

# The bay of pigs: a leadership failure essay examples

[War](#), [Intelligence](#)



Most students of history are familiar with the Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961 and its particularly problematic execution. The blame is heaped upon pretty much anyone who had anything to do with it, particularly the revolutionary leaders, the CIA, President Kennedy, etc.

The truth is that the investigations into the matter found that failure of leadership to make decisions and the inability to believe information that conflicted with preconceived notions. The Taylor Committee, put together by President Kennedy to figure out what went wrong, highlighted the lack of realization that success was impossible at an early stage, and the CIA's "Survey of the Cuban Operation", authored by Lyman B. Kirkpatrick, found insufficient decision making by leaders, lack of communications and management, and failure to collect or believe accurate intelligence on Cuba were the major reasons for the failure, at practically every level.

Some of the reasons for this can be well explained by the concept of Bounded Awareness, as explored by Bazerman and Moore (2009). They point out that when people are overwhelmed with information, they often avoid making decisions altogether. This certainly appears to demonstrably be the case with President Kennedy himself, who took practically no action throughout the crisis whatsoever (which possibly was in fact the best option he had politically, but not necessarily a conscious choice). Bazerman and Moore also point out that bounded awareness often limits people in their abilities to see things which later appear obvious. Certainly the intelligence on Cuba, or rather, lack thereof, is a perfect example of this. Those invested in the operation saw no way that it could fail, in no small part because they blinded themselves to any information that did not fit their preconceived

notions. This of course also highlights the involvement of the focusing illusion in the Bay of Pigs invasion; the focusing illusion is the “ tendency of people to make judgements based on their attention to only a subset of the information, to overweight that information, and to underweight unattended information.” (Bazerman & Moore, 2009).

## **References:**

Bazerman, M. H., and Moore, D. A. (2009). Judgment in Managerial Decision Making (7th

ed.). Hoboken NJ: John Wiley and Sons, Inc.

Taylor Committee Investigation of the Bay of Pigs (1961). Retrieved from [http://www.foia.cia.gov/sites/default/files/document\\_conversions/4186/bop-vol4.pdf](http://www.foia.cia.gov/sites/default/files/document_conversions/4186/bop-vol4.pdf) on 2/18/2012.