FROM THE FILE

The Bay of Pigs File

8 Documents

The starter pack for Season 1: record numbers, key quotes, and where the record still will not settle.

History from the documents. Every claim traced to a declassified file.

fromthefile.com

HOW TO READ THIS PACK

Eight documents, one story

This pack collects the eight documents that open Season 1 of *From the File*, the Bay of Pigs. They run from the March 1960 paper that started the covert program, through the planning turn of late 1960, the cancelled dawn strikes of April 1961, and the investigations afterward. The last entry is about what the record never settled.

EACH ENTRY HAS THE SAME PARTS

Record number and title. The publication, volume and document number, or the CIA release number, so you can find the paper yourself.
Key quote. Exact words from the document, with ellipses or brackets where we trim. Nothing is paraphrased inside quotation marks.
What it says, why it matters, what remains unsettled. Our reading, kept separate from the quote. Where an account is a later narrative rather than a contemporaneous paper, we say so.
Source link. A stable page where one exists. Where the CIA Reading Room has no stable per-document URL, we cite the record number and point to the collection. We do not invent links.

A FEW HABITS WORTH KEEPING

Read the quote first, then the paragraph around it in the source. Redactions stay redactions: where FRUS prints "[not declassified]," we do not guess what is behind it. When two documents disagree, we carry both. The page images are reproductions of the published or released pages, included so you can see the words in place.

THE EIGHT

1	**FRUS 1958–60, Vol. VI, Doc 481** A Program of Covert Action Against the Castro Regime (16 March 1960)
2	**FRUS 1958–60, Vol. VI, Doc 486** Memorandum of a Conference With the President (17 March 1960)
3	**FRUS 1961–63, Vol. X, Doc 231** Narrative of Operation Zapata: the November 1960 turn
4	**CIA Inspector General's Survey (FRUS Supp. Doc 273A)** The Agency's own investigation (October 1961)
5	**FRUS X Microfiche Supp. Doc 261** Cancellation night (3 May 1961 staff memorandum)
6	**CIA C06828873** Hawkins: Record of Paramilitary Action (5 May 1961)
7	**FRUS 1961–63, Vol. X, Doc 231 ¶75** The dissent footnote in the Taylor narrative
8	**What the files don't settle** Destroyed copies and casualty figures

DOCUMENT 1 OF 8

A Program of Covert Action Against the Castro Regime

Paper prepared by the 5412 Committee · Washington, 16 March 1960

FRUS 1958–60 Vol. VI Doc 481

KEY QUOTES

> *"The purpose of the program outlined herein is to bring about the replacement of the Castro regime with one more devoted to the true interests of the Cuban people and more acceptable to the U.S. in such a manner as to avoid any appearance of U.S. intervention."*
>
> FRUS 1958–60, Vol. VI, Doc 481, ¶1 (Objective)

> *"The creation of this capability will require a minimum of six months and probably closer to eight."*
>
> Doc 481, ¶2 (Summary Outline), on the paramilitary force

WHAT IT SAYS

The founding authorization. Four courses of action: a unified exile opposition; propaganda, including a gray radio station; an intelligence and action network inside Cuba; and paramilitary cadres trained outside the country to seed a resistance. A six-to-eight-month estimate and small teams. No invasion is authorized.

WHY IT MATTERS

Every later layer of the season measures the force that was built against what this paper actually approved. The funding and operational tabs remain heavily redacted where they count.

WHAT REMAINS UNSETTLED

Who later decided the small-team concept was over, and how an Agency-only beachhead came to be called "achievable," has no clean contemporaneous decision paper in the file we have.

SOURCE

history.state.gov: FRUS 1958–60 Vol. VI Doc 481

Listen: S1E01 The Inheritance

A Program of Covert Action Against the Castro Regime

FOREIGN RELATIONS OF THE UNITED STATES, 1958–1960, CUBA, VOLUME VI

481. Paper Prepared by the 5412 Committee[1]

Washington, March 16, 1960.

A PROGRAM OF COVERT ACTION AGAINST THE CASTRO REGIME

1. *Objective:* The purpose of the program outlined herein is to bring about the replacement of the Castro regime with one more devoted to the true interests of the Cuban people and more acceptable to the U.S. in such a manner as to avoid any appearance of U.S. intervention. Essentially the method of accomplishing this end will be to induce, support, and so far as possible direct action, both inside and outside of Cuba, by selected groups of Cubans of a sort that they might be expected to and could undertake on their own initiative. Since a crisis inevitably entailing drastic action in or toward Cuba could be provoked by circumstances beyond control of the U.S. before the covert action program has accomplished its objective, every effort will be made to carry it out in such a way as progressively to improve the capability of the U.S. to act in a crisis.

2. *Summary Outline:* The program contemplates four major courses of action:

   a. The first requirement is the creation of a responsible, appealing and unified Cuban opposition to the Castro regime, publicly declared as such and therefore necessarily located outside of Cuba, [*3 sentences (10 lines) not declassified*] (Tab A[2])

   b. So that the opposition may be heard and Castro's basis of popular support undermined, it is necessary to develop the means for mass communication to the Cuban people so that a powerful propaganda offensive can be initiated in the name of the declared opposition. The major tool proposed to be used for this purpose is a long and short wave gray broadcasting facility, probably to be located on Swan Island. [*2 sentences (4 lines) not declassified*] (Tab B)

   c. Work is already in progress in the creation of a covert intelligence and action organization within Cuba which will be responsive to the orders and directions of the "exile" opposition. [*3 sentences (7 lines) not declassified*]

   d. Preparations have already been made for the development of an adequate paramilitary force outside of Cuba, together with mechanisms for the necessary logistic support of covert military operations on the Island. Initially a cadre of leaders will be recruited after careful screening and trained as paramilitary instructors. In a second phase a number of paramilitary cadres will be trained at secure locations outside of the U.S. so as to be available for immediate deployment into Cuba to organize, train and lead resistance forces recruited there both before and after the establishment of one or more active centers of resistance. The creation of this capability will require a minimum of six months and probably closer to eight. In the meanwhile, a limited air capability for resupply and for infiltration and exfiltration already exists under CIA control and can be rather easily expanded if and when the situation requires. Within two months it is hoped to parallel this with a small air resupply capability under deep cover as a commercial operation in another country.

   [*Numbered paragraphs 3–5 (29 lines) not declassified*] (Tab C[3])

6. *Recommendations:* That the Central Intelligence Agency be authorized to undertake the above outlined program [*2 lines not declassified*].

Doc 481, page 1 (FRUS reproduction)

DOCUMENT 2 OF 8

Memorandum of a Conference With the President

Goodpaster memo · Eisenhower–Dulles meeting · White House, 17 March 1960, 2:30 p.m.

FRUS 1958–60 Vol. VI Doc 486

KEY QUOTES

> *"our hand should not show in anything that is done."*
> Doc 486: the President, as recorded by Goodpaster

> *"The President said that he knows of no better plan for dealing with this situation."*
> Doc 486, on the 5412 Committee action plan Dulles presented

WHAT IT SAYS

Eisenhower hears the action plan from the 5412 group the day after it was written and says he knows of no better one. He tells those present that "our hand should not show in anything that is done," and that only two or three government people should be connected with the groups involved.

WHY IT MATTERS

Contemporaneous presidential reaction to the program's founding paper. The hand-not-show line is the standard the later amphibious assault force built in Guatemala has to be held against.

SOURCE

history.state.gov: FRUS 1958–60 Vol. VI Doc 486
Listen: S1E01 The Inheritance (cited in the show notes)

Memorandum of a Conference With the President

[Page 862]

Secretary Anderson stated that Castro is in reality financing his operations out of the funds of the U.S. companies that are operating in Cuba. He suggested that the Administration might take steps to bring business leaders together with elements of our government to consider what course the businesses—which are now being milked of their assets—should take. He said he had received a report that Castro is trying to inflame Cuban opinion and create an incident against the Americans which would touch off attacks on Americans in Cuba which might result in the death of thousands. The President stated that once the operation Mr. Douglas [Dulles] had proposed gets started, there will be great danger to the Americans in Cuba. Mr. Rubottom said that the "warning phase" of our evacuation plan is already in effect, and that many Americans are leaving, with almost no new ones going in.

Mr. Anderson said he thought that if we were to cut the Cubans off from their fuel supply, the effect would be devastating on them within a month or six weeks. There is some question whether other countries would join in denying fuel oil—especially Venezuela. Mr. Anderson added that if Cuba is to seize the Nicaro plant or other U.S. Government property, we could not stand on the sidelines. In response to a question by the President, it was brought out that there is no treaty on this, and that Cuba of course has the right to confiscate the plant so long as compensation is given. Mr. Rubottom stated that if we wanted to cut their trade drastically we could denounce our two trade agreements with them. This would of course cut into the sales by our manufacturers to the Cubans. Mr. Nixon asked what we are doing with regard to cutting off new capital, pulling out private firms and cutting off tourism. Mr. Rubottom said that much of this is occurring of its own accord.

The President told Mr. Dulles he thought he should go ahead with the plan and the operations. He and the other agencies involved should take account of all likely Cuban reactions and prepare the actions that we would take in response to these. Mr. Irwin said the main Defense concern is how we would get our people out. We have contingency planning, but it would involve military action. The President said he would like some ground work laid with the OAS to let the Latin American countries know that if the Cubans were to start to attack our people in Cuba we would be obliged to take action.

Mr. Allen Dulles returned to the point made by Mr. Anderson—that American business in Cuba wants guidance. The President said we should be very careful about giving this. Essentially they will have to make their own decisions. Admiral Burke stated that many of the American firms want to pull out, but do not want to endanger their people who are there. Mr. Nixon said he thought we should encourage [Page 863] them to come out. Particularly if they think they should get out and are simply staying there to help the U.S. Government, we should disillusion them on that score immediately.

The President said that at the next meeting he would want to know what is the sequence of events by which we see the situation developing—specifically what actions are we to take. He said our hand should not show in anything that is done. In the meantime, State should be working on what we can do in and out of the OAS. Mr. Nixon asked Mr. Herter whether support was developing satisfactorily within OAS. Mr. Rubottom's answer indicated that the situation is not clear. The President said that, as he saw it, Castro the Revolutionary had gained great prestige in Latin America. Castro the Politician running the government is now losing it rapidly. However, governments elsewhere cannot oppose him too strongly since they are shaky with respect to the potentials of action by the mobs within their own countries to whom Castro's brand of demagoguery appeals. Essentially the job is to get the OAS to support us.

Doc 486, second page (FRUS reproduction), with the "hand should not show" line

DOCUMENT 3 OF 8

Narrative of the Anti-Castro Cuban Operation Zapata

Memorandum No. 1 from the Cuba Study Group to President Kennedy · Washington, 13 June 1961

FRUS 1961–63 Vol. X Doc 231 · The November 1960 planning turn

KEY QUOTES

> *"The Special Group became aware of these adverse factors which were discussed repeatedly in the Committee meetings during the fall of 1960. The minutes of the conferences indicate a declining confidence in the effectiveness of guerrilla efforts alone to overthrow Castro."*
> Doc 231, ¶6

> *"On November 4th, CIA in Washington dispatched a cable to the project officer in Guatemala describing what was wanted."*
> Doc 231, ¶7

> *"The cable directed a reduction of the guerrilla teams in training to 60 men and the introduction of conventional training for the remainder as an amphibious and airborne assault force."*
> Doc 231, ¶7

WHAT IT SAYS

A narrative written after the failure. Its account of the autumn of 1960: declining confidence in guerrilla teams alone, then a 4 November cable from CIA headquarters to Guatemala reorienting the training toward an assault force. By ¶10 the new concept is presented to the Special Group (8 December 1960).

WHY IT MATTERS

This is the later official account of the pivot from guerrilla teams to a beachhead assault. It is the hinge between what March 1960 authorized and what landed in April 1961.

WHAT REMAINS UNSETTLED

The pivot is told here in a June 1961 narrative. A contemporaneous decision paper naming who ended the guerrilla concept is still missing from the file we have.

SOURCE

history.state.gov: FRUS 1961–63 Vol. X Doc 231

Listen: S1E01 · S1E02 The Secret Army

Narrative of the Anti-Castro Cuban Operation Zapata

4. The CIA began at once to implement the decisions contained in the policy paper on 17 March 1960. A target of 300 men was set for the recruitment of guerrillas to be trained covertly outside the United States. Radio SWAN was installed on Swan Island and ready for broadcasting on 17 May 1960. (See Annex 2) Steps were taken to develop the FRD (Frente Revolucionario Democratico) as the Cuban front organization composed of a broad spectrum of Cuban political elements other than Communists and Batistianos. (See Annex 3) On August 18th, a progress report was given to the President and the Cabinet, at which time a budget of some $13 million was approved, as well as the use of Department of Defense personnel and equipment. However, it was specified at this time that no United States military personnel were to be used in a combat status.

5. Sometime in the summer of 1960 the paramilitary concept for the operation began to change. It appears that leaders in the CIA Task Force set up in January 1960 to direct the project were the first to entertain the thought of a Cuban strike force to land on the Cuban coast in supplementation of the guerrilla action contemplated under the March 17, 1960 paper. These CIA officers began to consider the formation of a small force of infantry (200-300 men) for contingency employment in conjunction with other paramilitary operations, and in June began to form a small Cuban tactical air force. Eventually it was decided to equip this force with B-26 aircraft which had been widely distributed to foreign countries including countries in Latin America.

6. There were ample reasons for this new trend of thought. The air drops into Cuba were not proving effective. There were increasingly heavy shipments of Communist arms to Cuba, accompanied by evidence of increasingly effective control of the civilian population by Castro. The Special Group became aware of these adverse factors which [Page 578] were discussed repeatedly in the Committee meetings during the fall of 1960. The minutes of the conferences indicate a declining confidence in the effectiveness of guerrilla efforts alone to overthrow Castro.

7. In this atmosphere the CIA began to implement the new concept, increasing the size of the Cuban force in training and reorienting the training toward preparation for its use as an assault force on the Cuban coast. On November 4th, CIA in Washington dispatched a cable to the project officer in Guatemala describing what was wanted. (See Annex 4) The cable directed a reduction of the guerrilla teams in training to 60 men and the introduction of conventional training for the remainder as an amphibious and airborne assault force. From that time on, the training emphasis was placed on the assault mission and there is no evidence that the members of the assault force received any further preparation for guerrilla-type operations. The men became deeply imbued with the importance of the landing operation and its superiority over any form of guerrilla action to the point that it would have been difficult later to persuade them to return to a guerrilla-type mission. The final training of the Cubans was done by 38 U.S. Army Special Forces personnel under Lt. Colonel David Crowe who arrived on January 13 in the training camp in Guatemala where 400-500 Cubans had been assembled.

8. As mentioned in paragraph 5 above, in order to prepare for this operation, the CIA had been obliged early to organize a task force for planning the operation, and then later was to adjust that organization to the execution phase. (See Annexes 5 & 6) In both phases the task force commander, Mr. J.D. Esterline, reported upward through Mr. R.M. Bissell, Deputy Director, Plans, to General C.P. Cabell, Deputy Director of Central Intelligence and the Director, Mr. Allen Dulles. The latter, while accepting full responsibility for the operation, generally did not inject himself into military operational matters.

9. During the early months of the development of the plan, the Director,CIA looked to the 5412 Committee (Special Group) for guidance and approval of his covert plans for Cuba. In the period December 10, 1960 to February 8, 1961, former Ambassador Whiting Willauer and Mr. Tracy Barnes of CIA were charged with keeping the President and the

Doc 231, the page carrying ¶¶6–7 (FRUS reproduction)

DOCUMENT 4 OF 8

Inspector General's Survey of the Cuban Operation

CIA Inspector General (Lyman B. Kirkpatrick) · October 1961

FRUS Supp. Doc 273A / IG Survey

KEY QUOTES

> *"The first formal briefing of President Kennedy and his advisors took place on 28 January 1961."*
> IG Survey, Evaluation of Planning, ¶14

> *"But there was still no authorization, express or implied, that military action would in fact eventually be undertaken."*
> IG Survey, ¶14 (typed page 50)

WHAT IT SAYS

On the 28 January 1961 briefing, the survey says President Kennedy "approved their continuation" of the preparations, but there was still no authorization that military action would in fact be undertaken. Kennedy approved continuing preparations, not a landing.

WHY IT MATTERS

The Agency's own internal investigation draws a bright line between continuing preparations and authorizing military action, a distinction later political memory often collapses.

WHAT REMAINS UNSETTLED

Of twenty survey copies, nineteen were later destroyed; one sat in the Director's safe for decades (1998 press relay). See entry 8.

SOURCE

FRUS transcript: history.state.gov: Supp. Doc 273A
Scan: National Security Archive: IG Survey, Part I
Collection: CIA Reading Room: Bay of Pigs
Listen: S1E07 The Inspector General

Inspector General's Survey of the Cuban Operation

~~TOP SECRET~~

project had to do their day-to-day business. This policy undertainty was, in several respects, never satisfactorily resolved right up to the very hour of action, and many problems arose out of the changing limitations to which authority to do certain things was subjected in the name of political necessity.

13. Thus, during the months immediately preceding the inauguration on 20 January 1961, the Agency was recruiting and training Cuban troops and otherwise proceeding with a changed plan not yet definitely formulated or reduced to writing, with no assurance that the invasion, which was now the essence of the plan, would ultimately be authorized by the new Administration. The Agency was driving forward without knowing precisely where it was going.

14. The first formal briefing of President Kennedy and his advisors took place on 28 January 1961. (He had received briefings on earlier occasions, even before his election.) At this meeting there was a presentation, largely oral, of the status of preparations, and President Kennedy approved their continuation. But there was still no authorization, express or implied, that military action would in fact eventually be undertaken.

15. In the ensuing weeks, the Director of Central Intelligence and the Deputy Director (Plans), accompanied in

~~TOP SECRET~~

IG Survey, typed page 50 (National Security Archive scan)

DOCUMENT 5 OF 8

CIA staff memorandum: cancellation night

3 May 1961 · reconstruction of the cancelled D-Day dawn air strikes, 16–17 April 1961

FRUS X Microfiche Supp. Doc 261

KEY QUOTES

> *"Secretary Rusk had telephoned the President and recommended there be no air strike, in view of political considerations."*
>
> Doc 261, ¶5: the relay of the decision, as relayed by General Cabell and Mr. Bissell

> *"The only real offensive danger to the Brigade is enemy fighters and bombers which are better hit on their home field—not repeat not over the beachhead."*
>
> Doc 261: the Puerto Cabezas cable, quoted in the memorandum

WHAT IT SAYS

A minute-by-minute reconstruction of the night of 16–17 April 1961. It quotes the Puerto Cabezas cable and preserves the paraphrased decision relay: General Cabell and Mr. Bissell returned to say that there had been a change in orders and that air support would be limited to close support of the beachhead.

WHY IT MATTERS

This is the core paper for the cancelled dawn D-Day strikes, distinct from the D-2 strikes of 15 April that already flew. The cable shows the pilots were already in their cockpits when the change arrived.

WHAT REMAINS UNSETTLED

The exact sentence that cancelled the strikes is not in the files. Only a paraphrase survives. Three different clocks for the same night appear in the record, and no document bridges what Kennedy personally understood he was cancelling.

SOURCE

history.state.gov: Supp. Doc 261

Listen: S1E04 The Cancelled Strike

No page image is reproduced for this entry. The published page rendering carries encoding artifacts in the quotation marks and dashes, so the text above is set from the FRUS text. See the source link for the document as published.

DOCUMENT 6 OF 8

Record of Paramilitary Action Against the Castro Government of Cuba

Col. Jack Hawkins · 17 March 1960–May 1961 · prepared 5 May 1961

CIA C06828873 · DOC_0000132097

KEY QUOTES

> *"Troops commenced landing at 0100."*
> Hawkins, Record of Paramilitary Action, section "Landing of Troops" (p. 35)

> *"Enemy air attacks against the invasion force commenced at 0630 and continued all day."*
> Hawkins, section "Enemy Air Attacks" (p. 35)

WHAT IT SAYS

The paramilitary staff's after-action record: how the force grew from the March 1960 authorization through the landing. Its D-Day chronology opens with the landing and runs through the enemy air attacks and the loss of the ship Río Escondido, which carried ten days' reserve supplies.

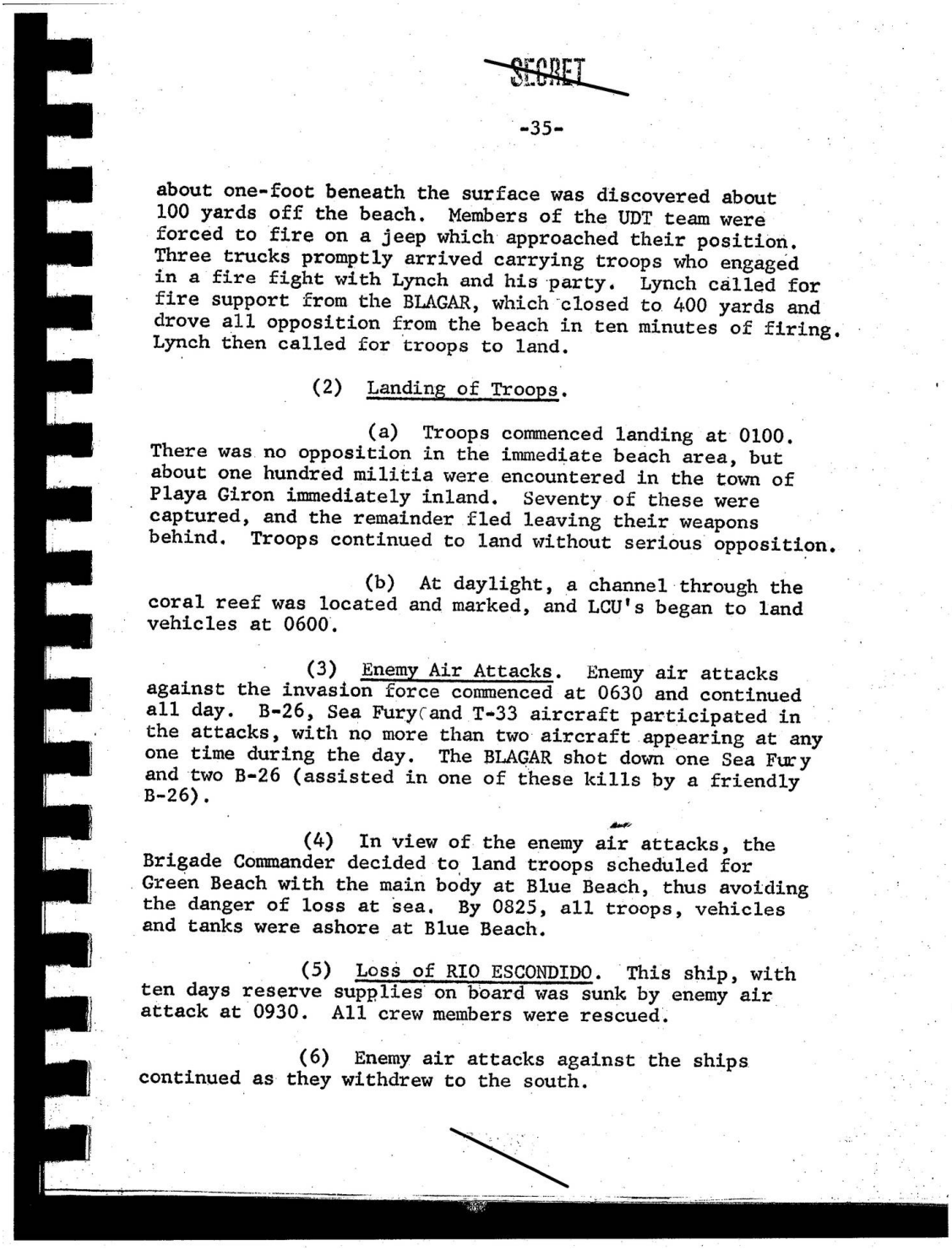
WHY IT MATTERS

An operator-level chronology of the force's growth and of D-Day itself. It is the paper to hold beside the later investigations when clocks and ship losses disagree.

SOURCE

Cite by record number (CIA release 0001459144 / C06828873). Collection pointer: CIA Reading Room: Bay of Pigs. No stable per-document URL is invented here.
Listen: S1E05 Playa Girón

Record of Paramilitary Action Against the Castro Government of Cuba



~~SECRET~~

about one-foot beneath the surface was discovered about 100 yards off the beach. Members of the UDT team were forced to fire on a jeep which approached their position. Three trucks promptly arrived carrying troops who engaged in a fire fight with Lynch and his party. Lynch called for fire support from the BLAGAR, which closed to 400 yards and drove all opposition from the beach in ten minutes of firing. Lynch then called for troops to land.

(2) Landing of Troops.

(a) Troops commenced landing at 0100. There was no opposition in the immediate beach area, but about one hundred militia were encountered in the town of Playa Giron immediately inland. Seventy of these were captured, and the remainder fled leaving their weapons behind. Troops continued to land without serious opposition.

(b) At daylight, a channel through the coral reef was located and marked, and LCU's began to land vehicles at 0600.

(3) Enemy Air Attacks. Enemy air attacks against the invasion force commenced at 0630 and continued all day. B-26, Sea Fury and T-33 aircraft participated in the attacks, with no more than two aircraft appearing at any one time during the day. The BLAGAR shot down one Sea Fury and two B-26 (assisted in one of these kills by a friendly B-26).

(4) In view of the enemy air attacks, the Brigade Commander decided to land troops scheduled for Green Beach with the main body at Blue Beach, thus avoiding the danger of loss at sea. By 0825, all troops, vehicles and tanks were ashore at Blue Beach.

(5) Loss of RIO ESCONDIDO. This ship, with ten days reserve supplies on board was sunk by enemy air attack at 0930. All crew members were rescued.

(6) Enemy air attacks against the ships continued as they withdrew to the south.

Hawkins, p. 35, with "Landing of Troops" (CIA Reading Room release)

DOCUMENT 7 OF 8

Taylor Memorandum No. 1: the ¶75 dissent footnote

Cuba Study Group · Washington, 13 June 1961

FRUS 1961–63 Vol. X Doc 231 ¶75 · Transmittal: Doc 230

KEY QUOTES

> *"It may be asked how near the landing ever came to success."*
> Doc 231, ¶75 (opening sentence)

> *"Admiral Burke and Mr. Dulles consider that there is insufficient evidence to support the conjectures in this paragraph."*
> Doc 231, footnote 16, attached to ¶75

> *"As we have found no difficulty in reaching a unanimous view on all essential points under consideration, we are submitting this view as a jointly agreed study."*
> Doc 230, Taylor's transmittal letter to President Kennedy, 13 June 1961

WHAT IT SAYS

Paragraph 75 of Memorandum No. 1 asks how near the landing came to success and concludes the beachhead "could not have survived long" without substantial help. Footnote 16 records that Admiral Burke and Mr. Dulles disagree and sets out their view. The transmittal letter (Doc 230) describes the study group as having reached "a unanimous view on all essential points."

WHY IT MATTERS

The President's own study group put unanimity and dissent on facing layers of the same report. The contradiction is on the page.

WHAT REMAINS UNSETTLED

How "a unanimous view on all essential points" and a formal ¶75 dissent coexist as the official record is a question the files leave open. We do not resolve which label fits. See S1E09 and S1E10.

SOURCE

history.state.gov: Doc 231 · Doc 230 (transmittal)
Listen: S1E09 The Taylor Committee

Taylor Memorandum No. 1: the ¶75 dissent footnote

70. Although permission was not sought for jet escort for the ammunition ships, Mr. Bissell of CIA sought and received Presidential authority to have the Navy to fly CAP over the beachhead from 0630 to 0730 on the morning of D+2. The purpose of this mission was to allow the B-26's to provide close support to the troops in the beachhead and cover for air resupply. This CAP was flown but, as indicated below, was of no avail.

71. Within the beachhead, the troops in the San Blas area began a general retreat in the morning of D+2. The last message received from the Brigade Commander by the Blagar at 1432 read: "Am destroying all equipment and communications. I have nothing left to fight with. Am taking to the woods. I can't wait for you." Units and individuals arriving at Blue Beach shortly thereafter found the Brigade Command Post gone and heavy artillery fire falling in the vicinity. Pressure on the beachhead was coming from the north and the northwest. The last known report on the situation indicates that at 1700 Blue Beach was still clear of the enemy. It appears that fighting ceased shortly thereafter and by nightfall resist-ance in the beachhead had ended.

Air Action

72. On the morning of D+2 American pilots were again used for the protection of the beachhead. The morning sorties were directed to arrive over the beachhead in the period 6:30 to 7:30 A.M. to take advantage of the one-hour period of Navy cover. For an undetermined reason, they came in almost an hour early with the result that two B-26's were destroyed by the T-33's. A total of 7 sorties were flown on this occasion with undetermined results.

73. As indicated above, three cargo aircraft tried to fly in ammunition on the morning of D+2 but were turned back by the presence of enemy air. A fourth C-46, succeeding in landing on the Blue Beach airstrip in the hours of darkness, unloaded ammunition and picked up a B-26 pilot who had been shot down, departing at daylight. (See Annex 28) [Page 595]

74. These sorties ended the action of the invasion force which began stand-down activities thereafter with a total of 21 aircraft still in commission. It is difficult to be sure of the losses suffered by the Castro Air Force. The D-2 air strikes positively destroyed 5 Castro aircraft, with undetermined damage to others, and 4 other combat aircraft were destroyed in the beachhead area.

[16] 75. It may be asked how near the landing ever came to success. Had the ammunition shortage been surmounted, which is to say, had the Castro air been neutralized, would the landing force have accomplished its mission? Considering their lack of experience, the Cubans ashore fought well and inflicted considerable losses on the Castro militia while they had ammunition. Contrary to the view held prior to the landing that with control of the air the CEF could have maintained themselves for some time, with the rapid appearance of the vastly superior Castro forces on the scene, the ultimate success of such a small landing force became very unlikely. The limited number of B-26 crews, if forced to continue to operate from Nicaragua, would have been strained to provide continuous daylight air support to the beachhead. An attempt by the landing force to exercise the guerrilla option and take to the hills would have been virtually impossible because of the presence of the encircling Castro forces and of the instructions which the Cuban invasion units had received to fall back on the beaches in case of a penetration of the beachhead. Under the conditions which developed we are inclined to believe that the beachhead could not have survived long without substantial help from the Cuban population or without overt U.S. assistance. Although under these conditions the guerrilla alternative did not exist, with control of the air the CEF might have been able to withdraw wholly or in part by sea.

III. Involvement of the U.S. Navy [Page 596]

The annexes cited in this memorandum were attached but are not printed. Some of the documents included in the annexes are printed, as noted in footnotes below. The March 17, 1960, policy paper cited here is printed in *Foreign Relations*, 1958–1960, vol. VI, pp. 850–851.↩

3. Document 28.↩
4. See Documents 30 and 31.↩
5. Document 35.↩
6. JCSM-146-61, Document 56.↩
7. See Documents 58 and 59.↩
8. JCSM-166-61, Document 62.↩
9. See Document 65.↩
10. Document 9.↩
11. See Document 66.↩
12. See Document 72.↩
13. See Documents 92 and 93.↩
14. See Document 98.↩
15. See Document 108.↩
16. Admiral Burke and Mr. Dulles consider that there is insufficient evidence to support the conjectures in this paragraph. The well motivated, aggressive CEF fought extremely well without air cover and with a shortage of ammunition. They inflicted very severe losses on the less well trained Cuban Militia. Consequently, it is reasonable to believe that if the CEF had had ammunition and air cover, they could have held the beachhead for a much longer time, destroyed much of the enemy artillery and tanks on the roads before they reached the beachhead, prevented observation of the fire of the artillery that might have been placed in position and destroyed many more of the local Militia en route to the area. A local success by the landing party, coupled with CEF aircraft overflying Cuba with visible control of the air, could well have caused a chain reaction of success throughout Cuba with resultant defection of some of the Militia, increasing support from the populace and eventual success of the operation. [Footnote in the source text.]↩
17. A 4-page narrative account of the Rules of Engagement, covering the period March 24-April 20, prepared in CNO by Commander Mitchell.↩
18. See Document 96.↩
19. Document 111.↩
20. See footnote 3, Document 111.↩
21. See Document 115.↩
22. See Document 122.↩
23. See Document 123.↩
24. See Document 124.↩
25. See Document 140.↩
26. See Document 147.↩
27. See Document 151.↩

Doc 231, page carrying ¶75

Doc 231, footnotes page, with footnote 16

DOCUMENT 8 OF 8

What the files don’t settle: destroyed copies and casualty fog

Exemplar · the burial of the IG survey (1998 press) · casualty figures across investigations

AP 22 Feb 1998 · VOA 23 Feb 1998 · Season 1 episodes 5, 7, 10

KEY QUOTE

> *“But there was still no authorization, express or implied, that military action would in fact eventually be undertaken.”*
>
> Quoted in entry 4: the survey that was then buried

WHAT IT SAYS

The IG survey, document 4 in this pack, was printed in twenty copies. Nineteen were destroyed. One was held in the Director’s safe for about thirty-seven years. AP (22 February 1998) names no author for the decision to destroy; VOA (23 February 1998) attributes it to McCone. Both attributions are carried and neither is resolved. On casualties, the published figures and the figures repeated as lore differ widely, and the investigations do not converge on a single number.

WHY IT MATTERS

This is Season 1’s signature method. The documents that survive, the copies that were destroyed, and the figures that never converge are part of the record. They are not a failure of storytelling.

WHAT REMAINS UNSETTLED

Who ordered the destruction, which attribution is correct, and which casualty figure (if any) the primary record will ever support all remain open. That is the door into S1E10 and Season 2.

SOURCE

These are press and secondary accounts, not a single primary document. Method: How We Know
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