

ENCLOSURE 2

TRINIDAD (CONCEPT OF OPERATION)

1. MISSION. Commencing at H-hour on D-day, the Assault Force lands, seizes, occupies, and defends a lodgement in the TRINIDAD-CASILDA area in order to establish a base from which further land and air operations can be launched against the Castro government of CUBA.
2. CONCEPT OF OPERATION.
 - a. On D-day the Assault Force conducts an amphibious/airborne landing in the TRINIDAD area.
 - b. Prior to D-day, sabotage activities are directed at reducing and destroying the GOC ground, air and naval capability throughout CUBA, with particular emphasis on air, communications, transportation, armor, artillery and POL. Propaganda activities are intensified in order to obtain active support of the Cuban populace.
 - c. On D-1 tactical support aircraft attack major GOC air force installations in order to destroy aircraft on the ground and to inflict maximum damage to runways and control and communications facilities. Attacks are also launched against tank parks, artillery parks, motor transportation, and other military targets.
 - d. At about H-6 hours a tactical deception operation is conducted in the LA FE area of PINAR DEL RIO in order to cause movement of enemy forces away from the area of intended actual operations.
 - e. Immediately prior to and following H-hour on D-day, tactical support aircraft provide air support for the Assault Force in landing and seizure of objectives, with particular attention to enemy defensive installations and troop formation in the immediate objective area. Major rail and highway bridges west and north-west of TRINIDAD and along the coastal road toward CIENFUEGOS are bombed in order to isolate the objective area. Daily armed reconnaissance missions are continued in order to prevent movement of enemy forces against the lodgement.
 - f. Commencing at H-hour, the Assault Force lands by landing craft (LCVP and LCU) over designated beaches, (Beaches 1 and 2), and by parachute in designated drop zone, seizes objectives A, B, and C, and on order of Assault Force Commander, seizes objectives E and F. (Annex D-

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Operation Overlay).

- g. After seizure of initial objectives, the Assault Force attempts to obtain cooperation, assistance and good-will of the local populace in the TRINIDAD-CASILDA area. Combat inside the City of Trinidad is avoided. Facilities such as the hospital in TRINIDAD and the port facilities and petroleum supplies at CASILDA are converted to Brigade use.
- h. After consolidation of the lodgement, Assault Force coordinates operations with local guerrilla leaders and civil leaders in the area making maximum efforts to organize, equip and employ additional forces and incorporate them under command of the Brigade Commander.
- i. Upon seizure and preparation of the airfield at TRINIDAD, transport aircraft (C-46) utilize this base for supply and evacuation operations.
- j. Follow-up logistic support is provided by air landing, air drop and seaborne means on a scheduled basis and in response to call of Brigade Commander.
- k. In the event the TRINIDAD area cannot be held, the Assault Brigade, on order of the Brigade Commander, withdraws to the ESCAMBRAY MOUNTAINS in order to continue resistance operations against the Castro government. Support for these operations will be provided by aerial means.

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ENCLOSURE 3

Appendix 1 (Target List) to Annex E (Tactical Air Support) to
Operation Plan (ZAPATA)

1. On D-day, the following targets will be attacked:
 - a. San Antonio de los Banos Air Base (2252N-8231W)
 - b. Campo Libertad Air Base (2305N-8227W)
 - c. Santiago de Cuba Air Base (Antonio Maceo) (1957N-7551W)
 - d. Managua Military Base (2258N-8218W)
 - e. Santa Clara Air Base (2229N-7955W)
 - f. Playa Baracoa Air Base (near Havana)
 - g. Cienfuegos Air Base (Jaime Gonzalez) (2209-8025W)
 - h. Naval craft at or near Cienfuegos Naval Station
 - i. Naval craft at or near Batabano Naval Station
 - j. Nueva Geron Airfield (Isle of Pines) (2150N-8247W)
 - k. Bauta International Broadcasting Station (2259N-8232W)
 - l. Topes de Collantes Military Base.
 - m. San Julian Air Base - Jose Marti International Airport -
Camaguey Airfield.

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16 March 1961Anti-Castro Resistance in Cuba: Actual and Potential

1. There are now from 2,500 to 3,000 persons in Cuba engaged in active resistance against the Castro regime. It is our estimate that a well-organized, well-armed force, successful in securing a lodgement on Cuban soil, would receive the active support of 25% of the Cuban populace and would be opposed, at the maximum, by no more than 20% of the people. (Of the remaining 65%, the majority would adopt an attitude of neutrality until such time as there was a strong indication of which side had the better chance of victory.)

2. While Castro has been able to disperse small groups of poorly-armed insurgents, he has been unable to eliminate them or to prevent a general increase in resistance activities throughout the island. Las Villas, with 600 active guerrillas, remains the principal center of resistance, but Oriente (380 actives), Camaguey, and Matanzas are increasingly hostile to the regime. In the past six weeks, insurgent groups have been reported from three points in Oriente, one in Camaguey, and three in Matanzas. In Havana itself there was an attempt to assassinate Ernesto Che Guevara and attacks were made on a refinery, several tank trucks, and two large stores. A plan is underway in Pinar-del Rio for seizure of a major air base with the assistance of Army and Navy personnel from Castro's own forces. Sabotage is occurring at a steadily mounting tempo, with cane fields burning at the rate of 15,000 tons per week. At Santiago de Cuba an attack on the refinery was mounted successfully by an agent team within the harbor of Raul Castro's stronghold.

3. The forces which remain loyal to Castro are, for the most part, younger students, Communists, and those who have a stake in the regime. The latter consists of government officials, persons who have benefitted from the distribution of seized properties, and those who have received, or believe they will receive, various benefits (such as new housing and employment). Castro is opposed

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by former property holders, business and professional people, the clergy, students in Catholic schools, most of those persons originally in his own movement, and, increasingly, by the very classes he professes to champion - the laborers and the peasants. Reasons for this opposition are many. The increasingly virulent attacks on the Catholic Church are disturbing a people 90% Catholic, even those who are only nominal members. Workers have seen their unions become instrumentalities for Communist propaganda, and their leaders, including many non-Communist leftists, imprisoned and denounced. All classes are aware of the economic deterioration. There are shortages, not only of luxuries, but of such essentials as soaps, fats, automotive parts, salt, eggs, rice, and beans. The increased numbers of Soviet Bloc and Chinese Communist "advisors" and the regime's uncritical acceptance of the international Communist line have alienated, not only the conservatives, but also the non-Communist left and those intellectuals unwilling to serve as toadies to a foreign ideology. The regime's disregard for objective justice and the rule of law, the increase in the arbitrary powers and the arrogance of the Security Services, the drum-head execution of young counter-revolutionaries, have convinced many Cubans that beneath the propaganda myth Castro's regime is little different from that of Batista.

4. General discontent and disillusionment, however, are ineffective against a loyal, disciplined armed force. The people are ready to support a new regime, but they will not enjoy that opportunity if the bulk of Castro's military forces will fight for him. It is our estimate that those forces, if confronted by a trained opposition element with modern weapons and a unified command, will largely disintegrate. It is significant that most of the leaders of anti-Castro insurgent groups are Army officers who once fought with Castro against Batista. The Army has been systematically purged, and most of it is now serving in labor battalions or on routine garrison duty. There is great resentment in the Army at this down-grading, the subordination to the Militia, and the imprisonment of such popular leaders as Huber Matos. The Air Force has lost nearly all of its better pilots and navigators and does not constitute an effective combat force. All of the few senior Navy officers and many of the younger ones would welcome an opportunity to desert Castro. We estimate that a significant portion (35 to 40%) of the Army would join an opposition force if given the opportunity, and that the remainder would not fight. The Air Force would likely defect en masse. This would leave as Castro's chief reliance, the Militia.

5. The Militia is well-armed with individual weapons (rifles and submachine guns) and is receiving increasingly effective

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training. Within it are the "hard-core" of Castro supporters. Despite this, it is our estimate that not more than 5,000 to 8,000 would fight to the end for Castro, and then only if they were united in elements made up of similar die-hards, which, except in Havana, they are not. While some of the Militia joined for the glamour of a uniform, most members became so because they had no other choice. In the Escambray one Army commander urged Castro to withdraw all the militia because of their ineffectiveness. And it is significant that when the fighting became more serious in that area, three Army battalions were called in despite the presence of 40,000 militia who were opposed by no more than 800 insurgents. Reports of heavy militia casualties have spread throughout the Island. Where terrain is favorable and opposition light, the militia can be effective through sheer weight of numbers, e.g., against Captain Clodomiro Miranda and only thirteen followers, Castro employed six battalions. In rough terrain or against determined opposition that effectiveness becomes minimal.

6. In summary, it is our estimate that conditions within Cuba are now favorable for the overthrow of the regime if an effective, well-armed opposition force can secure a lodgement on the island, that the active resistance to Castro will increase rapidly from the present 2,500 to 3,000 to a figure at least ten times that size once a landing is effected, and that the Castro military forces, faced with such opposition, will not exceed a maximum of 8,000 to 10,000 effectives. It is our further estimate that even the hard-core pro-Castro forces will not be effective outside the area of Havana, and that any opposition force that can advance as far as Havana will accrue to it such defectors from the Castro military as will give it superiority in numbers.

ENCLOSURE 5

Cuba: The Record Set Straight *

by Charles J.V. Murphy

Not long ago, at President Kennedy's daily staff meeting, the special assistant for national security affairs, McGeorge Bundy, opened the proceedings by noting, "Sir, we have four matters up for discussion this morning." The President was not in a zestful mood. "Are these problems which I inherited?" he asked. "Or are they problems of our own making?" "A little of both," was Bundy's tactful answer.

The exchange revealed a new and saving humility. Some days after this incident, Kennedy addressed the nation on the subject of Berlin. The ebullience, the air of self-assurance that marked his first months in office had gone. He spoke earnestly to his countrymen but his words were also aimed at Premier Khrushchev, who up to this point had appeared not to be listening. This time Kennedy did get through to Moscow; and any lingering doubt about the American determination to defend Berlin was dispelled by the response of the American people. The President's will to stand firm was clear, and the nation was with him.

Nevertheless, in any full review of John Kennedy's first months in office, there must be reported a failure in administration that will continue to inhibit and trouble American foreign policy until it is corrected. This failure raises a fair question: whether Kennedy has yet mastered the governmental machinery, whether he is well and effectively served by some of his close advisers, and whether they understand the use of power in world politics. The matter is of vital importance; in the crises that will inevitably arise around the world--in the Middle East, in Africa, in the Far East, in Central Europe--the U.S. Government must be in top form, and possibly even, as Kennedy himself suggested, act alone.

* Fortune, September 1961, pages 92 - 237, passim.

Administrative confusions came to light most vividly in the Cuban disaster. That story is told here for the first time in explicit detail. It is told against the background of the U.S. reversal in Laos, which in itself should not be underestimated: Laos, once in the way of becoming a buffer for its non-Communist neighbors, is all but finished; now, in South Viet-Nam, Ngo Dinh Diem, a stout friend of the U.S., is under murderous attack by Communist guerrillas; the U.S. loss of face is being felt from the Philippines to Pakistan, and in the long run the damage may prove to be even more costly than that caused by Cuba.

Let us turn back then to the train of events, beginning with Laos, that culminated in the disaster in the Bay of Pigs. FORTUNE is publishing the account for one purpose--to set the record straight for concerned Americans.

Kennedy, from the day he took office, was loath to act in Laos. He was confident that he understood the place and use of power in the transactions of the nation, but he was baffled by this community of elephants, parasols, and pagodas. Then, too, he brought to office a general surmise that our long-range prospects of holding the new and weak nations of Southeast Asia in the Western camp were doubtful in the extreme. In this respect, he was leaning toward the Lippmann-Stevenson-Fulbright view of strategy. This school holds that U.S. power is overcommitted in Southeast Asia, and that the proper aim for U.S. diplomacy there should be to reduce local frictions by molding the new states as true neutrals.

The U.S. position in Laos had become acute while Dwight Eisenhower was still in office. Eisenhower must therefore bear a considerable part of the blame for the U.S. failure; he let a situation go from bad to worse, and indeed he apologized to Kennedy for leaving "a mess," and that it might take the intervention of U.S. troops to redeem it. There had been a moment when the struggle in Laos had turned in favor of the pro-U.S. forces under General Phoumi Mosavan, the former Defense Minister. In a series of small but decisive engagements, more by maneuver than by shooting, Phoumi eventually took the capital, Vientiane, early in December, but at this point the Russians intervened openly on the side of the Communist faction, the Pathet Lao. In concert with a large-scale push by well-trained troops from North Viet-Nam, they introduced a substantial airlift into northern Laos (an operation that still is continuing).

The collapse of the Royal Laotian Army then became inevitable unless the U.S. came in with at least equal weight on Phoumi's side. One obvious measure was to put the airlift out of business. The job could have been done by "volunteer" pilots and the challenge would at least have established, at not too high an initial risk for the U.S., how far the Russians were prepared to go. Another measure would have been to bring SEATO forces into the battle, as the SEATO treaty provided.

In the end, Eisenhower decided to sheer away from both measures. The State Department was opposed to stirring up India and the other Asian neutrals. Secretary of State Christian Herter agreed in principle that the independence of Laos had to be maintained, yet he was unable to bring to heel his own desk officers and the policy planners, who were apprehensive that even a limited military action would wreck the possibility of some kind of political accommodation with Moscow. The policy shapers, especially in State, hung back from any sequence of actions that might have committed U.S. policy on the central issue: that Laos was worth fighting for. Even the modest additional support that the Defense Department tried to extend to Phoumi's U.S.-equipped battalions in the field during the last weeks of the Eisenhower Administration was diluted by reason of the conflict between Defense and State. Under Secretary of Defense James Douglas was later to say, "By the time a message to the field had been composed in Washington, it had ceased to be an operational order and had become a philosophical essay." And a vexed Phoumi was to exclaim that the reasoning of the American Ambassador, Winthrop Brown, was beyond his simple Oriental mind. "His Excellency insists that my troops be rationed to a few rounds of ammunition per man. He tells me that I must not start a world war. But the enemy is at my throat."

After the responsibility passed to Kennedy in January, Phoumi's position was still not completely hopeless, if he had been able to get adequate help. But early in March a sudden Communist descent drove him off a position commanding the principal highway in northern Laos. That unfortunate action was the turning point in his part of the war. For the relative ease with which it was done raised in Washington the question of whether Phoumi's troops had the will to fight.

By then Kennedy was committed to the Cuba operation. He therefore now had to reckon with the very real possibility, were U.S. forces to become involved in Laos, of having to back off from Cuba.

At this juncture Kennedy's foremost need was a clear reading of Soviet intentions. For this he turned to his

"demonologists," the New Frontier's affectionate term for its Soviet experts. The most influential among them--Charles E. Bohlen, State's senior Sovietologist, and Ambassador Llewellyn Thompson at Moscow--were agreed that Khrushchev personally had too much respect for U.S. power to stir it into action, as Stalin had carelessly done in Korea. Yet, while Khrushchev was plainly indulging his preference for "salami" tactics, it was impossible to judge how big a slice he was contemplating or whether he was being pushed by Mao Tse-tung. The only reading available to Kennedy was, in a word, ambiguous. Maybe Khrushchev was moving into a vacuum in Laos just to keep out Mao. If so, then the least chancy response for the U.S. was to assume that Khrushchev would be satisfied with a thin slice in Laos, and to maneuver him toward a compromise--a neutral government in which, say, the Pathet Lao would have some minor representation.

This course was urged by Secretary of State Dean Rusk and also was being pressed by Prime Minister Macmillan in London. It came to be known as Track Two. It was intended to lead to a cease-fire followed by negotiation. Oppositely, the Joint Chiefs of Staff still believed, as they did under Eisenhower, that the military challenge demanded a military showdown: action by the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization, under which a mixed allied force, including Americans, would move into Laos and take over the defense of the important cities, thereby freeing the Royal Laotian Army to move into the field without risk of being sapped by subversion in the rear. This option was labeled Track One, and it was favored as well by Defense Secretary Robert S. McNamara and his deputy, Roswell Gilpatric.

While Kennedy favored Track Two and supported a conciliatory note that Macmillan sent to Moscow, he decided he also had to make a show of starting down Track One, in case the political gamble failed. He permitted himself a dramatic gesture. At his televised press conference on March 23, he addressed himself somberly to a map of Laos--a country "far away" but in a world that is "small." Its independence, he went on, "runs with the safety of us all," and in language that all but told Khrushchev that he was in for a fight, he implied that the U.S. was preparing to go to its defense. There was, meanwhile, a tremendous deployment of U.S. forces in the Far East, involving the Seventh Fleet and Marine combat units on Okinawa. The Army's strategic-strike units in the U.S. were made ready. A belated effort was made to buck up Phoumi's forces with an increased flow of fighting gear. U.S. military "advisers" went into the field with his battalions. Against this background, on March 26, Kennedy went to Key West and met Macmillan, who was on a visit to the West Indies. The

Prime Minister made it clear that Britain considered Laos hardly worth a war, and wanted no part in a SEATO action. (De Gaulle, in a separate exchange, had told Kennedy flatly that France would not fight in Laos.)

From that point on, the idea of a military showdown in Laos looked less and less attractive to the President. He did issue one warning to the Russians that might have been construed as having a military tone. Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko called at the White House and Kennedy took him into the rose garden, beyond earshot of his staff, and said, "The U.S. does not intend to stand idly by while you take over Laos." But that was the last run along Track One.

By then, Rusk was in Bangkok for a meeting of the SEATO powers, still hoping to extract from the meeting at least a strong statement that would condemn the Soviet intervention in Laos and reassert the determination of the SEATO powers to defend the new nations of Southeast Asia. In this mission Rusk failed. None of the ranking Democratic Congressmen, or Republican, spoke up in favor of intervention. Moreover, when Kennedy pressed the military chiefs for specific recommendations, he got divided answers. General Thomas White, then Air Force Chief of Staff, and Admiral Arleigh Burke, then Chief of Naval Operations, were both confident that the Communist penetration could be defeated and Laos saved. They said that since the Communists could throw far more manpower into the battle, the U.S. war plan would have to include the possible use of tactical nuclear weapons on a limited scale. They maintained, however, that a clear U.S. resolution to employ nuclear weapons, if there was a need, might in itself discourage further Communist penetration. General Lyman L. Lemnitzer, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and General George H. Decker, Army Chief of Staff, had much less confidence in the U.S. ability to stop the Communists. Lemnitzer expressed the apprehension that U.S. military action in Laos might be matched by Red China and Russia in a fast reopening of the war in Korea. Two such wars, by his calculation, might require no fewer than twenty U.S. divisions, more than the Army had in its entire order of battle, as well as general mobilization to support them.

"In effect," Kennedy demanded, "you're telling me that I can't do anything--without starting a nuclear war?" This, he swore, he'd never do, which by itself was a startling reversal of a fundamental premise of the Eisenhower strategy: that U.S. forces would have recourse to nuclear tactical weapons on whatever scale the pursuit of U.S. objectives required. The White House, while conceding to the Communists the option of uninhibited escalation, would not tolerate even a limited escalation on the nuclear side by our own forces. Any military

move in Laos therefore seemed hopeless.

The fear of the nuclear escalation factor became the sanction for the policy that was pursued thereafter. In light of this, the scene of Kennedy addressing himself to the map of Laos, in his first public appearance as Commander-in-Chief, is now memorable for its fleeting revelation of a spirited man who was eager to present himself as a strong President, but who all too quickly turned unsure of his principal resource of power.

The chiefs, although they took different views of the risks of the Laos situation, were fundamentally agreed on a central point. And that was that the U.S. had to be prepared to employ tactical nuclear weapons. But Kennedy and his civilian strategists, moving away from the nuclear base of the Eisenhower strategy, read into their professional differences a bankruptcy of means and doctrine. The low esteem in which Kennedy began to hold the military leaders whom he inherited from the Eisenhower Administration has not been concealed.

Secretary of Defense McNamara is rewriting the Eisenhower strategic doctrine, in collaboration with the political scientists at the White House and State. The backing away from nuclear strategy, which ended in the U.S. retreat in Laos, is now being formalized by McNamara. (His prescription will call for a conventional base for NATO strategy in the defense of Berlin.)

So there was, by early April, even as Laos was slipping farther and farther below Kennedy's horizon, a breakdown of communication between the political and the military sides of the government, and this would contribute largely to the failure of Kennedy's next venture.

The Cuba affair has been called the American Suez. In the sense that Suez, too, was an utter fiasco, the bracketing is wryly accurate. There is, however, a clear difference between the two operations. Ill-managed as it was, the Suez invasion would have succeeded had not Eisenhower used the influence of the U.S. to bring three Allies--Britain, France, and Israel--to a humiliating halt. (It should be recorded that neither Britain, France, nor Israel made any critical comment on the U.S. excursion in Cuba.) In Cuba the defeat was wholly self-inflicted. Even as the expedition was creeping into the Bay of Pigs, just before midnight of April 16, the political overseers back in Washington were in the process of knocking out of the battle plan the final, irreducible element needed for victory.

If the U.S. military are without a peer in any one technique of warfare, it is in putting forces ashore across a hostile beach. For the Bay of Pigs, all the necessary means were at Kennedy's hand. It was, by the standards of General David M. Shoup's Marines, an elementary amphibious operation in less than battalion strength. And, indeed, as a tactical exercise, it was well devised and daringly and successfully led. But after the strategists at the White House and State had finished plucking it apart, it became an operation that would have disgraced even the Albanians. When Kennedy looked around for the blunderer, he found him everywhere and nowhere. Practically everybody in his inner group of policy movers and shakers had been in on the planning. Only after the disaster was upon them did he and his men realize that a venture which was essentially a military one had been fatally compromised in order to satisfy political considerations. One not unfriendly official who also served under Eisenhower was later to observe: "Cuba was a terrific jolt to this new crowd because it exposed the fact that they hadn't really begun to understand the meaning and consequences of action--the use or misuse of power, in other words. They had blamed Ike's apparent inaction on indecision and plain laziness. Cuba taught them that action, any kind of serious action, is hard and certainly no safe business for amateurs."

The idea for the invasion had taken root during the early summer of 1960. By then, thousands of defectors from Castro's Cuba were in the U.S. Many of them were professional soldiers. The job of organizing and training them was given to the Central Intelligence Agency, as the government's principal mechanism for mounting covert operations of this sort. It became and remained to the end the specific responsibility of one of the CIA's top deputies, Richard M. Bissell, a former economist who is also a highly practical executive. Among his other first-class accomplishments, Bissell had masterminded the U-2 operation, which was, until it finally missed, as one day it had to, the most economical and comprehensive innovation in espionage in modern times.

Training camps for the exiles were set up in a district in western Guatemala offering some privacy. The original idea was to feed the recruits back into Cuba, to reinforce the several thousand anti-Castro guerrillas already established in the mountains. Toward the autumn, however, a more ambitious and riskier project came under tentative consideration. Castro was organizing large formations of militia and was obviously bent on crushing the counterrevolutionary movement before the Cuban populace caught fire. With a view to saving the movement, it was proposed to build up an invasion force big enough to seize and to hold on the Cuban shore a beachhead

sufficiently deep for the expedition to proclaim a provisional government, and so provide a rallying base for the discontended. By this time; too, the rudiments of an anti-Castro air force were in training nearby. The planes, however, were all obsolete--mostly propeller-driven, B-26's, twin-engine bombers of World War II vintage that had been redeemed from the Air Force's graveyard. Associated with them was a troop-carrying squadron with which a small detachment of paratroopers was training.

During the summer and fall of 1960, Eisenhower from time to time personally reviewed the scheme. In late November, the last time it came up for his comprehensive review, an operational plan had not yet crystallized; no timetable for action had been set. Across the Potomac at the Pentagon, Under Secretary of Defense Douglas, who was charged with quasi-military operations under the noncommittal category of collateral cold-war activities, was keeping a watchful eye on the project, and releasing such military talent and gear as the CIA requisitioned. Neither he nor the Joint Chiefs of Staff (whose connection with the project remained informal at this stage) believed that much good would flow from an attack made by Cubans alone. For one thing, the resources then available permitted the training of only 300 men or so, and the air unit had but a dozen planes. This was hardly enough to bring down a tough, well-armed regime, and Douglas repeatedly counseled more realism in the planning. Indeed, it was taken for granted by Douglas and the others directly concerned that a landing in force could not possibly be brought off unless the expedition was shepherded to the beach by the U.S. Navy (either openly or in disguise), and covered by air power in whatever amount might be necessary. Eisenhower, the commander of Normandy, understood this well enough.

"You may have to send troops in"

It became obvious toward the end of 1960 that Ike would be out of office well before an effective force would be ready. So the decision as to how big the show should be, and how conspicuous should be the U.S. share, and in what role, was no longer his to make. Given the relaxed attitude at the White House, the military chiefs also relaxed; military concern for the enterprise sank to the "Indians"--from the four-star level to the colonels on the Joint Staff who had been advising the CIA in such matters as training and tactics. Bissell was encouraged, on the one hand, to go forward with preparations for an invasion, but he was cautioned to be ready to fall back to the more modest objective of simply generating a supply of reinforcements for the anti-Castro forces in the mountains.

Before Eisenhower was fully rid of his responsibility, however, a number of disquieting developments combined to impart to the enterprise an air of emergency. It was established that Castro was to start receiving, early in 1961, substantial deliveries of Soviet jet fighters, and that pilots to man them were already being trained in Czechoslovakia. From all indications, these would provide him, by early summer, with an air force that would be more than enough to extinguish the last chance of a successful invasion by Cuban exiles; it would be by all odds the most powerful air force in Latin America. Two other developments were scarcely less worrisome. Castro was making progress in his systematic destruction of his enemies in the mountains, upon whose cooperation the invasion counted, and there was no way, save by an overt air supply to get guns and ammunition to them. The stability of the exile movement itself was, moreover, coming into question. Warring political factions threatened to split their ranks, and men who had trained long and painstakingly were impatient over the failure of their American advisers to set a sailing date. The feeling took hold of them and their American sponsors that it was to be in the spring or never.

After his election, Kennedy had been briefed fairly frequently on the Cuba situation, along with that in Laos. As his hour of authority approached, the question of what to do about Cuba was increasingly on his mind. The problem had a personal angle. In his fourth television debate with Richard Nixon, he had sharply blamed the Eisenhower Administration for permitting Communism to seize a base there, "only ninety miles off the coast of the U.S." He discussed Cuba, along with Laos, at length in both of his pre-inaugural talks with Eisenhower, and by his stipulation. Ike was inclined to rank Cuba below Laos in terms of urgency, but Cuba clearly worried him. In their second conversation Ike said: "It's already a bad situation. You may have to send troops in."

The first necessity: control of the air

On taking office, Kennedy at once called for a detailed briefing on the condition and prospects of the U.S.-fostered operation. This information was supplied by Allen W. Dulles, the director of the CIA, and by Bissell. After Kennedy had heard them out he decided that he had to have from the Joint Chiefs of Staff a technical opinion of the feasibility of the project. It is at this point that the locus of responsibility begins to be uncertain.

The operation was not a Department of Defense responsibility. Only once before, in early January, had the chiefs formally

reviewed the plan, at Eisenhower's invitation. Now they were asked only for an "appreciation" of its validity. The enterprise, moreover, had expanded considerably in scope and aim in the past few months. With more than 100,000 Cuban refugees in the U.S., recruiting had stepped up, and the organizers were at this point aiming at a landing force of about 1,000 men. An operational plan for a landing on the south coast of Cuba, near the town of Trinidad, was finally beginning to jell. There the country was open, with good roads leading into the Escambray Mountains and the needed link-up with the indigenous guerrillas. Also cranked into the plan were ingenious schemes-- a barrage of radiobroadcasts from nearby islands and showers of pamphlets from airplanes--intended to galvanize the anti-Castro Cubans in the cities and villages into demonstrations as the invaders struck. It was never explicitly claimed by the CIA that a general uprising was immediately in the cards; the intention was to sow enough chaos during the first hours to prevent Castro from smashing the invasion on the beach. Once the beachhead was consolidated, however, and if fighting gear went forward steadily to the guerrillas elsewhere in Cuba, the planners were confident that a mass revolt could be stimulated.

Finally, the plan still assumed that U.S. military help would be on call during the landing. Castro's air force consisted of not quite two-score planes--a dozen or so obsolete B-26's, plus about the same number of obsolete British Sea Furies, also slow, propeller-driven airplanes. But in addition there were seven or eight T-33 jet trainers, the remnants of an earlier U.S. transaction with the Batista government, so the force was not the pushover it appeared at first glance. Armed with rockets, these jets would be more than a match in a battle for the exiles' B-26's. The scheme was to destroy them on the ground in advance of the landing, by a series of attacks on Castro's airfields; should the T-33's escape the first surprise blow, there would be ample opportunity to catch them later on the ground while they were being refueled after an action. In any event, a U.S. carrier would be close by, below the horizon, and one or two of its tactical jets could presumably supply whatever quick and trifling help might be required in an emergency.

It stood to reason that, considering how small the landing party was, the success of the operation would hinge on the B-26's controlling the air over the beachhead. And the margins that the planners accepted were narrow to begin with. The B-26's were to operate from a staging base in a Central American country more than five hundred miles from Cuba. The round trip would take better than six hours, and that would leave the planes with fuel for only forty-five minutes of action, for

bombing and air cover over Cuba. In contrast, Castro's air force could be over the beachhead and the invaders' ships in a matter of minutes, which would increase his relative air advantage manifold. Hence the absolute necessity of knocking out Castro's air power, or at least reducing it to impotence, by the time the ground battle was joined.

This, in general terms, was the plan the chiefs reviewed for Kennedy. The assumptions concerning the possibilities of an anti-Castro uprising not being in their jurisdiction, they took these at face value. They judged the tactical elements sound and, indeed, they accorded the operation a high probability of success. They were allowed to appraise the training and the equipment of the forces. A team of officers was sent to Guatemala. On the basis of its report, the chiefs made several recommendations, but again their assessment was favorable.

Late in January, Kennedy authorized the CIA to lay on the invasion plan, but he warned that he might call the whole operation off if he had a change of mind as to its wisdom. D-day was tentatively fixed for March 1 but this proved impossible to meet. For one thing, it took some time to organize the quarrelsome exiles in New York and Miami into a workable coalition that would sponsor the expedition. For another, it was decided that a battalion of about 1,400 men was needed to secure a beachhead, and that the force, which called itself the Cuban Brigade, should be beefed up generally. In consequence of these developments, the target date kept slipping until it finally came firm as April 17.

It has since been reported that the President was inwardly skeptical of the operation from the start but just why has never been clear--whether he judged the force too small to take on Castro, or because he was reluctant to take on so soon a nasty job that was bound to stir up an international ruckus, however it came out. Some of his closest advisers, in any case, were assailed by sinking second thoughts. What bothered them was the "immorality" of masked aggression. They recoiled from having the U.S. employ subterfuge in striking down even so dangerous an adversary as Castro, and they were almost unanimously opposed to having the U.S. do the job in the open. Even with the best of luck, there would certainly be a flutter among the six leading Latin-American states, which, with the exception of Venezuela, had refused to lend themselves to any form of united action against Castro. And the repercussion would scarcely be less embarrassing among the neutralists of Asia and Africa, whose good opinion Kennedy's advisers were most eager to cultivate. And so the emphasis at the White House and State began to move away from a concern with the

military considerations--the things needed to make the enterprise work--and to become preoccupied with tinkering they hoped would soften its political impact on the neutral nations.

The dismembering begins

The "immorality" of the intervention found its most eloquent voice before the President during a meeting in the State Department on April 4, only thirteen days before the date set for the invasion. (Stewart Alsop told part of the story in a recent issue of the Saturday Evening Post.) The occasion was Bissell's final review of the operation, and practically everybody connected with high strategy was on hand--Secretary of State Rusk, Secretary of Defense McNamara, Secretary of the Treasury Douglas Dillon, General Lemnitzer, CIA chief Allen Dulles, as well as Bundy, Paul Nitze, Kennedy's specialist on strategic planning at the Pentagon, Thomas Mann, then Assistant Secretary of State for Latin-American Affairs, and three of Kennedy's specialists in Latin-American matters--Adolf Berle, Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., and Richard Goodwin. There was also one outsider, Senator William Fulbright, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, who had been Kennedy's favorite choice for Secretary of State, and whose support he wanted. After Bissell had completed his briefing and Dulles had summed up the risks and prospects, Fulbright spoke and denounced the proposition out of hand: it was the wrong thing for the U.S. to get involved in.

Kennedy chose not to meet this issue. Instead, he quickly noted certain practical considerations and then, going around the table, he asked various of his advisers whether they thought the operation should go forward. Without exception, the answer was, yes. Berle was particularly outspoken. He declared that "a power confrontation" with Communism in the Western Hemisphere was inevitable anyhow. As for this enterprise. "Let 'er rip" was his counsel. Mann, who previously had been on the fence, now spoke up for the operation. Rusk, too, said he was for it, in answer to the President's direct question, but as would presently be manifest, he privately had no heart for it. Two other men among the President's senior foreign-policy advisers, not present at the meeting, shared Fulbright's feelings: Under Secretary of State Chester Bowles, and Adlai Stevenson, with the United Nations in New York, who soon came to know in a general way that something distasteful was afoot. In deference to these views, Kennedy--either at the meeting or soon afterward--made two separate rulings that were to contribute to the fatal

dismemberment of the whole plan. First, U.S. airpower would not be on call at any time: the obsolescent B-26's flown by "our" Cubans would be on their own. Second, the B-26's could be used in only two strikes before the invasion--first on D-minus-two-days (April 15) and again on the morning of the landing. Although these limitations clearly lengthened the risks, Lemnitzer did not dispute them, nor did Bissell's own military advisers; they were confident that if the B-26's missed the T-33's on the first go, they would surely catch them on the second.

During the few remaining days, Kennedy drew his circle of advisers more tightly around him. Apart from Bundy and Rostow, the only White House advisers who remained privy to the development of the operation were the Latin-American experts--Adolf Berle and Schlesinger. Lemnitzer and, of course, Allen Dulles were in and out of Kennedy's office. But the doubts of Rusk and Fulbright and of others were all the while imperceptibly converging on the President and, bit by bit, an operation that was marginal to begin with was so truncated as to guarantee its failure.

The embarkation of the expedition was scheduled to start on April 10. This was, in itself, quite a job. Some half-dozen small steamers were collected for the first movement, together with a number of tactical landing craft. The take-off point was a port on the Caribbean, several hundred miles from the training area in Guatemala, and the transfer of the Cuban Brigade was done by air and at night, through four nights, in the interest of secrecy. The gear aboard the ships was enough to supply the landing force through ten days of battle, and also to equip the thousands of guerrillas expected to be recruited after the beachhead was gained.

Only a week before the embarkation, and indeed only a day or so before the last go-around at the State Department, another serious change was made in the invasion plan. At the insistence of the State Department, Trinidad was eliminated as the target landing area. State's reasons were complex. Rusk decided that the entire operation had to be kept "unspectacular" and minimize the overtness of the U.S. role as much as possible. That required shifting the attack to a less populated and less accessible area, where Castro's reaction might be slower and less effective. Rusk and his own advisers were also anxious to be rid at all possible speed of the incubus of responsibility for mounting the operation in Central America, anxious that the B-26's should be based as rapidly as possible on Cuba. The only vulnerable airfield capable of taking the planes was one in poor condition near the Bay of Pigs, on the Zapata Peninsula, about 100 miles to the west of

Trinidad. Here the countryside was quite deserted and, to succeed at all, the invaders had to seize and hold two narrow causeways leading across a swamp that was impassable on either side. These actions did not end the last-minute curtailments directed by the White House. Even the arrangements for arousing the Cuban populace and trying to stampede Castro's militia with leaflet raids and radiobroadcasts were struck from the plan, and again because State was afraid that they would be too obvious a showing of the U.S. hand. On April 12, while the convoy was heading north, Kennedy was impelled to announce at a press conference that the U.S. would not intervene with force in Cuba. Rusk made sure the idea got home by repeating the same guarantee on the morning of the invasion. The effect of this was to serve notice on the Cubans in Cuba, who were known to be waiting for an encouraging signal from the U.S., that whatever they might be tempted to try would be at their own risk.

The politicians take command

Clear to the end, Kennedy retained tight control of the enterprise. As each new sequence of action came up for his final approval--the Go signal for the embarkation, then for the pre-invasion air strike on the morning of April 15, he came to his decisions quickly and firmly. All the way, however, he reserved the option to stop the landing short of the beach. He kept asking how late the enterprise might be reversed without making it look as if Castro had called an American bluff. He was told: noon on Sunday, April 16, when the invasion force would be eleven hours of steaming from the Bay of Pigs. The Sunday deadline found Kennedy in the Virginia countryside, at Glen Ora; only then did he raise his finger from the hold button. As he did so, he noted with relief that no other unfavorable factors had materialized. He was mistaken. At dawn of the day before, by the timetable, the B-26's, having flown undetected through the night from their Central American staging base, appeared over Cuba and bombed the three fields on which Castro's ready air was deployed. (The attack was, on the whole, highly successful. Half of Castro's B-26's and Sea Furies, and four of his T-33 jets were blown up or damaged and so removed from the imminent battle.) The story was put out that Castro's own pilots, in the act of defecting, had attacked their own airfields. This was a gloss, to say the least; the attackers were indeed defectors from Castro, but they had defected long before. Later that afternoon, at the United Nations, after the Cuban Foreign Minister, Raul Roa, had charged that the attack was a "prologue" to a U.S. invasion, Adlai Stevenson arose and swore that the planes were Castro's.

From this hapless moment on, Stevenson's role becomes unclear. There was a subsequent published report that he intervened to block the second strike. Stevenson has flatly denied, and continues to deny, that he even knew about the second strike, let alone that he demanded that it be called off. But there was little doubt about his unhappiness over the course of events in the Caribbean and he conveyed these feelings to Washington. Before Sunday was over Bundy was to fly to New York, to see Stevenson (Bundy said) and still wearing, in his haste to be off, sneakers and sports clothes. This sudden errand followed a shattering order that went out to Bissell.

It was Sunday evening, only some eight hours after Kennedy had given "the go-ahead." In the first dark, the expedition was even then creeping toward the Cuban shore. In Bissell's office there was a call on the White House line. It was Bundy, being even crisper than usual: the B-26's were to stand down, there was to be no air strike in the morning, this was a presidential order. Secretary of State Rusk was now acting for the President in the situation. If Bissell wished to make a "reclama" (federalese for appeal), it could be done through Rusk.

Bissell was stunned. In Allen Dulles' absence (he was in Puerto Rico), he put his problem up to CIA Deputy Director Charles Cabell, an experienced airman. Together they went to the State Department to urge Rusk to reconsider a decision that, in their judgment, would put the enterprise in irretrievable peril. Cabell was greatly worried about the vulnerability to air attack first of the ships and then of the troops on the beach. Rusk was not impressed. The ships, he suggested, could unload and retire to the open sea before daylight; as for the troops ashore being unduly inconvenienced by Castro's air, it had been his experience as a colonel in the Burma theatre, he told his visitors, that air attack could be more of a nuisance than a danger. One fact he made absolutely clear: military considerations had overruled the political when the D-minus-two strike had been laid on; now political considerations were taking over. While they were talking, Rusk telephoned the President at Glen Ora to say that Cabell and Bissell were at his side, and that they were worried about the cancellation of the strike. Rusk, at one point, put his hand over the mouthpiece, and asked Cabell whether he wished to speak to the President. Cabell shook his head. Perhaps that was his mistake; it was certainly his last chance to appeal a lamentable decision. But Bundy had made it clear that Rusk was acting for the President, and Cabell is a professional military man, trained to take orders after the facts had been argued with the man in command.

On their return to the office, Bissell flashed orders to the B-26 commander at the staging field, more than 500 miles from the Bay of Pigs. The force got the changed orders shortly before midnight, only half an hour or so before they were scheduled to depart; the bomb bays were already loaded and the crews were aboard. Meanwhile the planes carrying the paratroopers had taken off, and the first assault barges, still unobserved, were even then approaching the beaches.

Tuesday, the turning point

Past midnight, in the early watches, Bissell and Cabell restudied the battle plan, while signals of consternation welled up from their men far to the south. At four o'clock, less than an hour before first light on the Cuban shore, Cabell went back to Rusk with another proposal. It was manifestly impossible for the Brigade's small force of B-26's (only sixteen were operational) to provide effective air cover for the ships from their distant base against jets that could reach the ships in minutes. Cabell now asked whether, if the ships were to pull back of the three or twelve-mile limit, whichever distance U.S. legal doctrine held to be the beginnings of international water, the U.S.S. Boxer, a carrier on station about fifty miles from the Bay of Pigs, could be instructed to provide cover for them. Rusk said no and this time Cabell finally took advantage of the reclama that Bundy had extended to Bissell. The President was awakened. Cabell registered his concern. The answer was still no.

Shortly after that, on Monday morning, April 17, Brigadier General Chester Clifton, the President's military aide, received word that the Cuban Brigade had landed. They had little chance. They were without the ranging fire power that the B-26's with their bombs and machine guns had been expected to apply against Castro's tanks and artillery as they wheeled up. Castro's forces came up fast. He still had four jets left, and they were indeed armed with powerful rockets. He used them well against the ships in the bay. Before the morning was done, he had sunk two transports, aboard which was the larger part of the reserve stocks of ammunition, and driven off two other, with the rest of the stock.

Now Kennedy and his strategists became alarmed. About noon on Monday, Bissell was told that the B-26's could attack Castro's airfields at will. Orders went to the staging base for a major attack next morning. But the orders came too late. Most of the pilots had been in the air for upwards of eighteen hours in an unavailing effort to keep Castro's planes off the

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troops and the remaining ships. That night a small force was scratched together. It was over Cuba at dawn, only to find the fields hidden by low, impenetrable fog. Nothing came of the try.

Tuesday, the second day, was the turning point. The men ashore had fought bravely and gained their planned objectives. They had even seized and bulldozed the airfield. But they were desperately short of ammunition and food, and under the pressure of Castro's superior fire power and numbers they were being forced back across the beach; three B-26's trying to help them were shot down.

Two small landing craft had made rendezvous with two remaining supply ships and taken on ammunition and rations; but, from where they were, they could not reach the beach until after daybreak, at which time Castro's jets were certain to get them. There remained still one last clear chance to make the thing go. Boxer was still on station. The release of a few of its jets simply for air cover should see the two craft safely to the shore.

"Defeat is an orphan"

That night Kennedy was caught up in a White House reception, a white-tie affair, for Congress and the members of his Cabinet. He was informed by an aide that Bissell wished to see him. The President asked Bissell to come to the White House. Calls went out to the other principals--to Rusk, who had been entertaining the Greek Premier at a formal dinner at the State Department, to McNamara, General Lemnitzer, Admiral Burke.

They gathered in the President's office shortly after midnight. One of the participants recalls: "Two men dominated that singular occasion--the President and Bissell. Bissell was in the unhappy posture of having to present the views of an establishment that had been overtaken by disaster. He did so with control, with dignity, and with clarity." Bissell made it plain that the expedition was at the point of no return; unless U.S. airpower was brought forward, the men on the beach were doomed. In substance, he asked that the Boxer's planes be brought into the battle to save the operation. Rusk still would not have this. Several others were also opposed, including the President's personal staffers. Burke vouched for the worth of Bissell's proposition. The discussion with the President lasted until 2:00 A.M. Its outcome was a singular compromise. Jets from the Boxer would provide cover next morning for exactly one hour--from 6:30 to 7:30 A.M.,

just long enough for the ships to run into the shore and start unloading, and for the remaining B-26's to get in a hard blow.

Next morning, through an incredible mischance, the B-26's were over Cuba half an hour ahead of schedule. Boxer's jets were still on the flight deck. But Castro's jets were ready. Two of the B-26's were shot down; others were hit and forced to abort. That was the melancholy end. At two-thirty that afternoon, Bissell received word from one of his men aboard a ship in the Bay of Pigs: remnants of the landing force were in the water and under fire. There was a final message from the gallant Brigade commander ashore to this effect, "I have nothing left to fight with and so cannot wait. Am headed for the swamp." Bissell went to the White House to report the end. Kennedy gave orders for a destroyer to move into the bay and pick up as many men as it could. It was no Dunkirk. Only a few of the 1,400 were saved.

"Victory," Kennedy noted some days later, "has a hundred fathers, and defeat is an orphan." Yet, for all Kennedy's outward calmness at this moment of defeat, he was never, after it, quite the same. Speaking before the American Society of Newspaper Editors, a grave President said, "There are from this sobering episode useful lessons for all to learn."

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