

17. SUCCESSIVE DELAYS OF D-DAY.

a. The date originally selected by the Paramilitary Staff for execution of the Trinidad landing was 4 March 1961. This date was chosen on the basis of the following factors:

(1) The Government of Guatemala had expressed its desire to have the Cuban force removed from that country not later than 1 March.

(2) It was desired to execute the operation at the earliest possible date in view of the rapid military build-up in Cuba. Great quantities of military equipment, including field artillery, anti-aircraft artillery, and tanks, had been delivered to Cuba by the Soviet Bloc, and it was estimated that Castro's forces, under the tutelage of Bloc advisors, would soon achieve proficiency in the use of this equipment. It was also estimated that Castro could acquire a jet air capability by April, 1961. Unconfirmed reports were received indicating that crated MIG aircraft had been delivered, and by April, 1961 Cuban pilots known to be in Czechoslovakia would have had time to complete jet training.

(3) It was desired to land in the Trinidad area before guerrilla forces operating in the adjacent Escambray Mountains could be eliminated by Castro's ever-increasing pressure against them.

(4) The night of 4 March provided suitable conditions of moonlight to facilitate operations in the transport area in preparation for the landing at dawn.

b. After rejection of the Trinidad Plan, the Paramilitary Staff recommended 3 April 1961, as D-Day for the landing in Zapata. Moon conditions would again be favorable at that time, and 3 April appeared to be the earliest date by which necessary operation and administrative plans could be prepared and other necessary preparations made for the Zapata operation. This date proved to be unacceptable, however, since it coincided with a planned visit to the United States by the Prime Minister of Great Britain. In view of this visit, the President did not

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desire to conduct the operation before 10 April. That date was accordingly programmed, although it was made clear to all concerned by the Paramilitary Staff that the lack of adequate moonlight would increase the difficulty of the night landing. Later, D-Day was again postponed until 17 April in order, it was understood, to allow observation of further developments in the Laos situation and in the United Nations with regard to Cuban charges against the United States. The night of 16-17 April would be in the new moon phase with no moonlight.

18. FORCES AVAILABLE FOR THE ZAPATA OPERATION.

a. Ground Forces (1,511 men)

(1) The Cuban Brigade included:

- (a) Headquarters and Service Company - 156
- (b) Heavy Weapons Company - 114
- (c) Five Infantry companies - 175 (each
- (d) One Airborne Infantry Company - 177
- (e) Tank Platoon - 24
(These men were trained in a highly secure and satisfactory manner at Fort Knox.)
- (f) Boat Operator Section - 36
- (g) Intelligence/Reconnaissance Company - 68
- (h) Surgical Team - 18
- (i) Supernumeraries - 43

(2) Major items of equipment included: 108 Browning Automatic Rifles; 49 30 caliber machine guns; 14 50 caliber machine guns; 22 60mm mortars; 20 81mm mortars; 7 4.2" mortars; 18 57mm recoilless rifles; 4 75mm recoilless rifles; 47 3.5" rocket

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launchers; 9 flamethrowers; 5 M41 tanks; 12 2½ ton trucks; one 3,000 gallon aviation gasoline tanker truck; one tractor crane; one dozer; 2 400 gallon water trailers; 11 ½ ton trucks and 9 ½ ton tractors.

b. Air Forces. The Cuban Air Force, based at Puerto Cabezas, Nicaragua, included fifteen B-26 light bombers, ten C-54 transports and five C-46 transports.

c. Sea Forces. Sea forces included:

(1) Two LCI, each mounting eleven 50 caliber machine guns and two 75mm recoilless rifles. (These craft were for use primarily as command and naval gunfire vessels, although each carried a 1000 man paramilitary pack in its hold). Each LCI carried two high-speed boats.

(2) Three LCU, each mounting two 50 caliber machine guns.

(3) Four LCVP, each mounting a 50 caliber machine gun.

*(4) Seven chartered commercial freighters (average 2,000 tons).

*NOTE: Freighters in the assault mounted two to three 50 caliber machine guns. Only four of these ships were to participate in the assault phase. The additional ships were loaded with follow-up supplies for both ground and air forces.

(5) One 165 foot Cuban coastal steamer.

19. MAJOR FEATURES OF THE ZAPATA PLAN.

a. Staging and Embarkation. The plan provided for airlifting Brigade troops less the airborne company, under cover of darkness, from Guatemala to Puerto Cabezas, Nicaragua, during three successive nights. Upon arrival, troops were to be moved immediately to the Puerto Cabezas dock near the airfield for embarkation before dawn. Supplies were pre-loaded in assault shipping at New Orleans prior to proceeding to Nicaragua.

b. Movement to the Objective. Ships of the task force were to proceed independently over separate tracks in order not to give the appearance of a convoy, and were to arrive at a rendezvous point about forty miles off the Cuban coast at 1730 in the afternoon of D-1. From this point they were to proceed in column under cover of darkness to the transport area 5,000 yards off the beach, making rendezvous at this point at 2300 with the U. S. Navy LSD lifting the three pre-loaded LCU and four LCVP. One transport, escorted by an LCI, was to continue independently into Cochinos Bay for landing troops at the head of the Bay. As a deception measure, two United Fruit Company ships were hired to enter Puerto Cabezas harbor during the night the assault shipping sailed. The presence of these ships plus the one follow-up Garcia vessel lying off the harbor would, it was hoped, conceal the fact that the operation had been launched. This deception was apparently successful, for available intelligence indicates that Castro was not aware that an invasion force had left Nicaragua until after the landing.

c. The Plan for Landing. The plan provided for landings, commencing at 0200 17 April, at three widely separated beaches as follows:

(1) Red Beach. (Head of Cochinos Bay; left flank of beachhead). Two reinforced infantry companies, about 400 men, were to land from one transport at this beach, utilizing six 19 foot and four 14 foot aluminum craft with outboard motors.

(2) Blue Beach (Playa Giron; center of the beachhead; about 18 miles from Red Beach). The main body, about 700 men, including two infantry companies, the heavy weapons company less detachments, the headquarters and service company, tank platoon and motor transport platoon, were to land here utilizing LCI's, LCVP's and eighteen 19 foot aluminum boats from three transports. Reserve supplies (10 days) were to be unloaded at this beach.

(3) Green Beach (Right flank of the beachhead; about 18 miles east of Blue Beach). One reinforced company, about 200 men, was to land at this beach from an LCI utilizing one LCVP and the two launches available in the LCI.

d. Underwater Demolition Team (UDT) Plan. UDT swimmers were to reconnoiter and mark each beach with lights prior to the landing of troops.

e. Naval Gunfire. One LCI, mounting eleven 50 caliber machine guns, five 30 caliber machine guns and two 75mm recoilless rifles, was to support the landing at Red Beach, while the second similarly armed craft was to support at Blue Beach prior to departing that area for the purpose of landing troops on Green Beach to the east.

f. Airborne Landing. The airborne company was to land at dawn by parachute from five C-46 aircraft in five drop zones for the purpose of sealing off the roads crossing the Zapata swamp into the beachhead area from the north.

g. Scheme of Maneuver.

(1) The beachhead area consisted of a belt of dry, scrub-covered land, about forty miles in length from east to west and from three to six miles in width, separated from the interior of Cuba by a vast swamp impassable to foot troops. The only approaches to the beachhead from the interior of Cuba consisted of three roads crossing the swamp from the north, and a coastal road leading to the east flank of the beachhead from Cienfuegos. Movement off the roads in the swamp area was impossible, while the coastal road from the east led through a narrow strip of land between the swamp and the sea.

(2) The scheme of maneuver was designed to seize and defend positions dominating the exposed, canalized routes across the swamp and blocking entry into the beachhead at the narrow neck of dry land at the east flank. Outposts beyond the swamp on the three roads leading from the north were to be dropped by parachute.

h. Air Plan.

(1) Dawn attacks on D-Day were planned against all airfields revealed by photography to have fighters or bombers still operational after the surprise attacks on D-2. Attacks were also to be launched at dawn on naval craft in or near the objective area and against other military targets. Two B-26 aircraft, after completing their attacks, were to land on the airfield near Blue Beach and continue flying interdiction and

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support missions, using ordnance which was to be promptly landed over the beach by an advance aviation party and fuel from the 3,000 tanker to be landed early from an LCU. All available aircraft were to phase back to the beachhead in afternoon sorties for interdiction, close support and other attacks as necessary.

(2) Enclosure (3) is the target list for D-Day extracted from the Zapata plan. Some of these targets were removed from the target list at the last moment in view of the injunction from higher authority that air attacks on D-Day would have to be more limited. The targets removed from the list were: Managua Military Base (where tanks and artillery were parked); Playa Baracoa Air Base (used mainly by helicopters and transports); Bauta International Broadcasting Station; Topes de Collantes Military Base. (Succeeding paragraphs describing the actual operation, will show that none of these attacks planned for D-Day were carried out as a result of orders from higher authority.)

i. Communication.

(1) The internal radio communication system of the Brigade was similar to that of a reinforced United States infantry unit of similar size, but was more extensive in amounts of equipment and number of nets employed. Portable radios with a voice range of 30 miles were used for communication between Brigade Headquarters and the various companies of the Brigade. Nets for tactical and administrative purposes, mortar spotting and air-ground control were provided.

(2) For communication with Headquarters in the United States and the air base in Nicaragua, the Brigade was equipped with two communication trailers which were to be landed from two separate ships. In addition, it was provided with six man-portable sets (RS-1) capable of communication with Headquarters in the United States or Nicaragua. Mechanical cipher equipment and one-time pads were available for encryption and decryption.

(3) The command ship and alternate command ship (LCI's) had direct CW radio links with the United States and Nicaragua, and voice nets for naval command, boat control, and

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ship-to-shore liaison and logistical purposes. The Brigade Commander could relay messages to the United States or Nicaragua through either of these ships.

(4) Each troop transport was provided with a direct radio circuit to the United States and Nicaragua.

j. Supplies.

(1) Assault Shipping.

(a) The equivalent of two basic loads of ammunition for all units was deck loaded aboard the transports lifting the units concerned. Individuals were to land with three days emergency-type rations and all the ammunition they could carry.

(b) Seven 2½ ton trucks, lifted in the three LCU, were pre-loaded with ammunition of all types.

(c) Paramilitary arms packs (arms, field equipment and limited ammunition for outfitting guerrilla forces) were available in assault shipping (2 LCI; ATLANTICO) for 4,000 men.

(d) Ten days supply of Classes I, III and V was loaded in the holds of one of the assault ships (RIO ESCONDIDO).

(2) Follow-up Shipping.

(a) One transport (LAKE CHARLES) with ten days of supply, Classes I, III and V, was scheduled to arrive at the objective area on the morning of D+2 from Nicaragua.

(b) A second follow-up ship (ORATAVA) with twenty days supplies, Class I, III and V, for the landing force, was to be on call in the Caribbean Sea south of Cuba. This ship, in addition to the above, carried 21,000 bulk rations, medical supplies, aviation gasoline and 30 days aviation ordnance for the entire Cuban air force.

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(c) A third follow-up ship (LA PLAYA) with arms and ammunition for 15,000 men, plus vehicles, communication equipment, medical supplies and POL was also to be on call south of Cuba.

(3) Air Delivery.

(a) Three days supply of Classes I, III and V were available at the airfield at Puerto Cabezas, Nicaragua, for air landing or parachute delivery.

(b) Paramilitary arms packs for 3,000 men were available for air delivery at three airfields in Guatemala, Nicaragua, and Opa Locka.

(4) Additional Backup. Arms, equipment and supplies for 15,000 men were positioned by the Defense Department at Anniston, Alabama, as additional backup. Sufficient of the above for 2,000 men was prepared for air drop.

k. Evacuation.

(1) Establishment of a rear medical facility for receipt of casualties evacuated from the objective area was a problem which defied solution until a few days before execution of the operation. Authority could not be obtained for use of a facility in the United States. There were no usable facilities at bases in Guatemala or Nicaragua, and, in any event, the governments of those countries did not wish to have Cuban casualties evacuated there.

(2) Finally, it was decided that the Department of Defense would establish a field hospital at Vieques, Puerto Rico, to be operational by D-5. This plan was abandoned, however, and it was agreed in the end that casualties would be evacuated by air or sea to Ramey Air Force Base, Puerto Rico.

20. EXECUTION OF THE OPERATION. A summary of the more significant events of the actual operation is recorded in following paragraphs.

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21. AIR STRIKES ON D-2 (15 APRIL 1961).

a. The purpose of these strikes was to destroy Castro's tactical aircraft, all of which were believed from photographic interpretation to be based at San Antonio, Campo Libertad and Santiago. Three B-26 were programmed against each of the first two of these fields and two against the third. Each aircraft carried ten 250 pound fragmentation bombs, eight 5 inch rockets and full ammunition for eight 50 caliber machine guns.

b. The attack was executed at dawn, as planned. Returning pilots reported destruction of 50 percent of tactical aircraft at Campo Libertad, 75 percent at San Antonio and 100 percent at Santiago. The readout of photography taken immediately after the strike indicated that pilot reports were optimistic, and a conservative estimate was that only about 50 percent of Castro's original tactical air force of 15 to 18 serviceable aircraft had been knocked out.

c. Antiaircraft fire from 50 caliber and 12.7mm guns was reported as heavy at Campo Libertad and San Antonio. One friendly aircraft was disabled and crashed in the sea north of Havana. Two other aircraft landed at friendly bases low on fuel. The aircraft and crews were recovered.

22. THE DIVERSION OPERATION.

a. The Diaz Group of 170 men was staged and embarked on schedule and proceeded to its objective area thirty miles east of Guantanamo in the Cuban coastal vessel (SANTA ANA) chartered for the operation. The Group failed to land during the night of 14/15 April as planned, however, reporting that difficulty had been encountered in finding the beach and the reconnaissance boat and two rubber landing craft had been lost.

b. Prior to launching the Diaz operation, the radio man and several other members of the ten-man C.I.A. team which was to meet Diaz at the beach were wounded in an accident with a hand grenade, and Headquarters contact with the intended reception party was lost.

c. Upon learning of Diaz's failure to land, Headquarters ordered him to land on the following night, but again he failed to do so giving a number of excuses. The undersigned

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decided at this time that the real reason for not landing was a failure of leadership, and it was believed that Diaz would never land as ordered. Accordingly, he was instructed to proceed to Zapata where he was to join the main force. Diaz did not immediately comply with these sailing instructions, but eventually reached the Zapata area too late for the operation.

d. This abortive effort illustrated one truth in regard to the entire operation -- the forces involved were composed of volunteer foreign nationals, all based, with the exception of Diaz's group, in countries outside the United States, and consequently the United States exercised no legal authority over them. All the Cuban forces except Diaz's, however, voluntarily complied with all instructions issued by C.I.A. Headquarters.

23. THE AMPHIBIOUS/AIRBORNE OPERATION AT ZAPATA.

a. Embarkation and Movement to the Objective.

(1) These operations were smoothly executed according to plan. (See paragraph 19.) The ships formed column at the planned place and time and made rendezvous on schedule at 2300 with the Navy LSD carrying the three LCU and four LCVP, about 5,000 yards off Blue Beach (Playa Giron). The transport HOUSTON, led by the radar-equipped LCI BARBARA J, proceeded onward into Cochinos Bay enroute to Red Beach.

(2) There is no evidence to indicate that the Cuban Government was aware of the approach of this force until the landing was commenced.

b. Cancellation of the Air Attacks Against Cuban Military Airfields and Other Targets Planned for 0540R on D-Day. (See paragraph 19h.)

(1) At about 2215 on the night of 16 April, I was informed at the Command Post by Mr. Esterline, the Project Chief, that these attacks had been cancelled by order of the President on recommendation of the Department of State. Upon hearing this, I immediately telephoned Mr. Bissell, the Deputy Director (Plans), who was at the Department of State, and

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urged in the strongest terms that the President be immediately requested to reconsider this decision and that the possible disastrous consequences of cancelling these attacks be explained to him. I offered the prediction at this time that shipping, with the essential supplies on board, would be sunk, possibly to the last ship, on the following day, since it was known that Castro still possessed a dangerous fighter and bomber capability. I stated also at this time that if the decision to cancel the air attacks had been communicated to the Command Post a few hours earlier, I would have strongly urged that the shipping be withdrawn without attempting to land the troops. But as it was, the ships were already closely approaching the transport area off the beaches, and by the time a message could reach them, the landing operations would be underway.

(2) Mr. Bissell, and General Cabell, the Deputy Director of Central Intelligence, conferred with Secretary of State Rusk about the matter, but did not see the President. It is my understanding that Secretary Rusk, after talking with General Cabell and Mr. Bissell, telephoned the President and recommended that the decision to cancel the air attacks remain unchanged. The President accepted this recommendation.

(3) After it was learned at the Command Post that the decision had not been changed, a message was sent to the task force at 0149 warning that Castro's air force had not been destroyed. The task force was ordered to expedite unloading during the night and to sail all transports, except the RIO ESCONDIDO, to the south at best speed. The RIO ESCONDIDO was to remain at Blue Beach to continue unloading its vital reserve supplies under protection of the guns of the two LCI, BARBARA J and BLAGAR.

c. D-Day Operations at Blue Beach (17 April).

(1) UDT Reconnaissance. A reconnaissance boat with UDT personnel and the C.I.A. operations officer from the Command Ship BLAGAR, Mr. Lynch, landed at Blue Beach shortly after midnight and marked the beach with lights. A coral reef

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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.

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d. Operations at Red Beach.

(1) UDT Reconnaissance. Mr. Robertson, the C.I.A. operations officer with the LCI BARBARA J, led a UDT team to Red Beach shortly after 0100 on 17 April and marked the beach. The reconnaissance party silenced enemy automatic weapons fire coming from the left flank.

(2) Landing of Troops. Troops commenced landing without opposition, but encountered fifty militia immediately inland, forty of whom were captured. Several trucks which approached the beach within the first half hour were successfully attacked and driven off by gunfire from the BARBARA J. Captured militiamen offered to fight against Castro.

(3) Loss of the HOUSTON. The HOUSTON was hit by rockets from enemy aircraft at 0630, and beached on the west side of Cochinos Bay. One infantry company, less its weapons platoon, was still on board. These men, with the ship's crew, went ashore but never reached the Red Beach area.

(4) One enemy B-26 was shot down by machine gun fire from the UDT boat.

(5) Combat Action. At about 1000, about 500 to 600 militia attacked the Red Beach force from the north and were driven off with heavy casualties. Tanks accompanying this force were either destroyed or stopped by friendly aircraft. A tank and two ammunition trucks arrived from Blue Beach in time for action against the next attack at 1400 by an estimated 1,500 militia. These troops, who arrived in open trucks and semi-trailers, were ambushed by the Red Beach force, employing the tank, 57mm recoilless rifles, 3.5" rocket launchers, machine guns, and other available weapons. Enemy troops were caught by this fire before they could dismount, and friendly survivors have estimated that fifty percent of these enemy troops were killed or wounded. The next attack came in the evening and lasted all night. Five enemy tanks were knocked out by the Red Beach force during the night.

(6) The BARBARA J was strafed by an enemy Sea Fury during the day, and two engines were disabled. A near miss with rockets opened her seams slightly and she began taking water.

(7) Retirement to Blue Beach. On the morning of D+1, the Red Beach force, being almost out of ammunition, retired in good order to Blue Beach, utilizing captured trucks, and took up positions in the Blue Beach perimeter. They were not pressed by the enemy during this retirement.

(8) Cooperation of Civilians. Forty civilians in the Red Beach area volunteered to assist the invasion force and were employed as truck drivers and laborers.

e. Airborne Landing. The airborne company landed in all but one of five scheduled drop zones at 0730. Light resistance was encountered. Little is known of further actions by the airborne company, except that the force which landed north of Blue Beach held positions successfully until D+2, the final day of the operation.

f. Continued Action at Blue Beach.

(1) Air Supply. During the night of 17/18 April one C-54 drop of ammunition was made at Red Beach and three C-54 drops at Blue Beach. Three C-54 drops were made at Blue Beach during the following night, but only two were received.

(2) Combat Action. Reports have indicated that the Blue Beach area was quiet during the morning of D+1, but the enemy attacked from west, north and east in the afternoon, employing tanks, artillery, and aircraft. The battle continued throughout the night of 18/19 April.

(3) Attempt to Land Supplies. Orders were issued from Headquarters for ammunition and supplies to be offloaded from the transports CARIBE and ATLANTICO into the three LCU which were to be escorted to the beach during the night of 18/19 April. The LCU's were not able to rendezvous with these transports until the evening of 18 April. The LCU's were loaded and the run to the beach was commenced, but the DEBACAR

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reported that due to the slow speed of the LCU's, the craft could not arrive at the beach until after daylight. Enemy fighters by this time were over the beach continuously during daylight hours, and it was considered a certainty that the craft would be sunk before they could reach the beach to unload. Accordingly, the mission was cancelled by Headquarters, and instructions for air supply during the night were issued to the air base in Nicaragua.

(4) Evacuation Attempt. A message was sent to the Brigade Commander on 18 April stating that ships and craft would be moved to Blue Beach to evacuate troops that night if he so recommended. He replied that he would never be evacuated. At 1300 on 19 April, the two LCI and three LCU headed for the beach, in accordance with orders from Headquarters, to evacuate troops, but the convoy reversed course upon learning that the beachhead had fallen.

(5) Final Day of Battle (19 April). The enemy continued to press Blue Beach from three sides with tanks, infantry and artillery during the day. In the morning, a counter attack was launched to the west along the coastal road by about 90 men and two tanks. The tanks returned later in damaged condition, but the infantry force was not heard from again. In the course of the day's battle, ammunition supplies were exhausted, and at about 1600 in the afternoon organized resistance ceased. Survivors have stated that the lines did not collapse until all ammunition was expended.

g. Summary of Friendly Air Action.

(1) D-Day.

(a) Eleven B-26 were phased over the beachhead for close support and interdiction during the day. These aircraft attacked ground targets, sank a patrol escort ship (3 inch gun) near the Isle of Pines, and one aircraft attacked the airfield at Cienfuegos. Only three of these eleven aircraft returned to base. Four were shot down, while the remaining four landed at other friendly bases. Some of these four aircraft, and all the crews, were returned to base late the next day.

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(b) Four new B-26 arrived at Nicaragua from the United States that night. During the night, three B-26 were launched against the San Antonio airfield where D-Day photography had revealed the opposing aircraft were based. This mission was unsuccessful due to haze and poor visibility.

(2) D-1.

(a) Five aircraft flew missions over the beachhead during the morning and attacked ground targets.

(b) In the afternoon, a highly successful attack was launched by six aircraft (two flown by Americans) against a 20-mile-long truck and tank column approaching Blue Beach from the west. Several tanks and about twenty large troop-laden lorries were destroyed by napalm, bombs, rockets and machine gun fire. (It is noteworthy that an enemy report intercepted on this date indicated that he had already suffered 1,800 casualties, mostly from air attack.)

(c) This column was attacked again during the night by six B-26.

(d) Four additional new aircraft reached the base in Nicaragua during the night.

(3) D-2.

(a) Five aircraft (four with American crews) were sent in early morning sorties over the beachhead. Three, including two piloted by Americans, were shot down by T-33's. Additional sorties were flown during the morning as aircraft could be readied.

(4) It is estimated that only three enemy T-33 and two Sea Furies were left in action after D-Day. These fighters were sufficient, however, to keep almost continuous cover over the beachhead, making it almost suicidal to attempt operations in the area with B-26 aircraft, which were virtually helpless against fighter attack.

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(5) It seems reasonable to conclude that the attacks on military airfields originally programmed for 0540 on D-Day, but which had to be cancelled, would have had an excellent chance of eliminating Castro's offensive air capability or of reducing it to ineffectiveness. If this had been done, friendly B-26 operations could have been maintained over the beachhead area and the approaches thereto continuously during the day, and ships could have unloaded the supplies needed to sustain the Brigade. This could have turned the tide of battle, since Castro's road-bound truck columns proved highly vulnerable when friendly B-26 were able to locate them, and the Brigade, itself, was not defeated until its ammunition supplies were exhausted.

24. RESCUE OPERATIONS. Mr. Robertson and Mr. Lynch, with five Cuban UDT men, operated from United States destroyers for several days after collapse of the beachhead and rescued twenty-six survivors from the coastal area west of Cochinob Bay.

25. INTELLIGENCE FACTORS.

a. The ultimate success of strike operations against Cuba in causing the overthrow of Castro depended upon the precipitation by these operations of large-scale uprisings among the people of Cuba and widespread revolt within the ranks of Castro's armed forces. The invasion force was never intended to overthrow Castro by itself, and no representations were ever made by the Central Intelligence Agency that the force had such a potential.

b. There was much evidence from available intelligence sources, including agent reports and debriefing of persons recently coming out of Cuba, to indicate that the country was ripe for revolt. An analysis of actual and potential anti-Castro resistance in Cuba made by the Paramilitary Staff in March 1961 is contained in enclosure (4). After this was written, reliable intelligence was received indicating that the entire Cuban Navy was plotting a revolt, which was to take place at about the same time as the planned invasion.

c. The low estimate by the Paramilitary Staff of the fighting qualities and potential of Castro's militia was

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based upon accurate knowledge of militia performance against guerrilla forces in the Escambray Mountains over a period of six months. Some of the guerrilla leaders from the Escambray were exfiltrated and debriefed by the Central Intelligence Agency after resistance in these mountains collapsed. There can be no question of the fact that the militia performed very poorly in the Escambray, and demonstrated low morale, lack of efficiency and a marked reluctance to close in decisive combat even with small, poorly armed guerrilla forces. The guerrilla forces in the Escambray were reduced by siege, which cut off food supplies, and not by direct combat.

d. The military proficiency demonstrated by the militia at Zapata indicated that great progress had been made in integrating Bloc equipment and in the training of Castro's hard-core Communist followers during the early months of 1961. There was also reason to suspect that militia operations were being directed by European military personnel. The tactics employed were Communist-style, and enemy voice transmissions in a strange tongue, not Spanish, were intercepted by the Brigade. Intelligence indicates that these "elite" militia forces suffered extremely heavy casualties during the three days of fighting, and they were not able to overcome the Brigade until the latter was out of ammunition as a result of our inability to supply the force against the opposition of Castro's five remaining fighter aircraft. It would seem reasonable to conclude that if the Castro Air Force had been eliminated at the beginning so that uninterrupted unloading of supplies could proceed at the beach and our B-26 aircraft could operate effectively, the Brigade would have had an excellent chance of breaking the hard-core militia, which obviously was what Castro used in the battle. Casualties in the number being experienced by the militia (estimated 3,000 to 4,000) could not have been sustained more than a few more days without collapse. The breaking of the hard-core militia would probably have been the signal for revolt of the Rebel Army and remaining elements of the militia, who were known to be of dubious loyalty to Castro. In this regard, it is significant that the 150 militia prisoners captured by the Brigade offered to fight against Castro, and the majority of able-bodied male civilians in the invasion area did likewise. It is also

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significant that no known Rebel Army units participated in the battle, indicating Castro's lack of faith in their loyalty. It is also significant that Castro's Navy did nothing of importance against the invasion force.

e. The theory that uprisings and revolt would be triggered did not receive an adequate test in the operation. Agents throughout Cuba were warned shortly before the invasion to make all preparations for action, but the exact invasion area and timing could not be revealed to them in view of the known propensity of all Cubans to tell secrets. There was also a possibility that one or more agents would, unknown to us, be doubled (controlled by the enemy). It would not be reasonable to expect revolts to develop within a period of two or three days which turned out to be the extent of life of the invasion force, nor could revolt be expected until the invasion force had demonstrated that it had a good chance of enduring on Cuban soil. There is conclusive evidence that Castro feared revolt in the fact that he promptly arrested 30,000 persons throughout Cuba. One C.I.A. agent reported that 2,500 men had requested arms from him immediately after the invasion took place, but the invasion did not last long enough to permit supply of arms.

26. POLICY RESTRICTIONS WHICH LIMITED THE EFFECTIVENESS OF PARAMILITARY OPERATIONS.

a. The most significant policy restrictions which hampered the preparation for and conduct of effective paramilitary operations are listed below.

(1) The restriction prohibiting use of bases in the United States for training paramilitary forces.
(Adequate training base could not be obtained in other countries.)

(2) The restriction prohibiting use of an air base in the United States for logistical overflights in support of guerrilla forces and of the strike force when landed. (The Guatemalan base was the only base available for several months, until Puerto Cabezas, Nicaragua, was put into use shortly before

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the invasion in April 1961. Both were too distant from the target for effective, large-scale logistical flights with the aircraft available (C-54 and C-46). Missions could have been far more efficiently flown and supported from the United States, with fewer logistical problems, and possibly with less publicity than that which resulted from Guatemalan operations.)

(3) The restriction prohibiting use of American contract pilots for aerial supply of guerrilla forces. (Cuban pilots demonstrated at an early date their inability to perform these missions. American pilots, on the other hand, have proved their ability in this field in many areas of the world, working with a variety of indigenous forces. The failure to supply guerrilla organizations was a critical failure in the overall operation.)

(4) The restriction prohibiting use of a base in the United States for tactical air operations in support of the amphibious landing. (About nine hours were required to turn around a B-26 for a second mission over the target from Nicaragua, and pilots were physically unable to fly more than one mission per day. In the actual operation, numerous aircraft were forced to land in the United States or British territory due to fuel shortage, and were out of action during the critical period. From a base in Florida, the number of sorties flown could have been doubled or tripled, and fighter aircraft could have been used to protect the bombers. Location of bases in third countries also complicated security and logistical problems and increased the likelihood that use of the bases would be denied soon after commencement of operations.)

(5) The restriction prohibiting use of American contract pilots for tactical air operations. (Authority was granted to hire American pilots, but not to use them. Some American pilots were thrown into the amphibious operation during the second and third days as an emergency measure. Use of adequate numbers of highly skilled, combat-experienced American pilots in the initial air operations could have spelled the difference between success and failure.)

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(6) The restriction preventing use of more effective tactical aircraft than the B-26 bomber.

(7) The restrictions preventing the full application of the tactical air power available. (The preferred plan presented by the Paramilitary Staff called for full-scale air attacks by all available aircraft on military airfields, as well as against tank, artillery and truck parks, commencing at dawn of D-1 and involving another maximum effort at dusk and continuation of full-scale operations on D-Day and thereafter. Pressure by the Department of State against the use of tactical air resulted in the watering down of this plan. See paragraphs 11, 12 and 14. The initial air strike on D-2 was made against three airfields only, and only eight of the fifteen available bombers were permitted to participate.

(An initial full-scale raid by all fifteen of the available bombers would certainly have had a much greater destructive effect than the raid by eight aircraft, and might have eliminated Castro's tactical air force at one blow.

(Restrictions on the employment of napalm also reduced the effectiveness of operations. Use of this weapon against concentrated aircraft, tanks, artillery, and trucks clearly visible in up-to-date aerial photographs could have been a decisive factor. For example, one photograph revealed a concentrated tank park with 36 tanks and a truck park with 150 trucks. Napalm could have eliminated these, as well as other tank, truck, and artillery parks revealed by other available photography. By limiting the number of aircraft in the initial surprise strike, and leaving these important targets untouched, Castro was given the opportunity to disperse these concentrations.

(Cancellations at the last moment, while the troops were already off the beaches preparing to land, of the air attacks planned for 0540 on D-Day against Castro's remaining tactical aircraft, doomed the operation to failure. See paragraph 23b.

(Restrictions which prevented the full application of available airpower in accordance with sound

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tactical principles must be regarded as primarily responsible for failure of the amphibious operation.)

b. The Department of State was the principal advocate of the restrictions listed above. The rationale of these self-imposed restrictions rested upon what proved to be an unrealistic requirement, impossible of fulfillment under the circumstances, to conduct operations in such a way as to be non-attributable to the United States, or, at least, plausibly deniable. In the interest of non-attributability, the requirement for operational effectiveness was so completely subordinated that the end result was "too little, too late", and the United States had to bear publicly the responsibility for a failure rather than the responsibility for a success. The price paid by the United States in terms of public clamor by our enemies was high enough to have covered the cost of additional measures that could have been taken to ensure success. It seemed to this writer through the many months of this effort, that the United States was trying to achieve a very important objective at a very small cost to itself, while it would have been in the national interest to act more boldly and openly and accept more risks as might be necessary to ensure that every needed measure would be taken to win the objective, which had to be won, and still must be won, and soon, if all Latin America is not to be lost to Communism.

27. CONCLUSIONS. The following conclusions are based upon my experiences of the past eight months as Chief of the Paramilitary Staff of the Central Intelligence Agency Cuba Project:

a. The Government and the people of the United States are not yet psychologically conditioned to participate in the cold war with resort to the harsh, rigorous, and often dangerous and painful measures which must be taken in order to win. Our history and tradition have conditioned us for all-out war or all-out peace, and the resort to war-like measures in any situation short of all-out war is repugnant to the American mentality. In order to win the cold war, this inhibition must be overcome.

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b. In a cold war paramilitary operation, there is a basic conflict of interest between considerations of military effectiveness on the one hand and political considerations on the other. Since in the cold war national survival does not seem to be immediately at issue (although this writer would deem that it is), political considerations tend to dominate, with the result that military measures are progressively restricted and subordinated. Experiences of the past few years indicate that political restrictions on military measures may result in destroying the effectiveness of the latter, and the end result is political embarrassment coupled with military failure and loss of prestige in the world.

c. Paramilitary operations cannot be effectively conducted on a ration-card basis. Therefore, if political considerations are such as to prohibit the application of all military measures required to achieve the objective, then military operations should not be undertaken.

d. Civilian officials of the Government should not attempt to prescribe the tactics of military or paramilitary operations.

e. For an effort of the kind made against Cuba, detailed policy guidance, in writing, is required from the national level. A national plan should be written at the outset, setting forth the responsibilities and tasks of every Department and Agency concerned. An organization must be provided for directing and coordinating the actions by all Departments and Agencies in the economic, political, psychological and military fields.

f. In pursuing an operation of the kind conducted against Cuba, governmental machinery must be established for prompt, decisive resolution of policy questions as they arise.

g. Paramilitary operations of any appreciable size cannot be conducted on a completely covert basis, and the requirement for non-attributability introduces tremendous complications in the accomplishment of what would otherwise be simple tasks. Since paramilitary operations on an increasing

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scale will probably be required as we face years of cold war in the future, the United States should be prepared to operate more boldly and overtly in this field, as do our enemies of the Sino-Soviet Bloc.

g. The Central Intelligence Agency does not have required organization, equipment, procedures, bases, facilities nor staff for the planning and conduct of paramilitary operations. It cannot conduct such operations without relying heavily upon the Department of Defense for personnel, equipment, supplies, facilities, and other support.

i. Primary responsibility for all paramilitary matters, including the organization, equipping, training, operational employment and support of indigenous guerrilla forces, should be assigned to the Department of Defense, which has vast human and material resources and proper organization and procedures for accomplishment of these functions.

j. All military operations of any kind, including those of a paramilitary nature, should be under the direction and control of the Unified Commander in whose area the operations are to take place. It would be advisable to form a special task force within the Unified Command, with representation from Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, and C.I.A. as required, for conduct of paramilitary operations.

k. Within the Department of Defense, the responsibility for ground paramilitary matters should be assigned to the Army Special Forces, since these forces are especially trained and organized for such missions.

l. It would be advisable for all members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to attend meetings with the President and Cabinet Officers at which any military matters are to be discussed. It cannot be expected that any single military officer can advise adequately on all the technical aspects of air, sea, and ground warfare. The Cuban operation was essentially a seaborne invasion. Such operations are a specialty of the Navy and Marine Corps. Therefore, the Chief

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of Naval Operations and the Commandant of the Marine Corps, if present at all meetings, would have been able to contribute invaluable advice at the proper time.

m. A Communist-style police state is now firmly entrenched in Cuba, which will not be overthrown by means short of overt application of elements of United States military power. Further efforts to develop armed internal resistance, or to organize Cuban exile forces, should not be made except in connection with a planned overt intervention by United States forces.

J. Hawkins
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Colonel, U. S. Marine Corps

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