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a concept in some detail for employment of the force, although the invasion area had not been finally decided upon. Several major questions of national policy having important bearing upon the operation were as yet unresolved, however. These were:

- (1) Whether the national government would permit execution of the strike operation.
- (2) Whether the national government, if agreeable to the conduct of the operation, would permit its execution not later than 1 March 1961, which was the latest date considered desirable by the Paramilitary Staff.
- (3) Whether adequate tactical operations would be permitted in conjunction with the amphibious/airborne assault.
- (4) Whether American contract pilots could be used for tactical and logistical air operations over Cuba.
- (5) Whether the base at Puerto Cabezas, Nicaragua, could be used for tactical air operations and staging.
- (6) Whether an air base in the United States could be used for logistical flights to Cuba.

b. In an effort to cause resolution of these questions, the undersigned, on 4 January 1961, forwarded to superior authority within C.I.A. a memorandum which outlined the current status of preparations for amphibious/airborne and tactical air operations against Cuba and set forth the requirement for policy decisions on all of the questions listed above. Enclosure (1) is a copy of this memorandum. It should be noted in particular that the undersigned, in this memorandum, recommended:

- (1) That the air preparation commence not later than D minus 1 Day.
- (2) That any move to curtail the number of aircraft to be employed from those available be firmly resisted.

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(3) That the operation be abandoned if policy does not provide for use of adequate air support.

c. None of these policy questions, in the end, was resolved in the manner recommended by the undersigned, except in regard to use of the base at Puerto Cabezas, Nicaragua.

10. THE PREFERRED PLAN (TRINIDAD).

a. Reasons for Selection of Trinidad as the Preferred Landing Area:

(1) Extensive study for four months of the entire littoral of Cuba, including the Isle of Pines, led the Paramilitary Staff to select the Trinidad area of Las Villas Province as by far the best area for purposes of the amphibious/airborne landing. This area offered the following advantages:

(a) Good landing beaches with suitable routes of egress from the beach.

(b) An excellent drop zone for parachute troops near a terrain feature which dominated the town of Trinidad.

(c) Good defensive terrain dominating all approaches into the area.

(d) Excellent possibilities of isolating the objective area from approach by vehicular traffic. Mountain barriers protected the area from the north and west. The east flank was protected by an unfordable river with only two access bridges, one highway and one railroad, which could be destroyed by air or parachute demolition teams. The only other approach was along a coastal road from the west which crossed several bridges. Destruction of three key bridges could prevent the movement of truck convoys, tanks and artillery into the area.

(e) The area contained a hard-surfaced 3,500 foot air strip usable by C-46 aircraft (but not by B-26 light bombers) and a port facility at Casilda.

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(f) The town of Trinidad contained a population of 18,000, offering the possibility of immediate expansion of the landing force by volunteers. The people of Trinidad and of the entire area of Las Villas were known to be sympathetic to the anti-Castro guerrilla activity which persisted in the Escambray Mountains for many months.

(g) The objective area was immediately adjacent to the Escambray Mountains, the best guerrilla country in Cuba except for certain mountainous areas in Oriente Province of Eastern Cuba. If unable to hold a beachhead, the landing force would be able to retire to the mountains for guerrilla activity. In these mountains tanks and artillery could not be used against them.

(h) Cooperation could be expected from guerrilla forces, estimated at 600 to 1,000 men, which were then operating successfully in the Escambray Mountains.

(i) Expansion of activity in the mountains of Central Cuba offered the possibility of severing the island in the center.

(2) Members of the Joint Staff, of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, in an independent study of Cuba arrived at the same conclusion reached by the Project Paramilitary Staff -- that the Trinidad area was the best possible site for landing of a Cuban insurgent force.

b. Concept of the Trinidad Operation. The concept of the operation as developed by the Paramilitary Staff during January 1961, is contained in Enclosure (2).

c. Evaluation of the Plan and of the Force by the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

(1) A team of officers of the Joint Staff headed by Brigadier General D. W. Gray, U. S. Army, evaluated the complete operation plan for Trinidad during the period 31 January to 6 February 1961. This evaluation resulted in a favorable assessment of this plan by the Joint Chiefs of

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Staff. Reference (a) is a report by the Joint Chiefs of Staff on their evaluation of the plan.

(2) The report mentioned above recommended evaluation of the invasion force by a team of officers representing the Joint Chiefs of Staff. This was done at the training base in Guatemala in late February and resulted in a favorable evaluation of the force's combat capabilities. Reference (b) is the Joint Chiefs of Staff report of this evaluation.

d. Major Features of the Plan:

(1) Plan for Landing. The landing plan provided for simultaneous landing at first light on D-Day of two reinforced rifle companies of approximately 200 men each over two beaches southwest of Trinidad and the parachute landing of a company of equal strength immediately north of Trinidad. The remainder of the force was to land over one of the two beaches in successive trips of landing craft.

(2) Naval Gunfire. Two LCI each mounting eleven 50 caliber machine guns and two 75mm recoilless rifles were to provide naval gunfire support at the beaches.

(3) Tactical Air Operations. The plan provided for a maximum effort surprise strike (15 B-26) at dawn of D-1 on all Cuban military airfields followed by repeated strikes at dusk of the same day and at first light of D-Day against any airfields where offensive aircraft were yet operational. Immediate post strike photography was provided for in the plan. Tank, artillery, and truck concentrations known to be at Managua were also to be attacked on D-1 as were the Havana power plants, in order to deprive the capital of power and interrupt communications. Naval craft in or near the objective area were also to be attacked. On D-Day, a beach strafe and a bombing, strafing attack on the parachute drop zone were also planned as well as attacks on three key bridges. Armed reconnaissance and all approach roads throughout D-Day and thereafter was also to be provided. The first and primary objective of planned air action was to eliminate

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completely all opposing tactical aircraft.

(4) Scheme of Maneuver. The landing force was to seize and defend terrain features east, north and west of Trinidad dominating all approaches to the area. If unable to hold the beachhead, the force was to withdraw to the northwest into the Escambray Mountains to continue operations as a powerful guerrilla force supplied by air.

11. POSITION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE IN REGARD TO THE TRINIDAD PLAN.

a. The Secretary of State and the Assistant Secretary of State for Latin American Affairs consistently opposed the Trinidad Plan on the grounds that the operation would have the appearance of a U. S. World War II invasion and would be too obviously attributable to the United States. These officials expressed the opinion that execution of the Trinidad Plan would cause reactions adverse to the United States in Latin American and in the United Nations, and would possibly cause counter-moves by the Sino-Soviet Bloc in Laos, Berlin or elsewhere. Mr. Rusk on one occasion stated that the possibility of air attack by Castro forces against the United States could not be discounted.

b. Secretary Rusk and Assistant Secretary Mann objected in particular to the conduct of any tactical air operations. Mr. Mann took the position that there could be no tactical air operations unless the tactical aircraft were actually based on Cuban soil. He proposed on one occasion that a landing be made in Oriente Province without air support and that an airfield be built by the landing force to receive tactical aircraft, whereupon air operations could commence.

12. REJECTION OF THE TRINIDAD PLAN. After careful consideration of the Trinidad Plan, the President decided on or about 11 March 1961 that it should not be executed, and directed that possible alternative methods of employing the Cuban forces be studied. It was the understanding of the C.I.A. officials concerned that any alternate plan produced should have the following characteristics:

a. The landing should be made in a more quiet manner, preferably at night, and should not give the appearance

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of a World War II type amphibious assault. It was desired that the operation insofar as possible appear as an uprising from within Cuba rather than an invasion.

b. It would be necessary to seize an airfield capable of supporting B-26 operations, to which any tactical air operations conducted could be attributed. No tactical air operations were to be conducted until such a field had been seized.

13. THE STUDY OF POSSIBLE ALTERNATE LANDING AREAS.

a. During the period 13 to 15 March 1961, the Paramilitary Staff, pursuant to verbal instructions from the Deputy Director (Plans), conducted an intensive study of possible alternate areas in which a landing could be made in such a way as to satisfy the limiting requirements mentioned in the preceding paragraph. The entire littoral of Cuba was again examined in the search for an airstrip capable of supporting B-26 operations, which could be seized and defended by the Cuban assault force. In particular, the Provinces of Oriente, Pinar del Rio, Las Villas and Matanzas were examined, and the Isle of Pines was re-studied. As a result of this study, the Paramilitary Staff concluded that the only airstrips in all Cuba capable of supporting B-26 operations which the Cuban force could have any hope of seizing and holding were the Soplillar field and a new field at Playa Giron, both in the eastern half of the Zapata Peninsula of Central Cuba.

b. In accordance with the instructions of the Deputy Director (Plans), three concepts for possible operations were drawn up. These concepts, which in the short time available for preparation (about three days) could be developed only to the extent of sketching a tentative scheme of maneuver on an operations map and preparing brief notes, were based on the following areas:

- (1) The Preston area on the north coast of Oriente Province.
- (2) The south coast of Las Villas between Trinidad and Cienfuegos.
- (3) The Eastern Zapata area near Cochinos Bay.

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c. It was recognized by the Paramilitary Staff that the first two concepts mentioned above did not satisfy the requirements for a B-26 airfield, and therefore could not have been executed within established policy parameters unless attempted entirely without air support. The Paramilitary Staff advised higher authority within C.I.A. at this time, as it had consistently done in the past, that no amphibious operation could be conducted without control of the air and adequate tactical air support.

d. These three concepts were evaluated by General Gray's group from the Joint Staff. Their assessment, as approved by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, was that of the three alternatives evaluated, the Zapata concept was best, but that none of the three alternatives was as militarily feasible or likely to accomplish the objective as the Trinidad plan. Reference (c) is the report of this evaluation by the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

e. The Paramilitary Staff recommended the Zapata Plan to the Deputy Director (Plans) as being the best of the three alternatives, and the only one of these which offered any possibility of conducting tactical air operations within the limits of established policy. The Deputy Director (Plans) was advised, however, that some way would have to be devised to knock out Castro's air force before this or any other landing was attempted.

14. THE AIR FORCE DEFECTION PLAN.

a. In an effort to find some way acceptable to the Department of State and to the President in which air attacks could be conducted for the purpose of destroying the Castro air force, the undersigned with Mr. Bissell and his assistant, Mr. Barnes, developed a plan along the following lines:

(1) Prior to D-Day, a B-26 aircraft painted with Castro air force markings would be flown to Miami by a Cuban who would land soon after dawn and represent himself as a defecting pilot of Castro's air force. He would state that he, with certain companions, had executed a defection plot, and had attacked other aircraft on the fields from which they had flown.

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(2) At dawn on the day of the defection, B-26 aircraft would attack the three principal military airfields in Cuba, where all fighters and bombers were believed to be located as a result of photographic reconnaissance. A limitation on numbers of aircraft to be employed was imposed by the Deputy Director (Plans), who reasoned that the Department of State would not accept a plan involving a larger number of aircraft than could reasonably be attributed to the defection plot. He decided to propose that a total of six aircraft be employed, with two attacking each of three principal fields, Campo Libertad, San Antonio de los Banos, and Santiago. The total number was later raised to eight on recommendation of the undersigned.

b. It was believed that this attack, followed by dawn attacks on D-Day against these and all other military airfields, would have a good chance of destroying all of Castro's operable fighters and bombers, which were believed (correctly) to number no more than from fifteen to eighteen.

15. THE DIVERSION PLAN.

a. The desirability of conducting a diversionary landing in an area remote from the main landing had long been recognized by the Paramilitary Staff. However, sufficient troops for this purpose could not be raised, it appeared, except at the expense of the main landing force which had not yet reached desired strength. A development in Miami in late March 1961, provided an opportunity to raise a small diversionary force. Nino Diaz, a Cuban exile leader in Miami, expressed a desire to lead a small force composed of his immediate followers into Cuba. It was decided to send Diaz and 170 men to the recently acquired training base at Belle Chase, New Orleans, where they could be organized, equipped and given minimal training. This was done in great haste, and the company was formed at Belle Chase over a period of about two weeks prior to its embarkation for the operation.

b. Arrangements were made by the Forward Operating Base in Miami for a Cuban vessel to lift Diaz's group to the objective. The plan provided for staging Diaz through the Naval Air Station at Key West and loading the force out of Stock Island in the Florida Keys.

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c. A beach 30 miles east of Guantanamo was selected for the Diaz landing. A C.I.A. paramilitary team with ten men and a radio operator were operating in this area, and this team was to be instructed to act as a reception party for Diaz at the beach. This team was in contact with a 100 man guerrilla group operating in the mountains adjacent to the landing area, and it was planned that Diaz would join forces with this group. Diaz was known to have a large political following in Oriente Province.

16. THE FINAL OPERATIONAL CONCEPT SUBMITTED TO THE PRESIDENT.

a. The final concept submitted to the President in late March 1961, provided for:

(1) The defection operation, combined with surprise dawn air attacks on D-2 against the three principal military airfields. No more than two aircraft were to be visible at any one place at one time.

(2) The landing of the Diaz group east of Guantanamo during the night of D-2.

(3) The landing of the main force at three widely separated landing points in Eastern Zapata during the early morning hours of D-Day. The landing was to be followed by air attacks on airfields and other military targets at dawn of D-Day, by which time the airfield in the objective area was expected to be in friendly hands. These D-Day air attacks were to be represented, if necessary, as coming from the field seized in Zapata, although plans provided for having only two B-26 aircraft operate from that field, while the remainder of the air force was to continue operations from Puerto Cabezas, Nicaragua.

b. The President directed that all preparations for the operation, including the staging and embarkation of troops, should continue, but that actual execution of the operation would be subject to his final decision twenty-four hours before scheduled commencement. The President also directed that plans be formulated for diversion of the ships with troops embarked in the event that he should decide to cancel the operation. Pursuant to these instructions, C.I.A. planned to divert the ships, if required, to New Orleans or to Vieques, Puerto Rico, where the force would be disbanded in increments.

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17. SUCCESSIVE DELAYS OF D-DAY.

a. The date originally selected by the Paramilitary Staff for execution of the Trinidad landing was 4 March 1961. This date was chosen on the basis of the following factors:

(1) The Government of Guatemala had expressed its desire to have the Cuban force removed from that country not later than 1 March.

(2) It was desired to execute the operation at the earliest possible date in view of the rapid military build-up in Cuba. Great quantities of military equipment, including field artillery, anti-aircraft artillery, and tanks, had been delivered to Cuba by the Soviet Bloc, and it was estimated that Castro's forces, under the tutelage of Bloc advisors, would soon achieve proficiency in the use of this equipment. It was also estimated that Castro could acquire a jet air capability by April, 1961. Unconfirmed reports were received indicating that crated MIG aircraft had been delivered, and by April, 1961 Cuban pilots known to be in Czechoslovakia would have had time to complete jet training.

(3) It was desired to land in the Trinidad area before guerrilla forces operating in the adjacent Escambray Mountains could be eliminated by Castro's ever-increasing pressure against them.

(4) The night of 4 March provided suitable conditions of moonlight to facilitate operations in the transport area in preparation for the landing at dawn.

b. After rejection of the Trinidad Plan, the Paramilitary Staff recommended 3 April 1961, as D-Day for the landing in Zapata. Moon conditions would again be favorable at that time, and 3 April appeared to be the earliest date by which necessary operation and administrative plans could be prepared and other necessary preparations made for the Zapata operation. This date proved to be unacceptable, however, since it coincided with a planned visit to the United States by the Prime Minister of Great Britain. In view of this visit, the President did not

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desire to conduct the operation before 10 April. That date was accordingly programmed, although it was made clear to all concerned by the Paramilitary Staff that the lack of adequate moonlight would increase the difficulty of the night landing. Later, D-Day was again postponed until 17 April in order, it was understood, to allow observation of further developments in the Laos situation and in the United Nations with regard to Cuban charges against the United States. The night of 16-17 April would be in the new moon phase with no moonlight.

18. FORCES AVAILABLE FOR THE ZAPATA OPERATION.

a. Ground Forces (1,511 men)

(1) The Cuban Brigade included:

- | | | |
|---|---|------------|
| (a) Headquarters and Service Company | - | 156 |
| (b) Heavy Weapons Company | - | 114 |
| (c) Five Infantry companies | - | 175 (each) |
| (d) One Airborne Infantry Company | - | 177 |
| (e) Tank Platoon | - | 24 |
| (These men were trained in a highly secure and satisfactory manner at Fort Knox.) | | |
| (f) Boat Operator Section | - | 36 |
| (g) Intelligence/Reconnaissance Company | - | 68 |
| (h) Surgical Team | - | 18 |
| (i) Supernumeraries | - | 43 |

(2) Major items of equipment included: 108 Browning Automatic Rifles; 49 30 caliber machine guns; 14 50 caliber machine guns; 22 60mm mortars; 20 81mm mortars; 7 4.2" mortars; 18 57mm recoilless rifles; 4 75mm recoilless rifles; 47 3.5" rocket

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launchers; 9 flamethrowers; 5 M41 tanks; 12 2½ ton trucks; one 3,000 gallon aviation gasoline tanker truck; one tractor crane; one dozer; 2 400 gallon water trailers; 11 ½ ton trucks and 9 ½ ton tractors.

b. Air Forces. The Cuban Air Force, based at Puerto Cabezas, Nicaragua, included fifteen B-26 light bombers, ten C-54 transports and five C-46 transports.

c. Sea Forces. Sea forces included:

(1) Two LCI, each mounting eleven 50 caliber machine guns and two 75mm recoilless rifles. (These craft were for use primarily as command and naval gunfire vessels, although each carried a 1000 man paramilitary pack in its hold). Each LCI carried two high-speed boats.

(2) Three LCU, each mounting two 50 caliber machine guns.

(3) Four LCVP, each mounting a 50 caliber machine gun.

*(4) Seven chartered commercial freighters (average 2,000 tons).

*NOTE: Freighters in the assault mounted two to three 50 caliber machine guns. Only four of these ships were to participate in the assault phase. The additional ships were loaded with follow-up supplies for both ground and air forces.

(5) One 165 foot Cuban coastal steamer.

19. MAJOR FEATURES OF THE ZAPATA PLAN.

a. Staging and Embarkation. The plan provided for airlifting Brigade troops less the airborne company, under cover of darkness, from Guatemala to Puerto Cabezas, Nicaragua, during three successive nights. Upon arrival, troops were to be moved immediately to the Puerto Cabezas dock near the airfield for embarkation before dawn. Supplies were pre-loaded in assault shipping at New Orleans prior to proceeding to Nicaragua.

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b. Movement to the Objective. Ships of the task force were to proceed independently over separate tracks in order not to give the appearance of a convoy, and were to arrive at a rendezvous point about forty miles off the Cuban coast at 1730 in the afternoon of D-1. From this point they were to proceed in column under cover of darkness to the transport area 5,000 yards off the beach, making rendezvous at this point at 2300 with the U. S. Navy LSD lifting the three pre-loaded LCU and four LCVP. One transport, escorted by an LCI, was to continue independently into Cochinos Bay for landing troops at the head of the Bay. As a deception measure, two United Fruit Company ships were hired to enter Puerto Cabezas harbor during the night the assault shipping sailed. The presence of these ships plus the one follow-up Garcia vessel lying off the harbor would, it was hoped, conceal the fact that the operation had been launched. This deception was apparently successful, for available intelligence indicates that Castro was not aware that an invasion force had left Nicaragua until after the landing.

c. The Plan for Landing. The plan provided for landings, commencing at 0200 17 April, at three widely separated beaches as follows:

(1) Red Beach. (Head of Cochinos Bay; left flank of beachhead). Two reinforced infantry companies, about 400 men, were to land from one transport at this beach, utilizing six 19 foot and four 14 foot aluminum craft with outboard motors.

(2) Blue Beach (Playa Giron; center of the beachhead; about 18 miles from Red Beach). The main body, about 700 men, including two infantry companies, the heavy weapons company less detachments, the headquarters and service company, tank platoon and motor transport platoon, were to land here utilizing LCI's, LCVP's and eighteen 19 foot aluminum boats from three transports. Reserve supplies (10 days) were to be unloaded at this beach.

(3) Green Beach (Right flank of the beachhead; about 18 miles east of Blue Beach). One reinforced company, about 200 men, was to land at this beach from an LCI utilizing one LCVP and the two launches available in the LCI.

d. Underwater Demolition Team (UDT) Plan. UDT swimmers were to reconnoiter and mark each beach with lights prior to the landing of troops.

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e. Naval Gunfire. One LCI, mounting eleven 50 caliber machine guns, five 30 caliber machine guns and two 75mm recoilless rifles, was to support the landing at Red Beach, while the second similarly armed craft was to support at Blue Beach prior to departing that area for the purpose of landing troops on Green Beach to the east.

f. Airborne Landing. The airborne company was to land at dawn by parachute from five C-46 aircraft in five drop zones for the purpose of sealing off the roads crossing the Zapata swamp into the beachhead area from the north.

g. Scheme of Maneuver.

(1) The beachhead area consisted of a belt of dry, scrub-covered land, about forty miles in length from east to west and from three to six miles in width, separated from the interior of Cuba by a vast swamp impassable to foot troops. The only approaches to the beachhead from the interior of Cuba consisted of three roads crossing the swamp from the north, and a coastal road leading to the east flank of the beachhead from Cienfuegos. Movement off the roads in the swamp area was impossible, while the coastal road from the east led through a narrow strip of land between the swamp and the sea.

(2) The scheme of maneuver was designed to seize and defend positions dominating the exposed, canalized routes across the swamp and blocking entry into the beachhead at the narrow neck of dry land at the east flank. Outposts beyond the swamp on the three roads leading from the north were to be dropped by parachute.

h. Air Plan.

(1) Dawn attacks on D-Day were planned against all airfields revealed by photography to have fighters or bombers still operational after the surprise attacks on D-2. Attacks were also to be launched at dawn on naval craft in or near the objective area and against other military targets. Two B-26 aircraft, after completing their attacks, were to land on the airfield near Blue Beach and continue flying interdiction and

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support missions, using ordnance which was to be promptly landed over the beach by an advance aviation party and fuel from the 3,000 tanker to be landed early from an LCU. All available aircraft were to phase back to the beachhead in afternoon sorties for interdiction, close support and other attacks as necessary.

(2) Enclosure (3) is the target list for D-Day extracted from the Zapata plan. Some of these targets were removed from the target list at the last moment in view of the injunction from higher authority that air attacks on D-Day would have to be more limited. The targets removed from the list were: Managua Military Base (where tanks and artillery were parked); Playa Baracoa Air Base (used mainly by helicopters and transports); Bauta International Broadcasting Station; Topes de Collantes Military Base. (Succeeding paragraphs describing the actual operation, will show that none of these attacks planned for D-Day were carried out as a result of orders from higher authority.)

i. Communication.

(1) The internal radio communication system of the Brigade was similar to that of a reinforced United States infantry unit of similar size, but was more extensive in amounts of equipment and number of nets employed. Portable radios with a voice range of 30 miles were used for communication between Brigade Headquarters and the various companies of the Brigade. Nets for tactical and administrative purposes, mortar spotting and air-ground control were provided.

(2) For communication with Headquarters in the United States and the air base in Nicaragua, the Brigade was equipped with two communication trailers which were to be landed from two separate ships. In addition, it was provided with six man-portable sets (RS-1) capable of communication with Headquarters in the United States or Nicaragua. Mechanical cipher equipment and one-time pads were available for encryption and decryption.

(3) The command ship and alternate command ship (LCI's) had direct CW radio links with the United States and Nicaragua, and voice nets for naval command, boat control, and

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ship-to-shore liaison and logistical purposes. The Brigade Commander could relay messages to the United States or Nicaragua through either of these ships.

(4) Each troop transport was provided with a direct radio circuit to the United States and Nicaragua.

j. Supplies.

(1) Assault Shipping.

(a) The equivalent of two basic loads of ammunition for all units was deck loaded aboard the transports lifting the units concerned. Individuals were to land with three days emergency-type rations and all the ammunition they could carry.

(b) Seven 2½ ton trucks, lifted in the three LCU, were pre-loaded with ammunition of all types.

(c) Paramilitary arms packs (arms, field equipment and limited ammunition for outfitting guerrilla forces) were available in assault shipping (2 LCI; ATLANTICO) for 4,000 men.

(d) Ten days supply of Classes I, III and V was loaded in the holds of one of the assault ships (RIO ESCONDIDO).

(2) Follow-up Shipping.

(a) One transport (LAKE CHARLES) with ten days of supply, Classes I, III and V, was scheduled to arrive at the objective area on the morning of D+2 from Nicaragua.

(b) A second follow-up ship (ORATAVA) with twenty days supplies, Class I, III and V, for the landing force, was to be on call in the Caribbean Sea south of Cuba. This ship, in addition to the above, carried 21,000 bulk rations, medical supplies, aviation gasoline and 30 days aviation ordnance for the entire Cuban air force.

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(c) A third follow-up ship (LA PLAYA) with arms and ammunition for 15,000 men, plus vehicles, communication equipment, medical supplies and POL was also to be on call south of Cuba.

(3) Air Delivery.

(a) Three days supply of Classes I, III and V were available at the airfield at Puerto Cabezas, Nicaragua, for air landing or parachute delivery.

(b) Paramilitary arms packs for 3,000 men were available for air delivery at three airfields in Guatemala, Nicaragua, and Opa Locka.

(4) Additional Backup. Arms, equipment and supplies for 15,000 men were positioned by the Defense Department at Anniston, Alabama, as additional backup. Sufficient of the above for 2,000 men was prepared for air drop.

k. Evacuation.

(1) Establishment of a rear medical facility for receipt of casualties evacuated from the objective area was a problem which defied solution until a few days before execution of the operation. Authority could not be obtained for use of a facility in the United States. There were no usable facilities at bases in Guatemala or Nicaragua, and, in any event, the governments of those countries did not wish to have Cuban casualties evacuated there.

(2) Finally, it was decided that the Department of Defense would establish a field hospital at Vieques, Puerto Rico, to be operational by D+5. This plan was abandoned, however, and it was agreed in the end that casualties would be evacuated by air or sea to Ramey Air Force Base, Puerto Rico.

20. EXECUTION OF THE OPERATION. A summary of the more significant events of the actual operation is recorded in following paragraphs.

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21. AIR STRIKES ON D-2 (15 APRIL 1961).

a. The purpose of these strikes was to destroy Castro's tactical aircraft, all of which were believed from photographic interpretation to be based at San Antonio, Campo Libertad and Santiago. Three B-26 were programmed against each of the first two of these fields and two against the third. Each aircraft carried ten 250 pound fragmentation bombs, eight 5 inch rockets and full ammunition for eight 50 caliber machine guns.

b. The attack was executed at dawn, as planned. Returning pilots reported destruction of 50 percent of tactical aircraft at Campo Libertad, 75 percent at San Antonio and 100 percent at Santiago. The readout of photography taken immediately after the strike indicated that pilot reports were optimistic, and a conservative estimate was that only about 50 percent of Castro's original tactical air force of 15 to 18 serviceable aircraft had been knocked out.

c. Antiaircraft fire from 50 caliber and 12.7mm guns was reported as heavy at Campo Libertad and San Antonio. One friendly aircraft was disabled and crashed in the sea north of Havana. Two other aircraft landed at friendly bases low on fuel. The aircraft and crews were recovered.

22. THE DIVERSION OPERATION.

a. The Diaz Group of 170 men was staged and embarked on schedule and proceeded to its objective area thirty miles east of Guantanamo in the Cuban coastal vessel (SANTA ANA) chartered for the operation. The Group failed to land during the night of 14/15 April as planned, however, reporting that difficulty had been encountered in finding the beach and the reconnaissance boat and two rubber landing craft had been lost.

b. Prior to launching the Diaz operation, the radio man and several other members of the ten-man C.I.A. team which was to meet Diaz at the beach were wounded in an accident with a hand grenade, and Headquarters contact with the intended reception party was lost.

c. Upon learning of Diaz's failure to land, Headquarters ordered him to land on the following night, but again he failed to do so giving a number of excuses. The undersigned

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decided at this time that the real reason for not landing was a failure of leadership, and it was believed that Diaz would never land as ordered. Accordingly, he was instructed to proceed to Zapata where he was to join the main force. Diaz did not immediately comply with these sailing instructions, but eventually reached the Zapata area too late for the operation.

d. This abortive effort illustrated one truth in regard to the entire operation -- the forces involved were composed of volunteer foreign nationals, all based, with the exception of Diaz's group, in countries outside the United States, and consequently the United States exercised no legal authority over them. All the Cuban forces except Diaz's, however, voluntarily complied with all instructions issued by C.I.A. Headquarters.

23. THE AMPHIBIOUS/AIRBORNE OPERATION AT ZAPATA.

a. Embarkation and Movement to the Objective.

(1) These operations were smoothly executed according to plan. (See paragraph 19.) The ships formed column at the planned place and time and made rendezvous on schedule at 2300 with the Navy LSD carrying the three LCU and four LCVP, about 5,000 yards off Blue Beach (Playa Giron). The transport HOUSTON, led by the radar-equipped LCI BARBARA J, proceeded onward into Cochinos Bay enroute to Red Beach.

(2) There is no evidence to indicate that the Cuban Government was aware of the approach of this force until the landing was commenced.

b. Cancellation of the Air Attacks Against Cuban Military Airfields and Other Targets Planned for 0540R on D-Day. (See paragraph 19h.)

(1) At about 2215 on the night of 16 April, I was informed at the Command Post by Mr. Esterline, the Project Chief, that these attacks had been cancelled by order of the President on recommendation of the Department of State. Upon hearing this, I immediately telephoned Mr. Bissell, the Deputy Director (Plans), who was at the Department of State, and

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urged in the strongest terms that the President be immediately requested to reconsider this decision and that the possible disastrous consequences of cancelling these attacks be explained to him. I offered the prediction at this time that shipping, with the essential supplies on board, would be sunk, possibly to the last ship, on the following day, since it was known that Castro still possessed a dangerous fighter and bomber capability. I stated also at this time that if the decision to cancel the air attacks had been communicated to the Command Post a few hours earlier, I would have strongly urged that the shipping be withdrawn without attempting to land the troops. But as it was, the ships were already closely approaching the transport area off the beaches, and by the time a message could reach them, the landing operations would be underway.

(2) Mr. Bissell, and General Cabell, the Deputy Director of Central Intelligence, conferred with Secretary of State Rusk about the matter, but did not see the President. It is my understanding that Secretary Rusk, after talking with General Cabell and Mr. Bissell, telephoned the President and recommended that the decision to cancel the air attacks remain unchanged. The President accepted this recommendation.

(3) After it was learned at the Command Post that the decision had not been changed, a message was sent to the task force at 0149 warning that Castro's air force had not been destroyed. The task force was ordered to expedite unloading during the night and to sail all transports, except the RIO ESCONDIDO, to the south at best speed. The RIO ESCONDIDO was to remain at Blue Beach to continue unloading its vital reserve supplies under protection of the guns of the two LCI, BARBARA J and BLAGAR.

c. D-Day Operations at Blue Beach (17 April).

(1) UDT Reconnaissance. A reconnaissance boat with UDT personnel and the C.I.A. operations officer from the Command Ship BLAGAR, Mr. Lynch, landed at Blue Beach shortly after midnight and marked the beach with lights. A coral reef

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