The Yankee task force had only sat out there without the air support the men thought they had been promised. They had no idea what game the Americans were playing, but they were not going to wait around to find out.¹⁰¹

CIA officials in Washington were now scrambling to keep the invasion together. They knew the men on the beaches had only a one-day supply of ammunition. When the *Caribe* and *Atlantico* refused to answer radio calls, disappeared off the monitoring radar, and Washington deduced they were not coming back, jets were dispatched from the *Essex* to monitor their course.¹⁰² The destroyer USS *Eaton*, after taking aboard a marine colonel with a briefcase full of money, was sent racing on an intercept course. By the time the two boats were rounded up and persuaded to return (the *Caribe*, the faster of the two, was intercepted 218 miles south of Cuba), it became late Tuesday afternoon before they arrived back at the "Point Zulu" rendezvous off the Cuban coast.¹⁰³

Under fire, the remaining boats pulled back 50 miles into international waters. Rip and Gray, the CIA men, assured the Brigade they would return to complete the unloading, but with the communications van at the bottom of the ocean, there was no communication to the beaches during the rest of the day (or, as it turned out, on Monday night).

Back on the island, Brigade transport planes (five C-46s, one C-54) dropped 177 paratroopers at dawn to block the three roads. On the eastern front the operation worked well. But on the western front the equipment for one group landed in the swamp, Castro's swift response caught another group of "blocking" paratroopers behind enemy lines, and other men came down amidst heavy fire and were driven back.¹⁰⁴ By 10:00 A.M., then, two of the three roads to the beaches were open, the attackers had their supply lines cut, their back was to the sea, they had a one-day supply of ammunition, they were without effective radio communications, and they lacked the aviation fuel and munitions that would allow the Brigade B-26s to arrive from Nicaragua and provide sustained tactical air support from the beachhead.

But it did not seem desperate at that point. They expected resupply. They "knew" the Americans were offshore, in force, if they got into serious trouble, and air support did appear from Nicaragua. Two Brigade B-26s passed over the battlefield and headed toward a concentration of 900 or so Castro forces. They let loose with full loads of napalm and fragmentation bombs: within minutes the road was a wall of flame. "*No quedo ni el gato*," said the local Brigade commander with pride, "Not even the cat was alive." "How beautiful it was," a Brigade soldier remembered.¹⁰⁵ In less than three minutes, 800 men had been incinerated or blown apart. That was how Bissell's "shooting gallery" defense along the three roads — and throughout Cuba — was supposed to work, and would, just as soon as the early snarls were worked out.

But the next few minutes illustrated a harsher reality for the invaders. The slow Brigade B-26s flew without tail guns to increase their payloads on seven-hour round trips from Nicaragua.¹⁰² As the bombing runs finished and the planes pulled up, a T-33 jet trainer and a Sea Fury appeared — Castro's — and used their machine guns to shoot down both Brigade planes.

The men expected their resupply on Monday night. They did not know the problems with the *Atlantico* and the *Caribe*. Nor did they know that munitions aboard the American task force, by presidential order, were not available.¹⁰¹

For Tuesday morning, with approval of the president, Richard Bissell now ordered the D-Day strike (twenty-four hours later than originally planned), a dawn strike of six B-26s against Castro's key airfield to eliminate his remaining planes.¹⁰⁴ Luck was on Castro's side that morning: Heavy haze and low-lying clouds made it impossible for the B-26s to attack. The long distance to be flown on a return flight to Nicaragua did not leave sufficient fuel to wait for the sky to clear.¹⁰⁵

By midmorning Tuesday, the Brigade was able to rig a radio hookup with the fleet offshore. They cursed the CIA but were reassured there was only a temporary delay in supply. Air drops of ammunition occurred during the day. They were promised their main supply that night.

In Washington, the communication snarl kept decision makers five to seven hours behind events. By Monday afternoon Kennedy knew there was serious trouble, and he was under increasing pressure to act with American forces. He did approve the Tuesday morning attempt to eliminate Castro's remaining planes. But it was not clear to him that the American navy could save the operation if it went in. And Kennedy was adamant that his guideline against American involvement stood — much to the surprise of his advisers, all of whom seemed to expect him to abandon his restriction rather than accept failure.¹⁰⁶

The Brigade survived on Tuesday because Castro's forces did not press their advantage. Two captured paratroopers told conflicting stories. One said he was part of a group of 1,000 defending a position ahead. The second told

the truth: only nineteen men defended the road. Castro's commanders anticipated an invasion force of 3,000 to 10,000. The Cuban officer thought the second man was lying to lead him into a trap—the Americans would never have put only nineteen men there—and spent hours waiting for artillery to be brought up to pound the position before sending his troops forward.¹⁰⁷

Probably the second reason the Cuban advance delayed was that Castro himself had rushed north, to the west of Havana, after receiving reports at about 1:15 A.M. Tuesday that led him temporarily to believe the Bay of Pigs itself was a feint and that the main landing was now beginning in Pinar del Rio province on the west coast. This was the Pinar del Rio diversion (the planned companion to Saturday's aborted Mocoambo diversion 1,000 miles away on the eastern coast), featuring what the CIA agents termed their "dog and pony" show. It was designed with the aid of the former employees of the Walt Disney studios who had designed the special effects for Guatemala. Eight boats, thirty-five to forty feet long, each towing several smaller boats, had sailed secretly from Miami to stations off the western coast. They were crammed with electronic gear. No CIA agents landed but, strung out along the coast, the boats created a spectacular array of lights, sound effects, and electronic signals to simulate a major invasion and battle. It worked to draw Castro to the west and to keep him from being physically present to press his commanders at the Bay of Pigs. But he judged he had enough troops in the Havana area and did not deplete his 20,000 man force encircling the Bay of Pigs.¹⁰⁸

When the *Caribe* and the *Atlantico* reappeared Tuesday afternoon and evening, the CIA men offshore worked frantically to prepare the resupply for the beaches. Throughout the day they promised jet support, and many more plane drops than actually occurred, judging that they served the men—and the cause—best by keeping up morale. They expected that something would soon happen, that surely Washington would see the light. Then those jets would be authorized and cargo resupplies airlifted to Nicaragua would begin to be airdropped. They lied, but only in the sense of conveying facts they hoped would become true.¹⁰⁹ On the beaches, morale problems were beginning to occur, but the men believed the promises, by and large. They recalled early assurances that if they held the beach for a few days a new provisional government would land, be formally recognized, and then "all things are possible." With the airdrops that did arrive, and careful conservation of ammunition, they could hold out until the Tuesday night resupply.

But the crews of the *Caribe* and the *Atlantico* had other ideas than to face death while Americans cheered but stayed in international waters. They had learned about official promises. On their return—and perhaps wisely—they threatened mutiny if their skippers took them back to the combat zone on renewed promises alone and without visible, low jet cover from the American carrier. It was clear unloading could not be completed by dawn and without cover they would, once again, be vulnerable to Cuban air attack. Rip and

Gray, the two CIA commanders, sent additional urgent messages to Washington for approval of the jet cover and began a contingency plan to reload the *Caribe* and *Atlantico* supplies onto their own command boats, the *Blugar* and the *Barbara J*, and the small boats.¹¹⁰

Wednesday was the final day of the operation.

Late Tuesday night, President Kennedy had decided he would, as he put it to his brother, "rather be called an aggressor than a bum," at least to aid rescue of the men.¹¹¹ He authorized four navy jets to fly one hour of cover on Wednesday morning, from 6:30 to 7:30, interposing themselves between Brigade B-26s, which would attack Cuban ground troops, and Cuban planes. (The legalism involved was that, to shoot at the Brigade planes, Castro's planes would also need to shoot in the direction of the American planes.) American planes could not initiate fire, but they could return it. Kennedy's action reflected no long-term plan: Now he only sought to buy time and, perhaps, to make a minor concession to his advisers. It was as far as he was willing to go.

But by Tuesday night the Brigade air operation in Nicaragua was coming apart. There was no beachhead airstrip with aviation fuel.¹¹² The round trips were each seven hours and most pilots had been on continual duty for over two days, keeping awake with drugs. They were exhausted. They were also angry, scared, and disgusted. The Americans had inexplicably stopped their second, D-Day, strike just before launch. As a result, the Brigade's planes were being shot down (ten pilots were now dead) and without tail guns the pilots correctly judged that further flights were likely to be suicide missions.¹¹³ Betrayal, fear, and fatigue were not easily overcome. No one believed American government promises that *this* time there would be air support.

Except Americans. On his own authority Richard Bissell authorized four American volunteer pilots to fly in these last desperate hours to try to turn the battle, or at least win a respite for a sea evacuation. He probably exceeded his authority in doing this (although it occurred at the same time Kennedy was allowing navy pilots into the battle zone).¹¹⁴ But it was necessary to do it, or all was surely lost.

A timing snafu brought these Brigade planes over target an hour before their jet cover. They were shot down. The American pilots who believed the promises were killed.

The explanation of the timing error favored by earlier writers was that the Pentagon and the CIA, communicating to their separate forces through separate channels, had assumed different time zones (Washington versus Nicaragua time).¹¹⁵ A more recent account by the chief executive officer on the *Essex* maintains that the carrier received its launch order at 6:30 A.M. (the order was for a 6:30 A.M. launch), and, even working at top speed, the crews could not be awakened, briefed, and airborne until well after 7:00. The reason for the confusion has never been resolved.¹¹⁶

At 2:00 A.M. President Kennedy's order came that the U.S. Navy was

authorized to rescue the men from the beaches. Pepe San Roman was told, but he was not told the full story (which was not communicated, either, to the CIA commanders) that the invasion was over and would receive no American resupply. His Brigade, San Roman declared, would not retreat. He still expected the *Caribe* and the *Atlantico* at first light, and he would wait faithfully for the United States.¹¹⁷

In the early hours of Wednesday morning, instead of authorized air cover for the ships, the CIA men offshore had received only the cryptic message, "Hold where you are."¹¹⁸ Their message reflected that there would be no further resupply. Bissell, Admiral Burke, and others had exhausted their arguments. They had proposed diverse options: naval air cover for the beaches, long-range gun support from the destroyers, the landing of a company of Marines.¹¹⁹ But the president would allow only the one hour of "passive" air cover. (Judging it was out of the question, the CIA did not specifically request additional jet cover for arms resupply.) Just after midnight, early Wednesday morning, Kennedy had finally decided to scuttle the operation, concluding that "it was time to go guerrilla." And it was then, too, he had been shocked to learn that there was no guerrilla escape at this site: the impenetrable Zapata swamps, and three roads blocked by 20,000 Cuban troops, blocked any escape.¹²⁰

Rip and Gray, the CIA commanders, thought "hold where you are" meant something would still happen.¹²¹ They believed it could be turned around, that jets would come momentarily when clearances came through and that the leaders who wanted Castro eliminated understood the situation. Late Wednesday morning, their appeals to Washington inexplicably unanswered, the frustrated and angry CIA men unilaterally decided to violate orders and fight beside the men they had helped to train. They decided to take their resupply mission to shore and beach the boats rather than unload them. But as they set out, broadcasting the latest of their assurances, Pepe San Roman radioed that his ammunition was gone and Castro's troops were moving in. "Am taking to the woods. I can't wait for you." The battle was over.¹²²

Among invading Cubans, 114 men died; among defending Cubans, about 1,200. Most of the invaders were captured by Castro's forces, and they were later ransomed by Kennedy.¹²³

NOTES

1. Quoted in H. Parmet, *JFK: The Presidency of John F. Kennedy* (New York: Dial Press, 1983), p. 161. Note that Dulles did not tell the whole truth and mention explicitly the 20 percent chance of success he eventually held for Guatemala.
2. The actual invasion force was about 1,200. Altogether, 1,400 men were used in the invasion, the diversions, and the air strikes.
3. Walt Rostow, then an assistant to McGeorge Bundy. Quoted in P. Wyden, *Bay of Pigs: The Untold Story* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979), p. 325. Voicing

a common judgment at the time, another observer called it the most dramatically bungled operation "since the Light Brigade charged into oblivion at Balaklava." H. Johnson, *The Bay of Pigs: The Leaders' Story of Brigade 1506* (New York: Norton, 1964), p. 349.

4. For each of these cases I have attempted to render a consensus or standard account. Wyden in *Bay of Pigs* synthesized previous scholarship and then-declassified documents, cross-checking basic facts and interpretations by interviews with almost all of the American and Cuban principals still alive. All scholars are in his debt. I have interpreted events somewhat differently, with greater attention (for example) to the intellectual rationale provided by the Guatemala success and with greater weight to systemic factors and to a high dramatized and oddly wired sensibility of larger-than-life drama and the nature of power.
5. U.S. Senate. Committee on Foreign Relations. *Events in United States—Cuban Relations: A Chronology 1957–1963*. 88th Congress, 1st session. (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1963), p. 1. R. Stebbins, *The U.S. in World Affairs, 1961*. (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1962) provides a similar semi-official view.
6. D. Wise and T. Ross, *The Invisible Government* (New York: Random House, 1964), p. 26 discuss Bissell's background. See also Wyden, *Bay of Pigs*, pp. 9–19; Parmet, *JFK*, p. 160.
7. On Dulles's character see L. Mosley, *Dulles: A Biography of Eleanor, Allen, and John Foster Dulles and Their Family Network* (New York: Dial, 1978); A. Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1965), p. 241.
8. Wyden, *Bay of Pigs*, pp. 23–30, esp. p. 24. M. Halperin, P. Clapp, and A. Kanter, *Bureaucratic Behavior and Foreign Policy* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1974), pp. 196–218 discuss the strategy of involving the president.
9. Wyden, *Bay of Pigs*, pp. 24–25, 30.
10. *Ibid.*, pp. 65–67. Nixon's advocacy of Castro's elimination had begun almost a year earlier. He announced his candidacy on January 9, 1960.
11. The *New York Times* ran Kennedy's statement on its front page. The conflicting accounts of duplicity are reviewed in Parmet, *JFK*, pp. 47–49; Wyden, *Bay of Pigs*, p. 67n. Nixon's presentation showed he understood the opposition argument well. For the key portion of Nixon's statement see S. Kraus, *The Great Debates* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana Univ. Press, 1962). In a slip of institutional memory, H. Kissinger, *White House Years* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1979), p. 633, misremembers Kennedy's consistent public pledge *not* to use American troops, reporting the opposite that Kennedy publicly advocated their use against Cuba.
12. It is doubtful the president felt bound by it, any more than any politician feels bound by what he says in public statements during an election.
13. Wyden, *Bay of Pigs*, p. 68 gives November 27. M. Taylor, *Operation ZAPATA: The Ultra-Sensitive Report and Testimony of the Board of Inquiry on the Bay of Pigs*. Introduction by L. Aguilar. (Frederick, MD: Aletheia Books, 1981), p. 8 gives November 18. (This is the Taylor Commission report, written in 1961, and is published (with the current title) from the "sanitized" version released under the Freedom of Information Act.)
14. Thus experience convinced the CIA that tight security could not be maintained by Cubans, who were too voluble and unprofessional. Later, they did not tell the Cuban underground of D-Day for this reason.
15. Quoted in Mosley, *Dulles*, p. 466.

16. H. Perloff, *Alliance for Progress: A Social Invention in the Making* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1969), pp. 16-17.
17. The CIA's order to end guerrilla training and shift to conventional training for amphibious and airborne assault was sent to Guatemala on November 4, 1960. Taylor, *Operation Zapata*, p. 6.
18. The best reconstruction is that Eisenhower saw no specific plans. He did know an invasion force was being thought about. The record suggests that he did not carefully limit his remarks, and Kennedy may have mistaken the general's remarks to support the type of plan he shortly received. Ike was forceful, later, in noting that he had not seen or approved any specific plans while in office. As a military man he drew a sharp distinction between the process of "planning" and plans. There seems to be no good recollection about what exactly Eisenhower did endorse. Wyden, *Bay of Pigs*, pp. 87-88; C. Clifford (personal communication).
19. There were estimated to be 1,000 active guerrillas in the Trinidad area. U.S. Department of Defense. Joint Chiefs of Staff. Memoranda for the Secretary (JCSM 57-61, 166-61; 146-61; 1961). Appendix B to Annex A, p. 18. (Photocopy release under Freedom of Information Act.)
20. Castro and his commanders also knew these mountains well and became increasingly effective against the CIA's early guerrilla operations. Before the Trinidad invasion would have been launched, the Cuban government had eliminated the rebels, although the record is not clear that Kennedy's aides knew of Castro's antiguerrilla effectiveness.
21. Basic sources for the Guatemala case are R. Immerman, "Guatemala as Cold War History" *Political Science Quarterly* 95 (Winter, 1980-1981): 629-653; R. Immerman, *The CIA in Guatemala: The Foreign Policy of Intervention* (Austin: Univ. of Texas Press, 1982); S. Kinzer and S. Schlesinger, *Bitter Fruit: The Untold Story of the American Coup in Guatemala* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1982). See also B. Cook, *The Declassified Eisenhower: A Divided Legacy* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1981); S. Jonas, "Anatomy of an Intervention" in S. Jonas and D. Tobias, ed., *Guatemala* (Berkeley, CA: North American Congress on Latin America, 1974); S. Jonas, "Central America as a Theatre for Cold War Politics" *Latin America Perspectives* 9 (Summer 1982): 123-128.
22. The shipments were used as a pretext for American action. The government's planning for a covert operation began well before these public justifications of Communist "influence" via arms shipments: Treaties were signed with Nicaragua on April 23, 1954 and Honduras on May 20, 1954. See L. Etheredge, *American Defense Commitments* (Washington, CT: Center for Information on America, 1971). Airlifts of war material for "defensive purposes" were announced to both countries on May 24, 1954.
23. It is not clear if the McCarthy experience suggested the aspect of the 1954 plan. Ambassador Peurifoy lied and told a congressional committee that the January killings were to prepare the way for a full Communist takeover, were a standard Communist tactic, and the invasion alarm a callous fabrication of Arbenz acting under Soviet direction. See P. Taylor, "The Guatemala Affair: A Critique of United States Foreign Policy" *American Political Science Review* 50 (1956): 787-806.

The killings and torture to break the back of the (nonexistent) internal resistance movement stepped up sharply after the clandestine radio began to broadcast in June. A lesson to foreign nationals is that these brutal murders and tortures were not included later, in the institutional memory of planners, when

- speaking of the low casualties of the Guatemala operation: The behavior reflects a sensibility about costs I discuss in chapter 6.
24. My account of the battle relies primarily on Immerman, *The CIA in Guatemala*. M. Alisky, reviewing T. Anderson's *Politics in Central America* in *American Political Science Review* 77 (1983): 482-483, asserts a substantially higher number for the invasion force (circa 1,000).
25. D. Phillips, *The Night Watch* (New York: Atheneum, 1977), pp. 55-56.
26. Castillo Armas survived for three years. He was assassinated in 1957.
27. Richard Bissell, Dwight Eisenhower oral history interview, Columbia University.
28. Cook, *Declassified Eisenhower*, p. 284, provides a contrasting view of a thoughtful, rational choice: "The survival of his country, the continuation of the revolution in the hands of his loyal military successors, and a belief that by his resignation the people of Guatemala might be spared further bombings, the possible use of napalm and the kind of bacteriological warfare that the Guatemalans believed the United States had used in Korea all contributed to [Arbenz's] decision."
29. The State Department hinted that, as a potential Communist state, Guatemala was ipso facto an aggressor, but the principal symbolic evidence of serious threat (a shipment of Communist arms) arrived in Guatemala well after the CIA began to plan its operation. See Taylor, "The Guatemala Affair" for a discussion of legal issues.
30. Ibid. See also C. Ronning, ed., *Intervention in Latin America* (New York: Knopf, 1970) for a discussion of law and intervention.
31. Officially the planes were sold to Nicaragua (the CIA supplied the money). D. Eisenhower, *The White House Years: Mandate for Change, 1953-1956* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1963), pp. 420-427, discusses his decision.
32. After the failure, Kennedy said angrily America would not "be lectured on intervention by those whose character was stamped for all time on the bloody streets of Budapest!" "Address Before the American Society of Newspaper Editors" (April 20, 1961). In J. Kennedy, *Public Papers of John F. Kennedy, 1961* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1962), pp. 304-306.
33. Bissell told Robert Kennedy the odds were two-to-one in favor of the Bay of Pigs succeeding. A. Schlesinger, *Robert F. Kennedy and His Times* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1978), p. 443. To understand these assassination plans in the context of the times it is well to recall that the key planners had served in World War II, in which millions died. They had not led sheltered lives. In the Cuban case of a "cold" war, given that a military invasion was planned, assassination was a pragmatic tactic to save American and Cuban lives. It had the same rationale as the World War II efforts to assassinate Hitler, with which Allen Dulles had been associated. Wyden, *Bay of Pigs*, p. 41.
34. U.S. Senate. Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities. *Alleged Assassination Plots Involving Foreign Leaders*. Senate Report 94-465 (November 20, 1975). (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1975) reviews assassination issues. See also T. Powers, *The Man Who Kept the Secrets: Richard Helms and the CIA* (New York: Pocket Books, 1979), pp. 184-200.
35. Wyden, *Bay of Pigs*, pp. 40-45; 109-110.
36. Rosselli and Giancana were both killed after they had been called to testify before the Church investigation but before they actually did so. Giancana was shot seven times in the throat and mouth as he was frying sausages in his kitchen. Rosselli was hacked to pieces and the pieces of his body stuffed into an oil drum and

- dumped into the ocean off Miami. See A. Schlesinger, *Robert F. Kennedy*, p. 484. (The Church investigation resulted in the summary report, U.S. Senate, *Alleged Assassination Plots*).
37. Schlesinger, *Robert F. Kennedy*, pp. 483-484.
38. *Ibid.*, p. 482.
39. *Ibid.*, p. 484 discusses the timing.
40. U.S. Senate, *Alleged Assassination Plots*, p. 118; Powers, *The Man Who Kept the Secrets*, pp. 182, 193-198, 443.
41. Schlesinger, *Robert F. Kennedy*, pp. 488-498.
42. The alternative explanations, then, are: (a) their minds really worked this way; (b) this statement was part of a public cover-up story. "Embarrass": see U.S. Senate, *Alleged Assassination Attempts*, p. 121. Note, however, that Allen Dulles had socialized with the Kennedy family since Jack's school days. They were not strangers. See Parmet, *JFK*, p. 161.
43. Parmet, *JFK*, pp. 117-118, 120, 126-128.
44. *Ibid.*, U.S. Senate, *Alleged Assassination Attempts*, p. 130; D. Martin, *Wilderness of Mirrors* (New York: Ballantine, 1981), p. 123, reports Campbell was also involved with Rosselli.
45. Whether Kennedy knew of the Giancana connection before Hoover's visit has not been established.
46. Robert Kennedy's involvement happened this way. Giancana said another of his girlfriends (the singer Phyllis McGuire) was two-timing him by having an affair with Dan Rowan (a comedian whose national television program was popular during the early 1960s). In return for Giancana's favors and to keep him in Miami working on assassination plans (instead of flying constantly to Las Vegas to check on McGuire), Maheu asked the CIA to wiretap Rowan's room in Las Vegas. The CIA refused to do this directly, but said they would pay a private investigator to do it. He did it, they paid, and Las Vegas police and the FBI became involved when the bug was discovered and the operative arrested. The CIA went to the Justice Department to stop the investigation: The memorandum from the inspector general of the CIA to Robert Kennedy discussed at least one earlier assassination attempt against Castro in which the CIA was involved. As Giancana could obviously afford his own bugging, it is a puzzle why the CIA went along with this. The Church committee heard conflicting stories. See U.S. Senate, *Alleged Assassination Attempts*, pp. 77-79. Martin, *Wilderness of Mirrors*, p. 122, reports Maheu suspected Giancana of bragging to McGuire, who might have gossiped to Rowan.
47. See also Powers, *The Man Who Kept the Secrets*, pp. 182, 193-198, 441. Senior officials who testified to Congress never showed the anger or deep alarm that would have been appropriate if CIA assassination efforts were truly unauthorized. And no one admitted to anything beyond what documentary evidence compelled.
48. U.S. Senate, *Alleged Assassination Attempts*, p. 121.
49. *Ibid.*, p. 138.
50. It is also plausible, however, that McGeorge Bundy would have known.
51. The best discussion of strategic planning is E. Halperin, *The National Liberation Movement in Latin America* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Center for International Studies, 1959). Report No. A/69-6.
52. See also the discussion in chapter 5 of how Castro's success against Batista gave added reason to believe psychological collapse might be achieved easily. Allen Dulles's carefully worded statement was, "I know of no estimate that a spontaneous uprising of the unarmed population of Cuba would be touched off by the landing." Quoted in Wyden, *Bay of Pigs*, p. 139.

53. A summary of the president's favorable view is located in M. Bundy, "National Security Action Memorandum No. 31" (March 11, 1961) (Photocopy: Kennedy Library): "The President expects to authorize US support for an appropriate number of patriotic Cubans to return to their homeland. He believes that the best possible plan, from the point of view of combined military, political and psychological considerations has not yet been presented, and new proposals are to be concerted promptly." Meetings were large (15-20 people) and formal. In addition to the president they usually included McGeorge Bundy, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., and (at times) Richard Goodwin from the White House; Dean Rusk, Thomas Mann, and A. A. Berle from the State Department; Robert McNamara, Paul Nitze, and Joint Chiefs of Staff representatives (General Lemnitzer, the chairman, and Admiral Burke, chief of naval operations, having principal roles, with General Gray present as an aide in charge of CIA liaison) from the Defense Department; Allen Dulles, Richard Bissell, and, at times, three to four other officials (Tracy Barnes, Gen. Charles Cabell, "Jake Engler" and Col. Hawkins) from the CIA.
54. Wyden, *Bay of Pigs*, pp. 100, 135.
55. Bundy's testimony in Taylor, *Operation ZAPATA*, p. 176.
56. This was the reason, as well, to use old, leased Cuban boats to conduct the landing rather than military vessels properly equipped for defense. The older, less capable equipment needed for the cover story was later criticized in Maxwell Taylor's postmortem (see chapter 3). But even without jets in Castro's hands, it was recognized by Pentagon analysts that destruction of Castro's air force was absolutely necessary. On March 10 the Joint Chiefs sent a report to the Secretary of Defense warning the landing would fail without absolute control of the air. They wrote that even one Cuban aircraft with a .50-caliber machine gun "could sink all or most of the invasion force." U.S. Department of Defense, "Memoranda for the Secretary." JCSM-146-61, enclosure A, pp. 8-9.
57. There was also an attempted army coup in Guatemala: The CIA used the expatriates to aid its suppression. But the preparations were well known and controversial in Guatemala and the government wanted the troops to leave. The November 13, 1960 attempt is discussed in Wise and Ross, *Invisible Government*, p. 33.
58. Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days*, p. 242; Wyden, *Bay of Pigs*, p. 100; Schlesinger, *Robert F. Kennedy*, pp. 453-454.
59. Note, especially, the expectation of a quiet landing.
60. Wyden, *Bay of Pigs*, p. 8.
61. See L. Etheredge, *A World of Men: The Private Sources of American Foreign Policy* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1978); Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days*, pp. 186-205.
62. For quantitative evidence that achievement and power motivation are part of a foreign policy syndrome that includes perception of challenges and threats, see L. Etheredge, *A World of Men*.
63. Fulbright's memo is reprinted in K. Meyer, ed., *Fulbright of Arkansas* (Washington, DC: Robert D. Luce, 1963). Robert Kennedy, in his Kennedy Library interview by Martin (vol. 1, p. 60) asserted that Fulbright received a later briefing, following which he indicated a modifying of his opposition. J. Fulbright (personal communication) has said this is untrue.
- Kennedy returned from his trip more militant than before, according to Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days*, p. 251, Fulbright's memo notwithstanding. Kennedy was vacationing in Florida at the home of Earl Smith, Eisenhower's ambassador to Cuba under Batista and an old family friend. See H. Thomas, *The Cuban*

Revolution (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), p. 1309. Smith was passionately anti-Castro and alleged in his memoirs *The Fourth Floor: An Account of the Castro Communist Revolution* (New York: Random House, 1962), pp. 52-54 that Cuban communists had plotted to assassinate him and that the State Department had confirmed evidence of such a plan. Whether this was a contemporary belief and mentioned to Kennedy, or possibly fabricated and reported in Smith's memoirs as a later cover for the president should the administration's assassination plans become public, I have been unable to determine. An inquiry to the State Department using the Freedom of Information Act did not yield copies of any reports such as Smith implied he received, but this search was not definitive.

64. See H. Dinerstein, *The Making of a Missile Crisis, October, 1962* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1976), pp. 80-87. Khrushchev was taken to be speaking figuratively when he initially said Soviet rockets would support Cuban independence.
65. Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days*, chapters 1-6; also Wyden, *Bay of Pigs*, p. 316, makes the case for such learning.
66. I discuss the risk reduction logic of this decision process further in chapter 6.
67. Rusk was equivocal, but Kennedy perceived him to be a supporter. See Wyden, *Bay of Pigs*, p. 305. For Berle's views, see A. Berle, "The Cuban Crisis: Failure of American Foreign Policy" *Foreign Affairs* 39 (October 1960): 40-55.
68. Note that Kennedy had received a long memorandum, via Schlesinger, from Harvard professors John Plank and Bill Barnes, also strongly arguing against the invasion. Plank's conclusion, "We had access to the top of power, and there was nothing we could do to stop it" is relevant to the discussion in chapters 5 and 6 that motivation, not failure to hear the available evidence and argument, was the central determinant. See Wyden, *Bay of Pigs*, p. 125.
69. Ibid. T. Sorenson, *Kennedy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965) and other liberals have tended to see Kennedy as more reluctant.
70. In fact, he appears to have revealed himself differently, in these informal discussions, to men who shared the view he was expressing. This may have been politically astute, but I think he also instinctively surrounded himself with people who were, in effect, different aspects of himself. He then used them as sounding boards to express and integrate his different moods and reactions in decision making. Bundy himself was unsure of the president's true feelings. Recently he has said he thought, in 1961, that Kennedy did not like the invasion idea. Now, looking back, he believes Kennedy wanted the plan to succeed. Robert Kennedy's aggressive stance, and the role he played with the president's knowledge must count, I think, as expressing an aspect of the president's own personality. See Wyden, *Bay of Pigs*, p. 165 and Mosley, *Dulles*, pp. 464-474, passim. I will argue, in chapter 6, that the question is not either/or but that Kennedy was both confident and assertive and apprehensive and reluctant.
71. Wyden, *Bay of Pigs*, p. 318. There could be such deeper considerations at work. Freud would have said that deference and covert hostility toward older or more powerful male adults are commonplace. There are no accidents in mental life, the master said, and certainly some ordinarily very bright people "screwed up." There is no explicit evidence for or against the idea in this case.
72. Bissell's politics are discussed in Parmet, *JFK*, p. 160.
73. Wyden, *Bay of Pigs*, p. 120.
74. Ibid., p. 165. In fact, there is little evidence of this. At least by Schlesinger's account in *A Thousand Days* the manifest mood was belligerent. That Kennedy

thought otherwise might—but there is no additional evidence—suggest that he felt some of this instinct.

75. Quoted in Wyden, *Bay of Pigs*, p. 142.
76. A deeper sexual logic might mean, one step further, that if the president fully committed himself to the CIA's plans (America's power equals his power), they (these Eisenhower carry-overs) would have him by the balls . . . and he really did not like that idea. Whether Kennedy thought of power with these undertones is unclear: To leave the issue elusive, with a "fig leaf," seems to be what the evidence compels. A sexual analogy underlay Gray Lynch's postmortem schema for an operation which almost got him killed: "Superman was a fairy." Wyden, *Bay of Pigs*, p. 302.
77. These were all busy men, especially so at the beginning of a new administration. But there is no exonerating evidence that this was a hasty decision: No participants later complained they had lacked an opportunity to be briefed about the plan fully or to discuss it at length. Kennedy did not receive a full-dress military briefing, but he did not request it and felt he had ample time to take a Florida vacation. They apparently spent at least fifteen to twenty hours focusing on the problem in formal sessions with the president in the three months prior to the invasion. There were seven formal meetings involving the president: January 28, February 8, March 16, March 29, and April 4, 12, and 15 are listed by Bundy in "Memorandum to Lt. Col. Benjamin Tarwater," May 2, 1961. (Photocopy: Kennedy Library.) Wyden, *Bay of Pigs*, p. 99, adds a meeting on March 11. The most detailed discussion of the crucial April 4 meeting is Wyden, *Bay of Pigs*, pp. 146-150.
78. P. Blackstock, *The Strategy of Subversion: Manipulating the Policies of Other Nations* (Chicago: Quadrangle, 1964), p. 240. The president's decision was also conveyed in a memorandum on April 13 to Rusk, McNamara, and Dulles from McGeorge Bundy: "There will be no employment of U.S. armed forces against Cuba unless quite new circumstances develop." "Memorandum of April 13, 1961." (Declassified October 17, 1983). Photocopy, Kennedy Library.
79. Wise and Ross, *The Invisible Government*, pp. 13-14; Wyden, *Bay of Pigs*, pp. 175-176. Use of napalm was ruled out against the Havana area for fear of "concern and public outcry," but it was approved for the beachhead area. The restriction probably reduced the effectiveness of the D-2 strikes. See Taylor *Operation ZAPATA*, pp. 95, 346.
80. To retain security, the CIA (probably wisely) did not alert the indigenous Cuban underground. Earlier writers were unaware of the CIA's independent radio operator net, controlled separately from the Cuban underground, that was to be used. It is still unwise to reach a conclusion about how effectively Castro's sweep worked to disrupt operational plans, especially as the CIA believed 2,500 members of the Cuban military would aid the expatriate cause if it established momentum. Who these people were, where they were placed, what they were prepared to do, and whether they were vulnerable to the mass arrest counterplan Castro prepared is still classified.
81. Guantanamo was ruled off limits to the invaders; planes were forbidden to land there in the event of trouble.
82. See Taylor, *Operation ZAPATA*, pp. 96-97; Wyden, *Bay of Pigs*, pp. 170-172.
83. Wyden, *Bay of Pigs*, pp. 186-190; Stevenson declared the planes involved "to the best of our knowledge were Castro's own airforce planes." Wise and Ross, *Invisible Government*, pp. 15-17.
84. The *New York Times*, its lead story filed from Miami by Tad Szulc, was promi-

- ment among the skeptics. But until several investigative reporters began to write skeptical stories, the major news services and many newspapers treated the CIA's defector cover story as authoritative fact. For example, AP's wire report from Havana on April 15 began with the lead, "Pilots of Prime Minister Fidel Castro's air force revolted today and attacked three of the Castro regime's key air bases with bombs and rockets." See Wise and Ross, *Invisible Government*, p. 18.
85. Wyden, *Bay of Pigs*, p. 189. Stevenson's cable arrived at the State Department at 7:33 p.m. The timing suggests it precipitated a call from Rusk to Kennedy.
 86. Wise and Ross, *Invisible Government*, p. 45, add a fifth ship, the *Lake Charles*. Wyden, *Bay of Pigs*, p. 216, also records five ships; the *Lake Charles*, however, did not reach the beaches in time for the battle. *Ibid.*, p. 292n.
 87. The American naval vessels were also ordered to paint over their identification numbers, a maneuver that would presumably make them less "American" to reporters, if the ships should later be observed off shore, and also appear less "overt" to the Russians.
 88. The carrier USS *Boxer* was also in the vicinity, equipped to use new helicopter assault ("vertical envelopment") tactics. See Blackstock, *The Strategy of Subversion*, p. 248. It was not officially part of the task force but its presence and capability were intentional.
 89. Wyden, *Bay of Pigs*, pp. 217-220.
 90. *Ibid.*, p. 221.
 91. *Ibid.*
 92. The reason for the failure was never established, although it suggests sabotage by agents Castro would surely have attempted to place within the invasion force.
 93. Equipment included tanks and other vehicles.
 94. Wyden, *Bay of Pigs* is the principal English-language source for Castro's view of the operation, esp. pp. 248-262.
 95. *Ibid.*, p. 249; Taylor, *Operation ZAPATA*, p. 97 on Cuban troop coordination.
 96. The reef misidentification is discussed in Wyden, *Bay of Pigs*, pp. 136-138. Cubans with the invasion force knew of the reef but the CIA officials relied on U-2 photographs and interpreters in Washington. Local CIA officials thought the Cubans who brought the problem to their attention were just nervous and responded with kindly reassurance that everything would turn out.
 97. No Americans were aboard these boats because of Kennedy's orders to keep Americans out of the combat zone. This reduced American control at a crucial time.
 98. The basic source on battle events is Wyden, *Bay of Pigs*, pp. 210-288, supplemented by Johnson, *The Bay of Pigs*. The Taylor commission testimony, taken before the imprisoned Brigade members were ransomed, is less reliable.
 99. Distances are given in Taylor, *Operation ZAPATA*, p. 283. Without this crucial ammunition, the CIA tried to keep the invasion alive by airdrops and tactical air support for the beaches from Guatemala. The long distances, and the round trip required by the absence of a beachhead airstrip for refueling, gave planes only about 30 minutes over the beaches.
 100. Castro's tactical grasp was excellent as, unknown to the CIA, the Bay of Pigs region was his favorite fishing spot. He urged great speed because he anticipated his greatest danger would come if a beachhead were established and America could "recognize" a liberation government to legitimate direct American involvement. See, for example, Wyden, *Bay of Pigs*, p. 258.
 101. Johnson, *The Bay of Pigs*, provides eyewitness accounts.

102. Once on the ground it took one to two hours to turn around an expatriate plane for another run. See Taylor, *Operation ZAPATA*, pp. 119, 233. The absence of tail guns to increase payload was deliberate and reflected a consistent planning assumption between the CIA and JCS that either there would be air cover or complete destruction of Castro's air force. Castro's planes, of course, could be rearmed and turned around without seven-hour flying delays.
103. Communication snarls kept Washington from accurate knowledge of many issues, but the need for ammunition was clear to them. The *Lake Charles* was not due for several days.
104. R. Bissell (personal communication). Presidential approval reflected new consideration on Monday's situation and was not an automatic carry-over of the delay decision on Sunday.
105. Earlier efforts to obtain a closer launch point had not been successful, and the president had forbidden use of bases on the American mainland.
106. This is Walt Rostow's view. Rostow was present during these discussions. He later said, "It was inconceivable to them that the President would let it openly fail when he had all this American power." Wyden, *Bay of Pigs*, p. 270.
107. Wyden, *Bay of Pigs*, p. 180, on Castro's planning assumptions.
108. *Ibid.*, pp. 258-259.
109. Some degree of delay can likely be attributed to Kennedy's cover-story insistence on going ahead with an apparently normal work (and weekend) schedule and to his reluctance to make any decisions until he had more facts. He insisted on making the key decisions but had not prepared himself to do so, lacked a good conception of the terrain, and did not take obvious steps, e.g., radio replacements from the naval task force, to get him the timely information he needed.
110. Wyden, *Bay of Pigs*, p. 281.
111. Quoted in Schlesinger, *Robert F. Kennedy*, p. 445.
112. It was used once to evacuate wounded.
113. Wyden, *Bay of Pigs*, pp. 235-236, suggests that Americans began to substitute on Tuesday.
114. President Kennedy was not informed of this violation. He only learned of it months later when the widow of one of the men—in the face of repeated official denials from the bureaucracy that it had no information about her husband—pursued the issue successfully through a member of Congress.
115. Wyden, *Bay of Pigs*, pp. 242-243; Wise and Ross, *Invisible Government*, pp. 68-71.
116. The navy destroyed all records of its operations, a standard procedure for covert work.
117. Wyden, *Bay of Pigs*, p. 227. Kennedy quoted the Brigade commander's refusal in a speech to a meeting of newspaper editors to illustrate the zeal of the men. J. Kennedy, "Address." It is unlikely he realized the CIA commander on the scene had unwittingly encouraged the men to wait for resupply, which the commander thought would be approved.
118. Wyden, *Bay of Pigs*, p. 218.
119. Wise and Ross, *Invisible Government*, pp. 67-68.
120. Wyden, *Bay of Pigs*, p. 271.
121. *Ibid.*, pp. 281-282. Even twenty years later, the CIA commanders and naval commanders of the task force (who monitored the battle but continually had to refuse aid, by presidential order, to men being killed) were traumatized. Bissell likely judged astutely that, had he told the complete truth, the CIA commanders, loyal

to their men, would have disobeyed and effected a resupply early on Wednesday. Given Kennedy's views, and the hopelessness of further fighting, it likely seemed prudent, and perhaps an act of humanity, to cut off the Brigade's ammunition.

122. Ibid., p. 287.

123. Kennedy threatened an invasion to save the lives of the men, anticipating Castro might otherwise execute them.