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5 May 1961

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Paramilitary Action Against the Castro Government
of Cuba; Record of

1. PURPOSE. The purpose of this memorandum is to record significant information concerning preparation for and execution of paramilitary operations against the Castro Government of Cuba, and to draw conclusions based upon this experience which, it is hoped, may be useful for the future.

2. ORGANIZATION WITHIN C.I.A. FOR COVERT ACTION AGAINST THE CASTRO GOVERNMENT.

a. For purposes of this action, a task force headquarters was organized within the Western Hemisphere Division of the Clandestine Services of the Central Intelligence Agency. This task force contained staff sections for planning and

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supervision of activities in the intelligence, counter-intelligence, propaganda, political, logistical and paramilitary fields. The undersigned served as Chief of the Paramilitary Staff Section. The line of command within C.I.A. Headquarters for control of the Cuban operation was from the Director of Central Intelligence, Mr. Allen Dulles, to the Deputy Director (Plans), Mr. Richard M. Bissell, to the Chief, Western Hemisphere Division, Mr. J. C. King, to the Chief of the Task Force, Mr. Jacob D. Esterline.

b. The Task Force Headquarters did not include an integral air staff section, although air activity was a continuing and essential requirement throughout the operation. The Air Staff, with its headquarters in a separate building remote from Task Force Headquarters, was responsible directly to the Deputy Director (Plans), although in October, 1960, the Chief of the Air Section, in addition to his other duties, was placed under the direction of the Task Force Chief for matters concerning the project.

c. Major field activities as finally established included:

(1) A forward operating base at Miami, Florida, with a satellite communications center for relay of communications between Headquarters and the field and facilities in the Florida Keys for launching boat operations to Cuba. Recruiting was handled by the Miami Base.

(2) A base at the former Opa Locka Naval Air Station, which was used for storage of arms and munitions and for originating "black" passenger flights to Guatemala with Cuban recruits.

(3) An infantry training base and an air base in Southwestern Guatemala.

(4) An air and staging base at Puerto Cabezas, Nicaragua.

(5) Air facilities at Eglin Air Force Base for logistical flights to Guatemala and Nicaragua.

(6) A training base at Belle Chase Naval Ammunition Depot, New Orleans (used briefly in March and April, 1961).

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(7) A small maritime training base at Vieques, Puerto Rico.

d. The Chief of the Task Force did not exercise command over field activities, and had authority to release cables concerning operational matters to the Forward Operating Base in Miami only. Cables and other directives to the field were normally released at the level of Chief, Western Hemisphere Division, while some directives dealing with major policy questions were released at the still higher level of the Deputy Director (Plans). The Chief of the Air Section was authorized to release air operational cables to any field activity, and in that sense had greater authority than the Task Force Chief, himself.

e. An additional echelon of command and control was interposed between Headquarters and field activities in foreign countries in that [REDACTED] in each country [REDACTED], the responsibility for all C.I.A. activity within that country, including in particular, the responsibility for liaison with the host government. Communications personnel and facilities were provided by the C.I.A. Office of Communications, under the Deputy Director (Support), one of the three major subdivisions of C.I.A. Headquarters. The Deputy Director (Support) also provided logistical support for the operation.

f. The Paramilitary Staff Section of the Task Force included subdivisions for intelligence, logistics, maritime operations, internal resistance operations and military operations. The table of organization provided a staff of 37 officers, but the average strength was about 24 of whom 6 were military. The undersigned, as chief of this staff section, had no command authority nor authority to release cables or other directives to the field.

3. ORGANIZATION AND PROCEDURES AT HIGHER LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT FOR DETERMINATION OF POLICY GOVERNING THE PROJECT.

a. The Special Group (5412).

(1) During the administration of President Eisenhower, this Group normally met once a week to consider matters concerning covert activity in various parts of the

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world, including Cuba. Principal members of this Group were the Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, Mr. Gray; the Deputy Secretary of Defense, Mr. Douglas; the Director of Central Intelligence, Mr. Dulles; and the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, Mr. Merchant. The Department of Defense was represented for a time during the life of the Cuban project by the Assistant Secretary for International Security Affairs, Mr. Erwin. Other representatives of Departments and Agencies concerned met from time to time with the Group. Mr. Thomas Mann, the Assistant Secretary of State for Latin American Affairs, attended on occasion when Cuba was to be discussed.

(2) It was to this Group that policy matters concerning Cuban operations were submitted by the C.I.A. for resolution during the previous administration.

(3) In regard to the Cuban project, the Special Group proved to be a slow and indecisive vehicle for determination of policy. It did not have authority itself to make important policy decisions, nor did it have a formalized procedure for reaching an agreed Group position on any given question. Disagreement by one member of the Group could prevent approval of a proposed action. Proceedings were verbal, and no master record of minutes was kept. Instead, each Department or Agency kept its own minutes as desired, and sometimes there were misunderstandings later as to just what had been said or agreed upon at previous meetings. No written, signed policy directives were ever forthcoming after Group meetings for guidance of the Cuban project within C.I.A. In fact, throughout the life of the project there were no written policy directives approved at the national level to guide the project other than the original policy paper approved by the President on 17 March 1960, which was general in content.

b. Liaison with Department of Defense. The point of contact for C.I.A. within the Department of Defense for Cuban matters was the Office of Special Operations until 4 January 1961. At that time, a special committee headed by Brigadier General D. W. Gray, U. S. Army, was established within the Joint Staff for purpose of liaison with C.I.A. in regard to the Cuba project.

c. Coordination of Governmental Departments and Agencies. No machinery existed for this purpose, other than the Special Group, during most of the life of the project, although for a time during the previous administration

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Ambassador Willauer was appointed by the President to serve as a coordinator of the Department of State and the C.I.A. There was never a formal task force arrangement including representation of all Departments and Agencies which were or should have been concerned, such as the C.I.A., Department of State, Department of Defense, U. S. Information Agency, and the Department of Commerce. Instead, the project was a more or less exclusive endeavor of C.I.A., in liaison with other Departments.

d. Policy Determination During the Present Administration.

During the present Administration, policy questions concerning the Cuba project were considered directly by the President himself in meetings which normally included, among others, the Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Director of Central Intelligence, and the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs.

4. EVOLUTION OF PARAMILITARY CONCEPTS.

a. The only approved, written policy governing paramilitary action against Cuba is contained in paragraph 2d of the Policy Paper approved by the President on 17 March 1960. This paragraph is quoted as follows:

"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 C.I.A. control and can be rather easily expanded if and when the situation required. 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."

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b. Early concepts for paramilitary action to implement this approved policy involved:

(1) The recruitment, organization and training of a number of Cuban paramilitary agent teams. These teams were to include radio operators and personnel for the development and direction of intelligence, sabotage, propaganda, political and guerrilla activity within the target country.

(2) The introduction of these agent teams into the target country by clandestine or legal means.

(3) The development within the target country, through the medium of agents, of a large scale resistance movement, including sabotage, propaganda, political, and guerrilla activity.

(4) The organization and training of a Cuban air transport unit for use in supply overflights and other air operations.

(5) The supply of military arms and equipment to guerrilla and other resistance organizations by air drop or maritime delivery.

(6) The organization and training of a Cuban tactical air force equipped with B-26 light bombers.

c. Action was undertaken immediately to implement all of the above plans. Consideration was also given to the possibility of forming a small infantry force (200 to 300 men) for contingency employment in conjunction with other paramilitary operations.

d. During the period June through October, 1960, as the Soviet Bloc poured over 40,000 tons of military equipment into Cuba and Castro organized and equipped large forces of militia and established an effective Communist-style security system, the paramilitary staff studied the possibility of organizing an assault force of greater strength than the small contingency force previously planned. It was contemplated that

this force would be landed in Cuba after effective resistance activity, including active guerrilla forces, had been developed. It should be noted that the guerrilla forces were operating successfully in the Escambray Mountains during this period. It was visualized that the landing of the assault force, after widespread resistance activity had been created, would, precipitate general uprisings and widespread defection among Castro's armed forces which could contribute materially to his overthrow.

e. The concept for employment of the force in an amphibious/airborne assault was discussed at meetings of the Special Group during November and December. The Group took no definite position on ultimate employment of such a force but did not oppose its continued development for possible employment. President Eisenhower was briefed on the concept in late November by C.I.A. representatives. The President indicated that he desired vigorous continuation of all activities then in progress by all Departments concerned.

5. RESULTS OF THE INTERNAL RESISTANCE PROGRAM, SEPTEMBER 1960 to APRIL 1961.

a. Introduction of Paramilitary Agents. Seventy trained paramilitary agents, including nineteen radio operators, were introduced into the target country. Seventeen radio operators succeeded in establishing communication circuits with C.I.A. Headquarters, although a number were later captured or lost their equipment.

b. Air Supply Operations. These operations were not successful. Of 27 missions attempted only 4 achieved desired results. The Cuban pilots demonstrated early that they did not have the required capabilities for this kind of operation. A request for authority to use American contract pilots for these missions was denied by the Special Group, although authority to hire pilots for possible eventual use was granted.

c. Sea Supply Operations. These operations achieved considerable success. Boats plying between Miami and Cuba delivered over 40 tons of military arms, explosives and equipment, and infiltrated/exfiltrated a large number of personnel. Some of the arms delivered were used for partially equipping a 400 man guerrilla force which operated for a considerable

time in the Escambray Mountains of Las Villas Province. Much of the sabotage activity conducted in Havana and elsewhere was performed with materials supplied in this manner.

d. Development of Guerrilla Activity. Agents introduced into Cuba succeeded in developing a widespread underground organization extending from Havana into all of the Provinces. However, there was no truly effective guerrilla activity anywhere in Cuba except in the Escambray Mountains, where an estimated 600 to 1,000 ill-equipped guerrilla troops, organized in bands of from 50 to 200, operated successfully for over six months. C.I.A. never succeeded in establishing a direct radio link with any of these forces, although some communications with them were accomplished by radio to Havana and thence by courier. A C.I.A. trained coordinator for action in the Escambray entered Cuba clandestinely and succeeded in reaching the guerrilla area, but he was promptly captured and executed. Other small guerrilla units operated at times in Provinces of Pinar del Rio and Oriente, but they achieved no significant results. Agents reported large numbers of unarmed men in all provinces who were willing to participate in guerrilla activity if armed. The failure to make large-scale delivery of arms to these groups by aerial supply was a critical failure in the overall operation.

e. Sabotage.

(1) Sabotage activity during the period October 1960 to 15 April 1961 included the following:

(a) Approximately 300,000 tons of sugar cane destroyed in 800 separate fires.

(b) Approximately 150 other fires, including the burning of 42 tobacco warehouses, 2 paper plants, 1 sugar refinery, 2 dairies, 4 stores, 21 Communist homes.

(c) Approximately 110 bombings, including Communist Party offices, Havana power station, 2 stores, railroad terminal, bus terminal, militia barracks, railroad train.

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(d) Approximately 200 nuisance bombs in Havana Province.

(e) Derailment of 6 trains, destruction of a microwave cable and station, and destruction of numerous power transformers.

(f) A commando-type raid launched from the sea against Santiago which put the refinery out of action for about one week.

(2) These sabotage activities had considerable psychological value but accomplished no significant results otherwise.

f. Communist-Style Security Measures. As time went on, the police-state security measures imposed by Castro became increasingly effective, and agents and other resistance elements were hard pressed to survive. Many were captured, including three of the most important leaders under C.I.A. control. By stationing large numbers of militia and police throughout the country, by imposing curfews, by utilizing block wardens and security check points, and by seizing control of real estate in the cities through the Urban Reform Law, Castro was able to restrict the movements and activities of resistance elements to a crippling extent.

6. DEVELOPMENT OF THE STRIKE FORCE.

a. Action was begun on 4 November 1960, to recruit, organize, equip, and train a larger ground force than the small 200 to 300 man contingency force originally contemplated. It was planned at that time that this force would reach a strength of about 1,500 men. As this "Strike Force", as it came to be known, was developed over the ensuing months, many difficulties were encountered as a result of slowness in recruiting, political bickering among Cuban exile groups, lack of adequate training facilities and personnel, uncertainties with regard to whether Guatemala could continue to be used as a base, and lack of approved national policy on such questions as to what size force was desired, where and how it was to be trained, and whether such a force was actually ever to be employed. Some of the major problems encountered are described briefly below.

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b. Base for Training.

(1) The base available in Guatemala consisted of a small shelf of land on the side of a volcano barely large enough for comfortable accommodation of 200 men. Camp facilities were non-existent until the Cubans themselves, under American direction, threw up a few rude wooden buildings. As the population of the camp increased, living conditions became intolerably crowded, posing a serious morale problem among the troops and threatening the health of all. The only approach to the camp was over a narrow dirt road which wound its way up the mountainsides. In the dry season, the trip to the camp from the air base at Retalhuleu required about two hours by truck. In the rainy season, the road washed out frequently and became impassable to wheeled vehicles, while the camp itself was literally engulfed in the clouds. In the autumn of 1960, supplies had to be hauled up the mountain with tractors. There were no areas for infantry maneuver, but weapons could be fired at the camp site. Mortars were set up in the company street and fired over the buildings of the camp into impact areas on adjacent ridges.

(2) It appeared for a time in late 1960 that even this inadequate base would be lost, as the Department of State advanced the opinion that the presence of these activities in Guatemala would undermine the government of President Ydigoras and perhaps cause his overthrow. While the State Department urged withdrawal from Guatemala, it offered no alternative as to where the troops could be relocated. The possibility of using remote, unoccupied military facilities in the United States were raised, but this idea was opposed by the Department of State and was not approved by the Special Group. For a while, consideration was given to moving the troops to [REDACTED] at Saipan, but this idea was abandoned on the valid grounds that the project would be delayed and logistical problems magnified. It was finally decided to remain in Guatemala, since this appeared to be the only possible solution.

c. Instructor Personnel. The only qualified instructor personnel available for training at the infantry training base consisted of four CIA civilian employees until November, 1960, when two Army officers and one non-commissioned officer from the Project Paramilitary Staff at Headquarters were sent to

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Guatemala as a stop-gap measure pending assignment of Army Special Forces training teams. These teams had been requested by the Paramilitary Staff on 28 October 1960, but there were long delays while policy governing this question was established, and it was 12 January 1961 before the 38 Special Forces personnel reached Guatemala. It would have been impossible for C.I.A. to train the Strike Force without the assistance of these Army personnel.

d. Logistical Support for Training. Most of the materials used for support of the infantry training base, including weapons, equipment and training ammunition, had to be lifted to Guatemala by air. This was a great logistical problem, considering the number of aircraft available and distances involved. Shortages of equipment and ammunition sometimes hampered training.

e. Recruiting.

(1) Recruiting in Miami was very slow until the end of 1960, as a result primarily of political maneuvering among the members of the Frente Revolucionario Democrático (FRD), the political front for the project. Each member of the FRD desired to accept only recruits loyal to his own political group, and all members of the FRD objected to recruitment of any former Cuban soldier who had served during the regime of Batista. Thus, personnel with previous military experience were for the most part denied to our use. All recruiting stopped for about four weeks during the confusion of an abortive revolution in Guatemala in November. There was continuing uncertainty as to whether sufficient recruits could ever be obtained to form a Strike Force of even minimal size until early January 1961, when 500 men had been obtained and recruits began arriving at a more rapid rate as a result of action taken to break the Cuban exile political barriers, which were delaying recruitment.

7. PREPARATIONS FOR TACTICAL AIR OPERATIONS.

a. Selection of Aircraft. The decision was reached to use the B-26 light bomber prior to the time when the undersigned joined the project on 1 September 1960. Aircraft of

this type had been distributed to various foreign countries, including some in Latin America, and would, therefore, satisfy the requirement for non-attributability insofar as the United States was concerned. The Navy AD-6 was considered for a time as being superior to the B-26 for project purposes, but these aircraft had not been placed in the hands of Latin American governments and, therefore, could not meet the non-attributability requirement.

b. Tactical Air Base Problem.

(1) The air base constructed by C.I.A. at Retalhuleu, Guatemala, was at too great a distance from Cuba (750 miles from the central part of the Island) to serve for tactical air operations employing B-26 aircraft. The possibility of using a tactical air base in Mexico or in the Bahamas was explored with negative results. For a time, the President of Mexico indicated a willingness to permit use of the air field at Cozumel for limited staging operations over a 48 hour period. This was, of course, unsatisfactory for project purposes. The British were understandably reluctant to permit use of their territory for origination of tactical air strikes in connection with a United States-supported venture when the United States itself was unwilling to make similar use of its own territory.

(2) In October 1960, a C.I.A. delegation consulted with President Somoza of Nicaragua, who agreed to assist the project in any feasible way providing he received assurance from proper governmental authority that he would be supported politically by the United States if the question of Nicaraguan participation should ever be brought up for consideration by the Organization of American States or the United Nations. Such assurance was never given to the knowledge of the undersigned, but President Somoza nevertheless permitted development and use of Puerto Cabezas as an air and staging base.

(3) The use of facilities in Nicaragua was not looked upon with favor by the Department of State for political reasons, and for some months there was doubt as to whether the base would actually be used. Preparations at the base continued, however, and it was ready for use when the strike operations were launched in April 1961.

(4) The air base at Puerto Cabezas was within 500 miles of central Cuba, within marginal striking range for the B-26 aircraft.

c. Tactical Pilots. By the end of December 1960, ten B-26 aircraft were available to the project. This number was later increased to fifteen on recommendation of the Paramilitary Staff. Five Cuban B-26 pilots were considered proficient by this time, and six others were in training but had not reached a state of acceptable proficiency. The undersigned expressed reservations in writing in January 1961, concerning the ability and motivation of the Cuban tactical pilots to accomplish what would be required and recommended use of American contract pilots in addition to the Cubans. This recommendation was considered by the Special Group, which authorized the hiring of American pilots but reserved the question of their actual employment for later decision.

d. Air Crew Training. Adequate U. S. Air Force personnel were available early in the life of the project for training Cuban B-26 as well as transport pilots. About 150 Air Force personnel were involved in the project, performing such duties as training, maintenance, air base management, logistical ferry work, etc.

8. SEA FORCES.

a. The acquisition of ships and craft for execution of the amphibious operation proved to be one of the most difficult problems encountered. How this problem was solved is described briefly in following paragraphs.

b. Landing Craft. Four LCVP and three LCU, reconditioned by the Navy, ~~████████████████████~~, and C.I.A. personnel were trained at Little Creek, Virginia, in their use. The Navy moved these craft to Vieques, Puerto Rico, where the C.I.A. operators trained Cuban crews. Utilizing a landing ship dock, the Navy was to deliver the landing craft, pre-loaded with vehicles and supplies to the objective area for the amphibious operation.

c. Transports. For acquisition of transports for troops and supplies, two possible courses of action were considered:

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(1) To purchase ships outright and recruit Cuban crews for them, or

(2) To charter ships.

d. As an initial experiment with the first course, two LCI's were bought and refitted through a ship broker in Miami, and mixed crews, including American contract masters and key officers along with Cuban crewmen, were placed on board. The use of American personnel in this capacity required approval of the Special Group. As a result of the inordinate delays and difficulties experienced in readying these two ships for sea, the idea of acquiring more ships in this manner was abandoned.

e. The way was opened to pursue the second course through contact by a member of the Paramilitary Staff with Mr. Eduardo Garcia, a Cuban national who, with his father and brother, owned a shipping company incorporated in Panama. Mr. Garcia agreed to charter any or all of the six ships owned by his company for project purposes. Five Garcia ships were eventually chartered for the operation, including two 1,500 ton motor vessels and three 2,000 ton steamships. The civilian crews of these merchant ships were for the most part Cuban or Spanish. Mr. Garcia made adjustments of all crews, dismissing members who did not wish to participate in the operation or were suspected of being Castro sympathizers and replacing these with Cubans recruited in Miami. Prior to execution of the operation, each of these ships was furnished with six 19 foot aluminum boats with outboard motors for use as auxiliary landing craft.

f. Later, two additional ships were chartered from the United Fruit Company for follow-up delivery of supplies and equipment after the assault phase.

9. EFFORT OF PARAMILITARY STAFF TO OBTAIN RESOLUTION OF MAJOR POLICY QUESTIONS - JANUARY 1961.

a. By the end of 1960, the development of land, sea and air forces for the amphibious/airborne assault had proceeded to an extent which permitted firm planning for conduct of the operation. The Paramilitary Staff by this time had developed

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

(1) Whether the national government would permit execution of the strike operation.

(2) Whether the national government, if agreeable to the conduct of the operation, would permit its execution not later than 1 March 1961, which was the latest date considered desirable by the Paramilitary Staff.

(3) Whether adequate tactical operations would be permitted in conjunction with the amphibious/airborne assault.

(4) Whether American contract pilots could be used for tactical and logistical air operations over Cuba.

(5) Whether the base at Puerto Cabezas, Nicaragua, could be used for tactical air operations and staging.

(6) Whether an air base in the United States could be used for logistical flights to Cuba.

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

(1) That the air preparation commence not later than D minus 1 Day.

(2) That any move to curtail the number of aircraft to be employed from those available be firmly resisted.

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

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

10. THE PREFERRED PLAN (TRINIDAD).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

d. Major Features of the Plan:

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

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

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

completely all opposing tactical aircraft.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

13. THE STUDY OF POSSIBLE ALTERNATE LANDING AREAS.

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

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

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

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

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

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

14. THE AIR FORCE DEFECTION PLAN.

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

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

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

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

15. THE DIVERSION PLAN.

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

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

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

16. THE FINAL OPERATIONAL CONCEPT SUBMITTED TO THE PRESIDENT.

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

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

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

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

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