

The failed offensive

[Politics](#), [International Relations](#)



The year 1961 saw the attempt of Cuban exiles to replace the Cuban government led by Fidel Castro, and it was on April 17 on the same year when aerial bombings were launched as an attack by a coalition backed by the United States against Cuba which later came to be known as the Bay of Pigs Invasion. Although the United States helped in the planning and in the funding of the invasion, it failed right after the night landing of the invasion was discovered which led to the defeat of the invasion just within three days.

It is because of the immediate discovery and the reports about the invasion which practically enabled the Cuban government of Castro to frustrate the invasion and capture a large number of invaders. The consequence of the failed invasion is for Castro to start obtaining nuclear warheads from the Soviet government in the fear of another invasion backed by the United States, thereby leading to the Cuban Missile Crisis. History The history of the Bay of Pigs invasions stems before the time of the Kennedy administration.

Miller and Miller observe that the strains between the relations of Cuba and America stems back from immigration issues. They observe that: As the number of immigrants increased, relations with Cuba began to deteriorate after 1959. In June 1960 U. S. oil refineries in Cuba refused to process Russian crude oil. The Cuban government retaliated by nationalizing the oil refineries. On July 5, 1960, the Cuban government nationalized all U. S. property in Cuba.

In retaliation, the United States canceled Cuba's sugar export quota. This action amounted to an economic sanction against Cuba (Miller and Miller, p. 53). In the following years, the tension between the two countries grew and the desire to free Cuba from the leadership of Castro intensified. Miller and

Miller notes: Attempts to free Cuba from Castro's regime began under the Eisenhower administration, and under the Kennedy administration, U. S. - Cuban relations continued to deteriorate.

Less than three months after becoming president, Kennedy authorized an invasion of Castro's regime by Cuban exiles on April 17, 1961. Regrettably for the United States, the 1,500-man exile force was defeated in less than 72 hours. The invasion increased Castro's political power and popularity. As William Goodwin, a White House advisor, stated: "It made him even more of a hero as the man who had defended Cuba against the greatest power in the world (Miller and Miller, p. 54)."

Almost a year before the actual Bay of Pigs Invasion, the U. S. Central Intelligence Agency recommended to then-President Dwight Eisenhower a plan to equip Cuban exiles and use them for action against the newly established socialist Cuban government led by Fidel Castro. Since it was the policy of the American government to provide military, logistics and strategic assistance to guerilla forces fighting the government of Castro, the CIA pursued to train Cuban exiles for the mission.

Among the first plans to be adopted for the invasion is to land the Cuban exiles near the city of Trinidad, Cuba since the site gave a handful of choices for the brigade of Cuban exiles to exploit at the height of the invasion in the coming days. At the least, the site gave the exiles the advantage of a beach landing and of returning to the mountains for a possible retreat as the necessity would arise. However, the progress of the plans to invade Cuba led to several changes such as the change in the landing spot for Brigade 2506 from Trinidad to the Bay of Pigs.

As a result, contacts with the rebels situated in the Escambray Mountains were cut thereby reducing the military support the Cuban exiles needed. Further, senior KGB operatives Osvaldo Sanchez Cabrera and “Aragon” warned the Cuban government about the forthcoming invasion, thus giving Castro and his military men the time to anticipate and plan their counter moves against the U. S. -backed offensive. All these changes in the invasion plan under the helm of President Kennedy after seeking information to his advisors if the overthrow of Fidel Castro could be tied with weapon shipments.

The Invasion The invasion could be divided into at least three actions: sea, air and land offensives. The invasion was initiated with three flights of B-2B bombers on the early hours of April 15, 1961. As aircrafts with the markings of the Cuban Fuerza Armada Revolucionaria (CRAF) flew over and bombarded the airfields of Antonio Maceo International Airport, San Antonio de los Banos and Ciudad Libertad, counter air attacks against the CRAF, named Operation Puma, were also formed.

In the attempt to paralyze the air force of the Cuban government through the air attacks, the first air operations failed primarily because the air strikes were discontinued as opposed to what was original intended. There was a second attempt to foil the air force of the Cuban government by launching another air attack. However, the second plan was cancelled because President Kennedy hoped to make the operation look as if the Cuban exiles were the ones responsible in the attacks and not the U. S. government.

By doing so, the American government can easily deny accusations of being held responsible for the operation. The cancellation of the air assaults on the

air fields of Cuba largely contributed to the failure of the invasion and the deaths of many Cuban exiles. Almost two days after the failed air strikes, approximately 1,300 Cuban exiles landed at the Bay of Pigs situated at the Cuban southern coast. Armed with weapons provided by the American government, the exiles intended to proceed to Havana in the hopes of gaining local support.

At first, the invaders were able to suppress the ground militia at the beach, forcing the Cuban forces to surrender. It was under the prerogative of President Kennedy to use air force to support ground troops but he never opted to do so. As a result, the armies of the government of Castro were able to stop the invading forces at the Bay of Pigs. Naval offenses also took a crucial role in the offensives, with the invader ship *Blagar* fighting off Cuban aircrafts and with the naval forces of Castro losing at least one ship, the *P. C. Baire*.

The aftermath Although the exact number of deaths for the Cuban government is widely disputed, it can hardly be argued that the death toll went by the thousands. Interestingly, even though the casualties among the Cuban government were higher in contrast to the invading forces, the Castro government ended up gaining as much as \$53 million worth of food and medicine in exchange for the lives of the captured exiles who were sentenced to thirty years in prison for treason.

However, negotiations for the release of the captured exiles took almost twenty months which started from the demand of Castro for 500 large tractors to his demand of \$28 million. In the end, 1,113 prisoners were released in exchange for \$53 million worth of food and medicine; the funds were supposedly obtained from private donations. It was also reported that

President Kennedy hesitated to back the ground forces of the Cuban exiles with further air strikes because Kennedy did not want a full scale war. In doing so, Kennedy effectively abandoned the Cuban exiles fighting on the ground against the forces of Fidel Castro.

More importantly, the CIA believed that the invasion would lead to a spark in the sentiment of the people against the government of Castro thereby gaining the support of the Cubans with the offensive. In its entirety, Erich Weede observes that the failure of the invasion reinforced the ironies in the decisions and motives of the United States. Weede argues that: The Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba in 1961 was the most important case of vacillation and inconsistency: President John F. Kennedy would have liked to get rid of Fidel Castro and to replace him by a more friendly government, but he did not want to send in U.

S. troops when Cuban exiles were not up to the task. The Bay of Pigs disaster only reinforced Castro's hostility toward the United States (Weede, p. 136). Thus, one of the consequences of the failure in the Bay of Pigs is the increased hostility of Fidel Castro towards the United States, which also led to his forging an informal alliance with the Soviet Union, a nation which has been a firm opponent of America. The observation of Weede reinforces the idea that Kennedy was playing things safe, owing to the fact that Cuban exiles were the primary 'tools' in engaging the Cuban government into a hostile battle.

Piero Gleijeses further notes that one of the causes of the failure of the Bay of Pigs invasions is the "miscommunication between the CIA and the White House" and that it would have been "politically costly for Kennedy to have

aborted the operation” (Gleijeses, p. 2). He stresses the point that: The Bay of Pigs was approved because the CIA and the White House assumed they were speaking the same language when, in fact, they were speaking in utterly different tongues (Gleijeses, p. 2). Gleijeses’ observation indicates that the “ miscommunication between the CIA and the White House (Gleijeses, p.

2)” contributed to the failure of the Bay of Pigs invasion, stemming back to the discontinuation of the plans first determined prior to the attacks at the Bay. At the aftermath of the failed attempt to invade Cuba right from the Bay of Pigs, Lucien Vandenbroucke observed that Kennedy and his advisers “ did not carefully weigh competing alternatives and then select the invasion of Cuba as the best policy” without taking into account the fact that “ Castro had over 200, 000 men in arms and the benefit of the Guatemalan precedent” (Vandenbroucke, p. 472).

He further noted that: Carried out deftly enough to conceal the American hand, [the Bay of Pigs invasion] promised to deal with Castro while preserving the United State’s image. In short, then, the rational actor model suggests that the lack of other viable alternatives prompted the choice of the invasion, which appeared best in terms of a rational cost-benefit analysis (Vandenbroucken, p. 472). There is little or no disagreement over the failure of the Bay of Pigs invasion which resulted to the increased tension between the United States and Cuban governments.

As the tensions increased, Fidel Castro apparently looked for ways to strengthen his military capabilities and, thus, the military aid by the Soviet Union in terms of nuclear warheads was a tempting option to be easily

discarded. The years that followed soon paved the way for the Cuban Missile Crisis which further smeared the capabilities of the Kennedy administration to handle tough situations which involve the security of the United States.

Had the Bay of Pigs invasion been a success, there were promising chances for the American government to further launch successful offensives against the Castro government with the aid of the Cuban exiles (Dominguez, p. 20).

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