

DPD	Development Projects Division (CIA Air Operations)
DSC	Distinguished Service Cross
DZ	Drop Zone
E.O.D.	Extension of Duty
FI	Foreign Intelligence
FRD	Frente Democratico Revolucionario (Democratic Revolutionary Front)
G-2	Intelligence officer
GOC	Government of Cuba
GS-15	Government Service level 15
IO	Intelligence Officer
JCS	Joint Chiefs of Staff
LCI	Landing Craft, Infantry
LCU	Landing Craft, Utility
MSTS	Military Sea Transport Service
O/IC	Office of Intelligence Coordination Operations
Ops	Operations
OSS	Office of Strategic Services
P&P	Policy and Plans operations
para.	Paragraph
PM	Paramilitary
PP	Propaganda operations
PRC	Project Review Committee
SNIE	Special National Intelligence Estimate
TDY	Temporary Duty
U-2	U.S. high-altitude reconnaissance aircraft
USIA	United States Information Agency
USIB	United States Intelligence Board
USMC	United States Marine Corps
USMCR	United States Marine Corps Reserve
USUN	United States Mission at the United Nations
WH	Western Hemisphere Division
WH/3	Western Hemisphere Task Force 3
WH/4	Western Hemisphere Task Force 4, (Bay of Pigs Task Force)

Inspector General's Survey of the Cuban Operation October 1961

A. INTRODUCTION

1. This is the Inspector General's report on the Central Intelligence Agency's ill-fated attempt to implement national policy by overthrowing the Fidel Castro regime in Cuba by means of a covert paramilitary operation.
2. The purpose of this report is to evaluate selected aspects of the agency's performance of this task, to describe weaknesses and failures disclosed by the study, and to make recommendations for their correction and avoidance in the future.
3. The report concentrates on the organization, staffing and planning of the project and on the conduct of the covert paramilitary phase of the operation, including comments on intelligence support, training, and security. It does not describe or analyze in detail the purely military phase of the effort.
4. The supporting annexes have been chosen to illustrate the evolution of national policy as outlined in Section F of the body of the report. Annex A is the basic policy paper approved by President Eisenhower on 17 March 1960. Annex B is a paper prepared by the project's operating chiefs for the briefing of President Kennedy in February 1961. Annexes C, D, and E are the planning papers successively prepared during March and April 1961 in the last few weeks before the invasion.
5. The report includes references to the roles played by Agency officials in Presidential conferences and interdepartmental meetings at which policy decisions affecting the course of the operation were taken, but it contains no evaluation of or judgment on any decision or action taken by any official not employed by the Agency.
6. In preparing the survey the Inspector General and his representatives interviewed about 125 Agency employees of all levels and studied a large quantity of documentary material.

B. HISTORY OF THE PROJECT

1. The history of the Cuban project begins in 1959 and for the purposes of the survey ends with the invasion of Cuba by the Agency-supported Cuban brigade on 17 April 1961 and its defeat and capture by Castro's forces in the next two days.

2. Formal U.S. Government adoption of the project occurred on 17 March 1960, when, after preliminary preparations by the Agency, President Eisenhower approved an Agency paper titled "A Program of Covert Action Against the Castro Regime" (Annex A) and thereby authorized the Agency to undertake this program:

- a. Formation of a Cuban exile organization to attract Cuban loyalties, to direct opposition activities, and to provide cover for Agency operations.
- b. A propaganda offensive in the name of the opposition.
- c. Creation inside Cuba of a clandestine intelligence collection and action apparatus to be responsive to the direction of the exile organization.
- d. Development outside Cuba of a small paramilitary force to be introduced into Cuba to organize, train and lead resistance groups.

3. The budget for this activity was estimated at \$4,400,000. The breakdown was: Political action, \$950,000; propaganda, \$1,700,000; paramilitary, \$1,500,000; intelligence collection, \$250,000.

4. This document, providing for the nourishment of a powerful internal resistance program through clandestine external assistance, was the basic and indeed the only U.S. Government policy paper issued throughout the life of the project. The concept was classic. The Cuban exile council would serve as cover for action which became publicly known. Agency personnel in contact with Cuban exiles would be documented as representatives of a group of private American businessmen. The hand of the U.S. Government would not appear.

Preparatory Action

5. Some months of preparation had preceded presentation of this paper to the President. In August 1959 the Chief of the Agency's Paramilitary Group attended a meeting [excised] to discuss the creation of a paramilitary capability to be used in Latin American crisis situations. At this time Cuba was only one of a number of possible targets, all of which appeared equally explosive. The Chief of the Paramilitary Group prepared a series of staff studies for the Western Hemisphere (WH) Division on various aspects of covert lim-

ited warfare and urged the creation of a division paramilitary staff. He also set up a proprietary airline in [excised] for eventual support use.

6. In September 1959 the WH Division assigned an officer to plan potential Agency action for contingencies which might develop in a number of Latin American countries. There was a lack of sufficient readily available operational information on potential target areas, so a requirement, with special emphasis on Cuba, whose Communist control was now becoming more and more apparent, was sent throughout the intelligence community, and resulted in a three-volume operational study.

7. By December 1959 these studies had produced a plan for training a small cadre of Cuban exiles as paramilitary instructors, these in turn to be used for training other Cuban recruits, in a Latin American country, for clandestine infiltration into Cuba to provide leadership for anti-Castro dissidents.

Organization of Branch

8. On 18 January 1960 the WH Division organized Branch 4 (WH/4) as an expandable task force to run the proposed Cuban operation. The initial Table of Organization totaled 40 persons, with 18 at Headquarters, 20 at Havana Station, and two at Santiago Base.

9. The branch also began negotiations for a Panama training site. Its officers reconnoitered the area of Miami, Florida, in search of suitable installations for office space, warehouses, safe sites, recruiting centers, communications center, and bases for the movement of persons, materiel, and propaganda into or out of Cuba.

10. At the same time Headquarters and the Havana Station were conducting a study of Cuban opposition leaders to prepare for the formation of a unified political front to serve as the cover instrument for clandestine operations and as a rallying point for anti-Castro Cubans. They were also making a map reconnaissance of the Caribbean, seeking a site for a powerful medium-wave and short-wave radio station.

Preliminary Progress

11. As a result of this intensive activity over a relatively brief period the Agency was able to report considerable preliminary progress and to predict early performance in a number of respects, when it carried its request for policy approval to the President in mid-March of 1960.

12. Among the facts so reported (Annex A) were: That the Agency was in

close touch with leaders of three major and reputable anti-Castro groups of Cubans whose representatives, possibly together with others, would form a unified opposition council within 30 days; that the Agency was already supporting opposition broadcasts from Miami, had arranged for additional radio outlets in Massachusetts, [excised] and [excised], and that a powerful "gray" station, probably on Swan Island, could be made ready in two months; that publication of an exile edition of a confiscated Cuban newspaper had been arranged; that a controlled action group was distributing propaganda outside Cuba, and that anti-Castro lecturers were being sent on Latin American tours.

13. The President was further informed that an effective intelligence and action organization inside Cuba, responsive to direction by the exile opposition, could probably be created within 60 days and that preparations for the development of an adequate paramilitary force would require "a minimum of six months and probably closer to eight."

Policy Discussions

14. Discussion at high policy levels of the Government had preceded submission of this program to the President. In the last months of 1959 the Special Group, composed of representatives of several departments and agencies and charged by NSC 5412 with responsibility for policy approval of major covert action operations, considered several Agency proposals for exile broadcasts to Cuba. During January and February of 1960, the Director of Central Intelligence informed the Special Group of Agency planning with regard to Cuba, and on 14 March an entire meeting was devoted to discussion of the Agency's program. Concern was expressed over the length of time required to get trained Cuban exiles into action, and there was discussion of U.S. capabilities for immediate overt action if required. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff is reported to have said that forces totaling 50,000 men were ready if needed and that the first of them could be airborne within four hours after receipt of orders. Members of the group urged early formation of an exile junta. The Agency announced its intention of requesting funds to pursue the program, and no objections were raised by the group.

15. The project to unseat Castro had thus become a major Agency activity with the highest policy sanction, engaging the full-time activity of the personnel of a rapidly expanding operating branch, requiring a great amount of detailed day-to-day attention in higher Agency echelons and entailing frequent liaison with other agencies and departments of the Government.

16. The activities described to the President continued at an accelerated rate, but the financial approach to the project was relatively cautious in the early weeks.

Financial Preparations

17. On 24 March 1960 the project was approved by the Director of Central Intelligence in the initial amount of \$900,000 for the rest of Fiscal Year 1960. However, only two weeks later, on 7 April, WH/4 Branch reported that 85% of the \$900,000 had been obligated. By 30 June an additional \$1,000,000 was obligated.

18. In April the Director of Central Intelligence told a meeting of WH/4 personnel that he would recall people from anywhere in the world if they were needed on the project. From January 1960, when it had 40 people, the branch expanded to 588 by 16 April 1961, becoming one of the largest branches in the Clandestine Services, larger than some divisions. Its Table of Organization did not include the large number of air operations personnel who worked on the project and who were administered by their own unit, the Development Projects Division (DPD), nor did it include the many people engaged in support activities or in services of common concern, who, though not assigned to the project, nevertheless devoted many hours to it.

19. In the early months of the project there were intensive efforts to organize an exile front group, to get a broad and varied propaganda program under way, to begin a paramilitary program, and to acquire sites in Florida and elsewhere for training and recruiting activities and for office space.

20. The so-called "Bender Group" composed of project political action officers, was set up as a notional organization of American businessmen to provide cover for dealing with the Cubans. After a series of meetings in New York and Miami a nominally unified *Frente Revolucionario Democrático* (FRD), composed of several Cuban factions, was agreed upon on 11 May 1960.

Propaganda Activity

21. Radio broadcasts from Miami into Cuba were continued under the sponsorship of a Cuban group. Preparations were made for exile publication of *Avance*, whose Havana plant had been seized by Castro. Anti-Castro propaganda operations were intensified throughout Latin America, and a boat for marine broadcasts was purchased. The Swan Island radio station, on

which the President had been briefed, was completed and on the air with test signals by 17 May.

22. The action-cadre instruction training program was being prepared, and \$25,000 worth of sterile arms were being sent to the Panama training base, which was activated 11 May. At the same time Useppa Island, Florida, was acquired as a site for assessment and holding of Cuban paramilitary sites and for training radio operators. Screening of paramilitary recruits had begun in Miami in April, and the training in Panama began in June.

23. The Miami Base was opened on 25 May in the Coral Gables business district under cover of a New York career development and placement firm, backstopped by a Department of Defense contract, and on 15 June a communications site, with Army cover, was opened at the former Richmond Naval Air Station, which was held under lease by the University of Miami. Safe houses were also acquired in the Miami area for various operational uses. The use of other sites for project activities, in the United States and other countries, was acquired for varying periods as time went on.

24. Project officers were engaged in liaison on numerous matters. In April they reached an agreement with the Immigration and Naturalization Service on special entry procedure for Cubans of interest to the operation. They consulted with Voice of America and the United States Information Agency on propaganda operations. There were many discussions with the Federal Communications Commission on the licensing of Radio Swan and with the Defense Department concerning its cover. The State Department was regularly consulted on political matters.

Uneasy Front

25. Although Cuban leaders had formed a "front" at Agency urging, it was an uneasy one. They were by no means in agreement, either among themselves or with Agency case officers, on politics or on operations.

26. Power struggles developed early in the life of the FRD. The Cuban leaders wanted something to say about the course of paramilitary operations. As early as May 1960 one of the more prominent leaders was urging an invasion on a fairly large scale from a third country.

27. By June the American press was beginning to nibble at the operation, principally at Radio Swan, some of the stories implying that it was not a completely legitimate commercial venture. Another indication that operational security was less than perfect was a statement by a defected Cuban naval attache that it was common knowledge among exiles in Miami that a certain

Cuban leader was backed by the Agency and that "there were entirely too many Americans running around the area waving money."

28. On 22 June the Deputy Director of Central Intelligence briefed the National Security Council on the project. Ultimate objective of the training program, according to the paper prepared for this briefing, was a minimum force of 500 men split into approximately 25 teams skilled in organizing, training and leading indigenous dissident groups, each team to be provided with a radio operator. Preparations were under way for creating an exile Cuban air force, and attempts were being made to develop maritime capabilities for support of paramilitary groups.

29. This briefing contained an expression of doubt that a purely clandestine effort would be able to cope with Castro's increasing military capability, pointing out that implementation of the paramilitary phase of operations would be contingent upon the existence of dissident forces who were willing to resist and that such groups had not as yet emerged in strength.

Training in Panama

30. The air training program began to get under way in July 1960 with the screening of Cuban pilot recruits and negotiations with Defense for AD-5s and the Navy being asked to supply 75 instruction and maintenance personnel.

31. In mid-June 29 Cubans had arrived in Panama to begin training in small-unit infiltration.

32. The FRD was resisting Agency attempts to persuade it to move its headquarters to Mexico and was demanding direct contact with the State Department or with some high government office in order to argue its case. It also showed reluctance to become involved in the recruiting of Cuban pilots. It presented a budget for \$500,000 a month, excluding paramilitary costs, but was told it would have to get along on \$131,000 and would get this only if it agreed to move to Mexico. It did agree to furnish 500 paramilitary candidates and finally gave in on the issue of moving to Mexico. It remained there only a few weeks because of harassment by the Mexican Government, in spite of prior agreements to the contrary. It appears that one reason why the FRD leaders were so reluctant to be based in a third country is that they desired to establish a direct, official channel to the U.S. Government.

Emphasis on Resistance

33. In August WH/4 Branch prepared papers for use in briefing the President and the Joint Chiefs of Staff, respectively. By about 1 November it was

expected to have 500 paramilitary trainees and 37 radio operators ready for action. It was stated that this group would be available for use as infiltration teams or as an invasion force. The briefing paper for the Joint Chiefs made the point that "obviously the successful implementation of any large-scale paramilitary operations is dependent upon widespread guerrilla resistance throughout the area."

34. The paper prepared for the President's briefing identified 11 groups or individuals with whom the Agency had some sort of contact and who claimed to have assets in Cuba. The paper for the Joint Chiefs spoke of the problems of obtaining support bases and trained man power and warned that an exile invasion force might have to be backed up by a contingency force, augmented by U.S. Army Special Forces personnel.

35. The terms "invasion," "strike," and "assault" were used in these documents although the strike force concept does not seem to have been given any sort of policy sanction until the Special Group meeting which took place toward the end of 1960.

Plan of Operations

36. The Presidential briefing paper of August 1960 outlined the plan of operations as follows:

"The initial phase of paramilitary operations envisages the development, support and guidance of dissident groups in three areas of Cuba: Pinar del Rio, Escambray and Sierra Maestra. These groups will be organized for concerted guerrilla action against the regime.

"The second phase will be initiated by a combined sea-air assault by FRD forces on the Isle of Pines coordinated with general guerrilla activity on the main island of Cuba. This will establish a close-in staging base for future operations.

"The last phase will be air assault on the Havana area with the guerrilla forces in Cuba moving on the ground from these areas into the Havana area also."

37. Expenditures were rapidly running beyond the original estimates. The WH Division estimated operating costs for four weeks starting 1 July at \$1,700,000 and for the fiscal year at approximately \$25,000,000. On 19 August an additional \$10,000,000 was requested and obtained. About half of this figure was the estimated cost of paramilitary activities, with about another \$2,000,000 estimated for propaganda.

Anti-Castro Broadcasts

38. Propaganda activity had gotten off to an early start and had developed rapidly. After an initial shakedown period Radio Swan had gone on the air first with anti-Trujillo, then with anti-Castro broadcasts. Radio programs were also originating in Miami and [excised]. The newspaper *Avance in Exile* was being published by the end of the summer, and a second paper and a weekly magazine were planned. There had also been some successful black operations. Most such operations had thus far been conducted without participation by the FRD.

39. By the end of August the FRD had a lawyer team set for a Latin American propaganda tour and was ready with its first broadcast on Radio Swan, which was reported to be getting world-wide reception with many listeners in Cuba. An anti-Castro comic book was being reprinted, and a Spanish-language television program was being prepared in Miami.

40. At the end of August WH/4 Branch was reporting that a machine run search had failed to find any bilingual Agency employee suitable as a Radio Swan announcer. (This search went on for some time. On 28 December the branch reported finding a candidate, but on 18 January 1961 that he had backed out.)

41. Late September 1960 saw the almost simultaneous occurrence of the first maritime operation and the first air drop over Cuba. The former was successful. The latter, the first of a series of failures, resulted in the capture and execution of a paramilitary agent on whom the project had set great store.

Maritime Operations

42. Several successful maritime operations took place during the latter months of 1960 before severe winter weather began to make them almost impossible. But the project had only one boat regularly available during this period, and the process of supplying and building up a resistance movement through clandestine means began to seem intolerably slow, especially since during this same period Castro's army was reported to have been strengthened with 30 to 40 thousand tons of Bloc arms, and Cuban internal security was being tightened.

43. The strike force concept which, as noted, had already begun to be associated with the project as early as July, began to play an ever greater role in WH/4 planning. This role became dominant in September 1960 with the assignment to the project, as chief of its Paramilitary Staff, of a Marine Corps colonel experienced in amphibious operations.

44. In late October the Nicaraguan Government offered the Agency the use of an air strip and docking facilities at Puerto Cabezas, some 250 miles closer to Cuba than the facilities in Guatemala. At about the same time, the Agency requested the Army to supply 38 Special Forces personnel as instructors. Due to prolonged policy negotiations, those trainers did not arrive in Guatemala until 12 January 1961.

Switch in Concept

45. On 4 November 1960 WH/4 took formal action to change the course of the project by greatly expanding the size of the Cuban paramilitary unit and redirecting its training along more conventional military lines. Appropriate orders were sent to the Guatemala Base, which had 475 air and ground trainees on 10 November, and to Miami where recruiting efforts were increased.

46. By this time Miami Base, through liaison with the FRD military staff, had already recruited and dispatched to Guatemala 101 air and 370 paramilitary trainees, plus six specialists (doctors, dentists, and chaplains). The base had also recruited 124 maritime personnel for manning the invasion fleet that was being acquired.

47. By 28 January 1961 the strike force strength was 644, on 3 February it was 685, by 10 March it had risen to 826, by 22 March to 973. On 6 April 1961 brigade strength was reported at 1,390.

48. On 3 November 1960 WH/4 reported it had only \$2,250,000 left for the rest of Fiscal Year 1961, and by 16 December this was almost gone. A supplementary budget estimate was prepared, and an additional \$28,200,000 was obtained from the Bureau of the Budget.

Freedom Fund Campaign

49. There were also financial problems on a smaller scale. To publicize Radio Swan, and perhaps to enhance its cover, the Cuban Freedom Fund Campaign was organized in November to solicit donations through newspaper advertisements. The radio station, which was budgeted at \$900,000 for Fiscal Year 1961, received \$330 in gifts during the next few weeks.

50. *Bohemia Libre*, a handsome weekly magazine, budgeted at \$300,000 but actually costing about \$35,000 an issue, had bad luck from the start in seeking advertising and once missed an issue on that account. Additional funds had to be sought for it several times. Yet it developed an audited circulation of 126,000, said to be second only to the *Reader's Digest* in the Spanish-language field.

51. While the project moved forward, acquiring boats, planes and bases, training men, negotiating with foreign governments, seeking policy clarification, training an FRD security service, publishing magazines and newspapers, putting out radio broadcasts, and attempting to move arms, men and propaganda into Cuba by sea or air, the FRD, in whose name most of this activity was being carried on, was making little progress toward unity.

52. Members would resign in a huff and have to be wheedled back. Each faction wanted supplies to be sent only to its own followers in Cuba, while groups inside were reluctant to receive infiltrees sent in the name of the FRD. The FRD coordinator had his own radio boat which made unauthorized broadcasts until halted by the Federal Communications Commission and the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Provisional Government Plans

53. Tentative plans for a provisional government were first discussed with FRD leaders in December, and this set off a flurry of intrigue and bickering which delayed the recruiting process and did nothing to advance the cause of unity. In mid-January Miami Base reported that "the over-all problem is simply to maintain the Frente (FRD) as an operational facade until military action intervenes and a provisional government can be established." Until the question of how and by whom such a government was to be selected could be answered, the base reported, "We are at political dead center."

54. This dead center remained until very near the target date and was only resolved by an ultimatum to the FRD Executive Committee directing its members to agree on the chairman for a Revolutionary Council or risk the loss of all further support.

55. However, in selective ways the FRD proved to be a responsive and useful instrument. An example of this was the counterintelligence and security service which, under close project control, developed into an efficient and valuable unit in support of the FRD, Miami Base, and the project program.

56. By mid-March 1961 this security organization comprised 86 employees of whom 37 were trainee case officers, the service having graduated four classes from its own training center, whose chief instructor was a [excised] police officer.

Security Activities

57. The FRD's service ran operations into Cuba, many of them successful. It built up a voluminous set of card files on Cuban personalities. One of its

most helpful services was reporting on meetings of FRD committees and other anti-Castro groups and on political maneuvering within the FRD hierarchy. It also helped in recruiting for the strike force at a time when the political leaders were sabotaging the effort. Security and counterintelligence teams were also trained for integration with the strike force. These had the primary mission of securing vital records and documents during the invasion and a secondary mission of assisting in establishing and maintaining martial law.

58. The service also carried on radio monitoring and conducted interrogations and debriefings. An indication of its alertness and efficiency is the fact that it supplied Miami Base with its first information on the location of a C-54 plane which was forced down in Jamaica after a mission over Cuba. The chief of the service was largely responsible for personally persuading the crew of the downed plane to return to the training camp.

59. In the first three months of 1961 the problems faced by the project were many and complex. Although the Army Special Forces instructors had finally arrived in Guatemala the brigade trainee quota was still only half fulfilled and a call went to the training camps for special recruiting teams to be sent to Miami. Meanwhile trainees who had been in the camp for several months had had no contact with the political front and were wondering what sort of a Cuban future they were expected to fight for. Disturbances broke out, and the project leaders persuaded three FRD figures to visit the camp and mollify the men.

Training in the U.S.

60. During this period the Nicaraguan air strip which had been placed at the project's disposal was being made ready for use and two new training sites were activated. Although a definite policy determination on the training of Cubans in the U.S. had never been made, 25 tank operators were successfully trained for the strike force at Fort Knox. Another eleventh-hour training requirement was fulfilled when the project acquired the use of Belle Chase Ammunition Depot near New Orleans. This was used for the training of a company-sized unit hurriedly recruited for a diversion landing and of an underwater demolition team.

61. During the period between the U.S. national elections and the inauguration of President Kennedy the Government's policymaking machinery had slowed down. A number of piecemeal policy decisions were vouchsafed, but not all the specific ones the project chiefs were pressing for, for example,

authority for tactical air strikes and permission to use American contract pilots.

62. President Eisenhower had given a general go-ahead signal on 29 November and had reaffirmed it on 3 January 1961, but the impending change in administration was slowing matters down. For example, a proposed propaganda drop was turned down on 13 January for this reason. On 19 January, at the Special Group's last meeting before the inauguration, it was agreed that a high-level meeting, to include the new Secretaries of State and Defense, should be set up as soon as possible to reaffirm the basic concepts of the project.

Preparations Endorsed

63. Such a meeting was held 22 January, and the project and current preparations were generally endorsed. At a meeting with the new President on 28 January the Agency was authorized to continue present activities and was instructed to submit the tactical paramilitary plan to the Joint Chiefs of Staff for analysis. Shortly thereafter, in an attempt to get a high-level internal review of the plan, it was briefed to Gen. Cabell, Gen. Bull (consultant) and Adm. Wright (ONE). By 6 February the Joint Chiefs had returned a favorable evaluation of the strike plan, together with a number of suggestions.

64. On 17 February the Agency presented a paper (Annex B) to the President which outlined three possible courses of action against Castro.

65. Noting plans for early formation of a government in exile, the paper described the growing strength of the Castro regime under Bloc support and observed: "Therefore, after some date probably no more than six months away it will become militarily infeasible to overthrow the Castro regime except by the commitment to combat of a sizeable organized military force. The option of action by the Cuban opposition will no longer be open."

66. This paper found the use of small-scale guerrilla groups not feasible and advocated a surprise landing of a military force, concluding that the brigade had a good chance of overthrowing Castro "or at the very least causing a damaging civil war without requiring the U.S. to commit itself to overt action against Cuba."

67. Following presentation of this paper to the President, the project leaders were given to understand that it would be at least two weeks before a decision would be made as to use of the invasion force. They thereupon withheld action to expand the force up to 1,000 for the time being.

Movement of Agents

68. Although the invasion preparations were absorbing most of the project's energies and funds WH/4 Branch was still attempting to nourish the underground. There were six successful boat operations, carrying men and materials, in February and 13 in March, and two successful air drops in March. Infiltration of agents was continuing. As of 15 February Miami Base reported the following numbers and types of agents in Cuba: Counterintelligence, 20; positive intelligence, 5; propaganda, 2; paramilitary, 4. As of 15 March the base reported that these numbers had risen, respectively, to 21, 11, 9, and 6.

69. By the invasion date the personnel strength of Miami Base had grown to 160. The intensity of activity there during the latter months of the operation is indicated by the record of a day picked at random—it happened to be 9 February—when 21 case officers spent 140 man hours in personal contact with 125 Cubans.

70. Successive changes in the operational plan and postponements of the strike date are discussed later in this report and are documented in Annexes C, D, and E. Detailed policy authorization for some specific actions was either never fully clarified or only resolved at the eleventh hour, and even the central decision as to whether to employ the strike force was still somewhat in doubt up to the very moment of embarkation.

71. During the weeks preceding the invasion the pace of events quickened. In early March the State Department asked the Agency not to announce formation of the Revolutionary Council or to commit any untoward act until after the 5-9 March Mexico City Peace Conference. The Cubans conferring in New York disagreed on various aspects of a post-Castro platform. The Guatemala camp was having counterintelligence problems.

Sabotage Action

72. On 12 March the LCI "Barbara J" successfully launched and recovered a sabotage team in an action against the Texaco refinery in Santiago.

73. During 13-15 March project chiefs were working intensively to prepare a revised plan which would meet policy objections cited by the State Department. On the 15th the new plan was presented to the President.

74. In mid-March ten members were added to the FRD Executive Committee, the politicians continued their platform talks, and 23 March was set as deadline for choice of a chairman. An intensive defection project was started from Miami Base. A survey was started with the object of determining the

trainees' knowledgeability of U.S. involvement in the strike preparations. Trainees at Guatemala were impatient, and a number had gone AWOL.

75. José Miro Cardona was unanimously elected Chairman of the Revolutionary Council.

76. In late March the [excised] ostensible owner of the Swan Island radio station, thanked all the sponsors of political programs and advised them that no more tapes would be required; purpose of this action was to clear the way for a unity program during the action phase of the operation. A Radio Swan listener survey had received 1,659 replies from 20 countries. Ships with strike force equipment were arriving in Nicaragua, and the Guatemala camp was still receiving trainees as late as the week of 4 April.

Overflights Suspended

77. Cuban overflights were suspended on 28 March. Two reasons have been given for this suspension: (a) that the air-craft were needed to move the strike force from Guatemala to Puerto Cabezas, Nicaragua, for embarkation on the invasion ships; (b) that the Agency wished to avoid any incident, such as a plane being downed over Cuba, which might upset the course of events during the critical pre-invasion period.

78. For a White House meeting on 29 March papers were prepared on these subjects: (a) The status of the defection program; (b) internal Cuban support which could be expected for the landing operation.

79. On 5 April the B-26 "defection" plan was prepared in an effort to knock out some of Castro's air force before D Day in a manner which would satisfy State Department objections. Project chiefs agreed that in event of a policy decision to call off the invasion they would move the troops to sea, tell them that new intelligence made the invasion inadvisable, and divert the force to Vieques Island for demobilization.

80. On 12 April at a meeting with the President it was decided that Mr. Berle would tell Miro Cardona there would be no overt U.S. support of the invasion. The President publicly announced there would be no U.S. support. On 13 April all WH/4 headquarters sections went on 24 hour duty. The Revolutionary Council was assembled in New York and advised that it would be briefed in stages on the military aspects of the project. On 14 April the Council agreed to go into "isolation" during the landing phase of the military operation.

81. The raids on three Cuban airfields were carried out by eight B-26s on 15 April, and destruction of half of Castro's air force was estimated on the

basis of good post-strike photography. Afterward, according to plan, one of the pilots landed in Florida and announced that the raids had been carried out by defectors from Castro's own air force. The Council was briefed on the air strike. The diversionary expedition by the force which had been trained in New Orleans failed to make a landing on two successive nights preceding the strike.

82. Immediately before D Day, Radio Swan and other outlets were broadcasting 18 hours a day on medium-wave and 16 hours on short-wave. Immediately after D Day, these totals were increased to 55 hours and 26 hours, respectively. Fourteen frequencies were used. By the time of the invasion a total of 12,000,000 pounds of leaflets had been dropped on Cuba.

83. Late on 16 April, the eve of D Day, the air strikes designed to knock out the rest of Castro's air force on the following morning were called off. The message reached the field too late to halt the landing operation, as the decision to cancel the air strike was made after the landing force had been committed.

84. The invasion fleet which had assembled off the south coast of Cuba on the night of 16 April included two LCIs owned by the Agency, a U.S. Navy LSD carrying three LCUs and four LCVPs, all of them pre-loaded with supplies, and seven chartered commercial freighters. All these craft participated in the assault phase, except for three freighters which were loaded with follow-up supplies for ground and air forces. These vessels were armed with 50-caliber machine guns. In addition, each LCI mounted two 75-mm. recoilless rifles.

85. In addition to the personal weapons of the Cuban exile soldiers, the armament provided for combat included sufficient numbers of Browning automatic rifles, machine guns, mortars, recoilless rifles, rocket launchers, and flame-throwers. There were also five M-41 tanks, 12 heavy trucks, an aviation fuel tank truck, a tractor crane, a bulldozer, two large water trailers, and numerous small trucks and tractors.

86. The invasion brigade comprised 1,511 men, all of them on the invasion ships excepting one airborne infantry company of 177 men. The brigade included five infantry companies, a heavy weapons company, an intelligence-reconnaissance company, and a tank platoon.

87. These troops had been moved by air on three successive nights from the Guatemala training camp to the staging area in Nicaragua where they embarked on the ships which had been pre-loaded at New Orleans. The ships had moved on separate courses from Nicaragua, under unobtrusive Navy escort, to the rendezvous 40 miles offshore in order to avoid the ap-

pearance of a convoy. From there they had moved in column under cover of darkness to a point 5,000 yards from the landing area, where they met the Navy LSD. Those complicated movements were apparently accomplished in a secure manner and without alerting the enemy.

88. Of the three follow-up ships, one was due to arrive from Nicaragua on the morning of D Day plus 2 and two others were on call at sea south of Cuba. Additional supplies were available for air landing or parachute delivery at airfields in Guatemala, Nicaragua, and Florida. At a Defense base in Anniston, Alabama, there were also supplies ready for 15,000 men. Altogether there were arms and equipment available to furnish 30,000 dissidents expected to rally to the invasion force.

89. The landing was to be carried out at three beaches about 18 miles from each other on the Zapata Peninsula. The left flank of the beachhead was Red Beach at the head of Cochinos Bay; Green Beach was at the right flank, with Blue Beach at the center. The lodgment to be seized was thus a coastal strip about 40 miles long, separated from the interior by an sizeable swamp penetrated only by three roads from the north and flanked by a coastal road from the east.

90. In the early hours of 17 April Cuban underwater demolition teams, each led by an American contract employee, went ashore to mark Red and Blue Beaches. Each of those parties engaged in fire fights with small enemy forces but accomplished their tasks, and the troops began moving ashore in small aluminum boats and LCUs. Before daylight small militia forces were encountered at both beaches. These offered little opposition, and many of the militiamen were quickly captured.

91. Not long after daylight the airborne infantry company was successfully parachuted from C-46 aircraft to four of the five scheduled drop zones where its elements were given the mission of sealing off approach roads.

92. At dawn began the enemy attacks which the project chiefs had aimed to present by the planned dawn strikes with Nicaragua-based aircraft against Castro's fields. Action by Castro's B-26s, Sea Furies, and jet T-33s resulted in the sinking of a supply ship, the beaching of a transport, and damage to an LCI. The plan for a landing at Green Beach was thereupon abandoned and these troops, with their tanks and vehicles were put ashore at Blue Beach. Shipping withdrew to the south under continuous air attack.

93. The air attacks continued throughout the day. The 11 B-26s of the Cuban exile force which were available for close support and interdiction were no match for the T-33 jets. However, at least four of Castro's other air-

craft were shot down by machine gun fire from maritime craft, assisted by friendly air support.

94. The first ground attacks by Castro's forces occurred at Red Beach which was hit by successive waves of militia in the morning, afternoon and evening of 17 April. While ammunition lasted those attacks were beaten off with heavy enemy casualties and several of Castro's tanks were halted or destroyed by ground or friendly air action. On the morning of 18 April, the Red Beach Force, nearly out of ammunition, retired in good order to Blue Beach without being pressed by the enemy.

95. In addition to supporting the ground forces and protecting shipping on 17 April, the friendly B-26s also sank a Castro patrol escort ship and attacked the Cienfuegos airfield. Four of the friendly B-26s were shot down, while three returned safely to Nicaragua, and four landed at other friendly bases.

96. Attempts were made to resupply the brigade with ammunition by air drops. On the night of 17-18 April one C-54 drop was made at Red Beach and three at Blue Beach, and on the following night Blue Beach received two drops. Preparations for resupply by sea had to be canceled due to enemy air action.

97. At Blue Beach the enemy ground attacks, supported by aircraft, began from three directions on the afternoon of 18 April. Six friendly B-26s, two of them flown by Americans, inflicted heavy damage on the Castro column moving up from the west, using napalm, bombs, rockets, and machine gun fire to destroy several tanks and about 20 troop-laden trucks. Air support to the Blue Beach troops was continued on the morning of 19 April, when three friendly B-26s, including two piloted by Americans, were shot down by Castro T-33s. Jet cover from the Navy aircraft carrier "Essex" had been expected to protect the 19 April sorties but a misunderstanding over timing hampered its effectiveness.

98. In spite of this air action, however, and in spite of a reported 1,800 casualties suffered by the Castro forces, the brigade's ability to resist depended in the last resort on resupply of ammunition, which had now become impossible. On the night of 18 April, when failure appeared inevitable, the Cuban brigade commander refused an offer to evacuate his troops. And on the morning of 19 April, with ammunition rapidly running out, the brigade was still able to launch a futile counterattack against the forces relentlessly moving in from the west.

99. In the last hours of resistance the brigade commander sent a series of

terse and desperate messages to the task force command ship pleading for help:

"We are out of ammo and fighting on the beach. Please send help. We cannot hold."

"In water. Out of ammo. Enemy closing in. Help must arrive in next hour."

"When your help will be here and with what?"

"Why your help has not come?"

100. The last message was as follows: "Am destroying all equipment and communications. Tanks are in sight. I have nothing to fight with. Am taking to woods. I cannot repeat cannot wait for you."

101. An evacuation convoy was headed for the beach on the afternoon of 19 April. When it became known that the beachhead had collapsed the convoy reversed course.

102. During the next few days two Americans and a crew of Cuban frogmen succeeded in rescuing 26 survivors from the beach and coastal islands.

C. SUMMARY OF EVALUATION

1. In evaluating the Agency's performance it is essential to avoid grasping immediately, as many persons have done, at the explanation that the President's order canceling the D-Day airstrikes was the chief cause of failure.

2. Discussion of that one decision would merely raise this underlying question: If the project had been better conceived, better organized, better staffed and better managed, would that precise issue ever have had to be presented for Presidential decision at all? And would it have been presented under the same ill-prepared, inadequately briefed circumstances?

3. Furthermore, it is essential to keep in mind the possibility that the invasion was doomed in advance, that an initially successful landing by 1,500 men would eventually have been crushed by Castro's combined military resources strengthened by Soviet Bloc-supplied military materiel.

4. The fundamental cause of the disaster was the Agency's failure to give the project, notwithstanding its importance and its immense potentiality for damage to the United States, the top-flight handling which it required—appropriate organization, staffing throughout by highly qualified personnel, and full-time direction and control of the highest quality.

5. Insufficiencies in these vital areas resulted in pressures and distortions, which in turn produced numerous serious operational mistakes and omissions, and in lack of awareness of developing dangers, in failure to take action

to counter them, and in grave mistakes of judgment. There was failure at high levels to concentrate informed, unwavering scrutiny on the project and to apply experienced, unbiased judgment to the menacing situations that developed.

D. EVALUATION OF ORGANIZATION AND COMMAND STRUCTURE

1. The project was organized at the level of an operating branch, the fourth echelon in the organization of the Agency, in the Western Hemisphere Division. Its chief, a GS-15, was not given the independence and the broad, extensive powers of a fast force commander. Instead, he had to apply constantly for the decision of policy questions and important operational problems to the Deputy Director (Plans) (DD/P), who was in fact directing the project, although this was only one of his many responsibilities. The DD/P delegated much of his responsibility to his Deputy for Covert Action, especially the handling of policy matters involving contact with non-Agency officials. The office of the DD/P and the offices of the project were in different buildings. Consideration was given by the DD/P in late 1960 to raising the project out of WH Division and placing it directly under his Deputy for Covert Action, but this was not done.

2. The Chief of WH Division was in the chain of command between the chief of the project and the DD/P but only in a partial sense. He exercised his right to sign the project's outgoing cables until the week of the invasion even though the project's own signal center was activated at the end of December 1960. He supervised the staffing activities and attended some of the meetings of the Special Group. But the DD/P and his deputy dealt directly with the project chief, and gradually the Chief of WH Division began to play only a diminished role.

3. The DD/P, in turn, reported to the Director of Central Intelligence (DCI) and the Deputy Director of Central Intelligence (DDCI) who usually represented the Agency at the meetings of the 5412 Special Group.

4. The Director delegated his responsibility for major project decisions to a considerable extent. He relied on the DDCI, an Air Force general, for policy matters involving air operations. For military advice he relied on the military officers detailed to the project. This reliance deprived the Director of completely objective counsel, since the project's military personnel were

deeply involved in building up the strike force and the DDCI was taking an active role in the conduct of air operations.

Fragmentation of Authority

5. Thus, the project lacked a single, high-level full-time commander possessing stated broad powers and abilities sufficient for the carrying out of this large, enormously difficult mission. In fact, authority was fragmented among the project chief, the military chief of the project's Paramilitary Staff, and several high-level officials, whose responsibilities elsewhere in the Agency prevented them from giving the project the attention it required. There were too many echelons; the top level had to be briefed by briefers who themselves were not doing the day-to-day work.

6. Three further extraordinary factors must be mentioned:

(1) The Chief of Operations of the Clandestine Services (COPS), who is the DD/P's chief staff advisor on clandestine operations, played only a very minor part in the project. On at least two occasions COPS was given express warning that the project was being perilously mismanaged, but he declined to involve himself with the project.

(2) The three Senior Staffs, the Agency's top-level technical advisors in their respective areas, were not consulted fully, either at the important formative stages of the project or even after grave operational difficulties had begun to develop; instead, they allowed themselves to be more or less ignored by the chief of the project and his principal assistants. This state of affairs is partly attributable to the inadequate managerial skill and the lack of experience in clandestine paramilitary operations of the WH/4 chiefs; it was not corrected by the DD/P or his deputy or by the Chief of WH Division.

(3) There was no review of the project by the Agency's Project Review Committee, which would at least have allowed the views of the most senior review body in the Agency to be heard.

Independence of DPD

7. Still another important factor in the diffusion of direction and control was the insistence of the Agency's air arm, the Development Projects Division (DPD), on preserving its independence and remaining outside the organizational structure of the project, in which it had a vital, central role, including air drops to the underground, training Cuban pilots, operation of air bases, the immense logistical problems of transporting the Cuban volunteers from Florida to Guatemala, and the procuring and servicing of the mili-

tary planes. The project chief had no command authority over air planning and air operations. The DPD unit established for this purpose was completely independent.

8. The result was a divided command dependent upon mutual cooperation. There was no day-to-day continuing staff relationship, which is essential for properly coordinated operations. Headquarters of the two units were in different buildings far away from each other. The chiefs of air operations in Guatemala and Nicaragua were DPD representatives, independent of the WH/4 chiefs of these bases, and the Headquarters confusion was compounded in the field.

9. In October 1960, shortly after his assignment to the project, the paramilitary chief noted coordination difficulties between WH/4 and DPD. He pointed out that the organizational structure was contrary to military command principles, to accepted management practices, and to the principles enunciated by the DD/P himself in 1959, and recommended that the DPD Unit be integrated into WH/4, under command of its chief.

Failure of Integration Effort

10. The DD/P rejected this recommendation as not being the most efficient solution for technical reasons. The insufficiently effective relationship between the project and the DPD unit was one of the gravest purely organizational failures of the operation. The DD/P has subsequently confirmed this conclusion and has ascribed this lack of effectiveness to personality frictions and to the "classic service rivalry." (We would note that this does not exist in present-day combined commands.)

11. The organizational confusion was augmented by the existence of a large forward operating base in the Miami area, which in turn had loose control over several sub-bases. The mission of this base was vaguely defined and not well understood. In theory the base had a supporting role; actually it was conducting operations which for the most part paralleled similar operations being conducted by WH/4 from Headquarters. This divided effort was expensive, cumbersome, and difficult to coordinate. In some cases the efforts of the two elements were duplicating or conflicting or even competing with each other.

12. The upshot of this complex and bizarre organizational situation was that in this tremendously difficult task the Agency failed to marshal its forces properly and to apply them effectively.

E. EVALUATION OF STAFFING

1. In April 1960 the Director of Central Intelligence stated that he would recall from any station in the world personnel whose abilities were required for the success of the project. This recognition of the need for high-quality personnel is nowhere reflected in the history of the project. The DD/P's Deputy for Covert Action advised his subordinates that the Director's words did not mean that the project was to be given *carte blanche* in personnel procurement but that officers could be adequately secured through negotiation.

2. In actual fact, personnel for the project were secured by the customary routine method of negotiation between the project and the employee's office of current assignment; no recourse was had to directed assignment by the Director of Central Intelligence. The traditional independence of the 55 individual division and branch chiefs in the Clandestine Services remained unaffected by the Director's statement. The lists prepared by the project for the purpose of negotiation for personnel naturally reflected the preferences of the chief of the project and the willingness of the person in question to accept the assignment. In many cases, the reason for assigning a given person to the project was merely that he had just returned from abroad and was still without an assignment.

3. The basic mistake was made of filling the key spots early, without realizing how much the project would grow and that it should be staffed for a major effort. In some cases, officers originally selected to supervise five persons ultimately had to supervise 15 or 20 times as many. Of the three GS-16 officers assigned to the project, none was given top-level managerial responsibilities. The result of all these factors was that none of the most experienced, senior operating officers of the Agency participated full time in the project.

An Indication Of Quality

4. An interesting insight into the quality of the personnel of WH/4 is afforded by the initial "Relative Retention Lists" prepared in April 1961 by the divisions and senior staffs of the Clandestine Services and other Agency units pursuant to the requirements of Regulation 20-701 (Separation of Surplus Personnel). Each such unit was required to group its officers in each grade into ten groups, on the basis of the performance and qualifications of each one. (Under the prescribed procedure, these lists are to be reviewed at several levels before becoming definitive.)

5. Of the 42 officers holding the principal operations jobs in WH/4 in

7. *Propaganda and Communications:* Currently medium and short wave broadcasting in opposition to Castro is being carried on from seven stations in addition to Radio Swan. Antennae modifications of the latter have increased its effective power in Cuba and it is believed that there is now good medium wave reception of Swan everywhere except in Havana itself where it can still be effectively jammed. The number of hours of broadcasting per day will be increased beginning immediately from about 25 to almost 75 soon after D-Day. The combination of multiple long and short wave stations which will then be in use, supplemented by three boats which carry broadcasting equipment (two short wave and one medium wave) will assure heavy coverage of all parts of the island virtually at all times. Radio programs will avoid any reference to an invasion but will call for up-rising and will of course announce defections and carry news of revolutionary action. Soon after D-Day a small radio transmitter will be put in operation on Cuban soil.

8. *The Political Leadership:* As of the present moment, the six members of Cardona's Revolutionary Council, notably including Ray, have reaffirmed their membership. Although no specific portfolios have been confirmed, the following possibilities are currently under discussion: Varona, Defense; Ray, Gobernacion (Interior); Carrillio, Finance; Hevia, State; Maceo, Public Health. The political leaders have not yet been briefed on the military plan but they will be informed at each phase of military operations. Advance consultation with the political leaders is considered unacceptably dangerous on security grounds and although last minute briefings will be resented, it is believed that the political leaders will want to take credit for and assume control as quickly as possible over these major operations against Castro. The present plan is that one them (Artime) will go into Cuba with the main force, others will follow as soon as possible after D-Day and they will announce the establishment of a Provisional Government on Cuban soil.

9. *Command:* Military command will be exercised in the name of the Revolutionary Council and later of the Provisional Government. In fact, however, the CIA staff constitutes the general staff of the operation and the Agency controls both logistics support and communications. Accordingly, in the early stages at least, the functions of a general headquarters will be exercised from the Agency with the Cuban brigade commander exercising field command over the units that land on D-Day.

—*An Analysis of the
Cuban Operation*
by the Deputy Director (Plans)
Central Intelligence Agency
18 January 1962

I. INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

The purpose of this paper is to contribute to an understanding of the nature of and the reasons for the failure of the Cuban operation and in so doing to suggest what are the correct lessons to be learned therefrom. It is prompted by and is, for the most part, a commentary on the IG Survey.

That document gives a black picture of the Agency's role in this operation. It makes a number of different kinds of allegations.

First, there are numerous charges of bad organization and incompetent execution, including specifically criticisms of: command relationships; the quality of personnel; the internal operational planning process; the conduct of maritime and air operations; and the collection and evaluation of intelligence. These deficiencies are portrayed as responsible for the failure to build up and supply resistance organizations under rather favorable conditions.

Second, and more serious is the allegation of major errors of judgment, notably (a) the decision to convert the project into what rapidly became an overt military operation beyond the Agency's capability, (b) the treatment of the Cuban exiles as "puppets," (c) the inadequacy of the military plan for the invasion, and (d) the failure "to appraise the chances of success realistically."

Third, the Survey is critical of the Agency's failure to insure that the decision making process in the Executive Branch was orderly and effective. The Agency, it is alleged, "failed to keep the national policy makers adequately and realistically informed of the conditions considered essential for success, and it did not press sufficiently for prompt policy decisions in a fast moving situation." As a corollary of this judgment, the Survey attributes the blame for incompetence of execution and for errors of judgment essentially to this Agency alone.

It is almost self-evident that some of these allegations are true, at least in part. In any large and rapidly organized undertaking there are certain to be errors of organization and of execution. In all likelihood major errors in judg-

ment were committed. Similarly, the decision making process in the Executive Branch of the Government operated in a manner that left something to be desired. Nevertheless, this paper argues: that a large majority of the conclusions reached in the Survey are misleading or wrong; that the Survey is especially weak in judging what are the implications of its own allegations and, therefore, that its utility is greatly impaired by its failure to point out fully or in all cases correctly the lessons to be learned from this experience. This generalized rejection can be made more meaningful by an elaboration at this point, which will at the same time serve the purpose of outlining the structure of this paper and summarizing certain of its main conclusions.

A. Organization and Execution

As to the first set of allegations, there is not too much that can be said short of detailed discussion which is contained in later sections, except to make the obvious point that perfection in organization and execution is never attained and that the real question is whether the mistakes that were made were worse than they reasonably should have been and justify blanket condemnation. Stated flatly, the conclusions reached here on the main substantive points are:

- a. That Agency command and organizational relationships were what they should have been.
- b. That any shortcomings in the internal planning process reflected, for the most part, the difficulty of securing clear policy guidance from outside the Agency and prompt, willing, support based on that guidance.
- c. That the failure of most air operations in support of the resistance was the result of circumstances completely beyond the control of the air arm and probably not remediable by any action that the Agency could have taken.
- d. That the intelligence on the Castro regime and on the internal opposition thereto was essentially accurate.

The greatest operational weaknesses were in the early phases of maritime operations and, possibly, in the failure to place trained paramilitary agents with resistance groups, although it must be recognized that major efforts were made to accomplish this result and even with hindsight it is not clear that any different operational procedures or any greater effort could have achieved greater results.

The ultimate test of any project such as this is, of course, its outcome but

if a judgment of the effectiveness of organization and execution is to be made, the deficiencies need to be balanced by the accomplishments. As even the Survey remarks, "There were some good things in this project." After a slow start, a sizable number of small boat operations were run efficiently and a large number of persons and volume of cargo were infiltrated successfully into the Island. In the last weeks before the invasion, a political organization was formed which covered a remarkably broad spectrum of political opinion and brought together what was described by a State Department officer at the time as the best group of exile leaders that could be assembled and that left outside no important politically acceptable element. In the military build-up, a force was created that was twice as large as originally envisaged and larger than any paramilitary force ever developed by the Agency. It was brought to a high state of combat effectiveness with a remarkably low percentage of individuals who had to be eliminated for unsuitability and with high morale later proven in combat. This force was airlifted to a staging base, the location of which was never revealed until after the finish of the operation. It was loaded on ships which sailed on dispersed courses and achieved complete surprise five days later. The Brigade then successfully carried out what had been described as the most difficult type of military operation, a landing on a hostile shore, carried out largely at night. Finally, as the battle was joined, adequate supplies of all sorts were available within a few hours of the beaches, had conditions permitted their off-loading. These various results were accomplished in such a way that only a small number of Agency staff officers were ever exposed to the Cuban participants and the true identities of these Americans have never been revealed. Moreover, the entire build-up was accomplished under the limitation that it contemplate no use of Americans in combat and no commitment of American flag shipping. As the event proved (and the Survey remarks), "This was not enough." Nevertheless, a recital of affirmative accomplishments suggests that whatever shortcomings there were in organization, personnel, and execution were not the decisive reasons for failure. It will be necessary to return to this point later.

B. Errors of Judgment

The second set of criticisms, those described above as allegations of major errors of judgment and the third, relating to the Agency's relationships with the rest of the Executive Branch, are more complex. Their validity is discussed in separate sections below (Section III on Why a Military Type Invasion and IV on The Decision Making Process, Section VIII on The

Relationships with the Cubans, and Section V on The Assessment of the Adequacy of the Plan and on the Appraisal of its Success.) Summarized in flat statements, the conclusions there reached are these:

a. The basic reason for placing increasing emphasis as the build-up progressed upon the planned military operation and decreasing emphasis on the internal resistance is that for a number of reasons the capacity of the resistance to achieve an overthrow without a significant assist from the outside appeared to be diminishing rather than growing despite the best efforts of which the Agency was capable to support it. Moreover, preparation for the military operation was not intended to reduce support of the resistance and the two efforts became truly competitive only in the last week before the invasion was mounted.

b. The decision to deny the Cuban political leadership control of or close contact with the Brigade and to withhold from them knowledge of the impending invasion was based on two considerations. First, it was believed at the time that if the Brigade was to achieve unity and esprit de corps, it must not be split by political rivalries and its officers must be chosen on professional grounds. This clearly precluded control of the Brigade, or even free access to it, by the political leaders. Second, the insecurity of the Cubans was notorious. It was quite inconceivable that they could know the details of times and places without the gravest risk that the essential advantage of surprise would be lost. It was clear at the time that the Agency assumed a significant risk in denying responsibility to the Cubans and inevitably assuming this responsibility itself. No evidence that has come to light during or since the invasion suggests that military effectiveness and security could have been obtained without paying that price.

c. The conclusions of this paper on the adequacy of the military plan are really too complex to be summarized in a sentence or two. All that can be said here is that (1) there was solid reason to believe that it had a good chance of at least initial success; (2) the last minute cancellation of the D-Day air strike significantly reduced the prospects of success; (3) there was never a test of whether internal support for the invasion would materialize on the scale and in the manner anticipated; and (4) the main deficiencies in the plan and in the capabilities of the Cuban force which may have contributed to the defeat have not been touched on in the Survey.

d. The appraisal of the chances of success may well have been faulty. The intelligence was generally good but it may have underestimated the skill with which the Castro forces would be directed,

the morale of the militia units he would deploy against the Brigade and the effectiveness of any T-33's that remained in operation. There was some exaggeration of the capabilities of both ground and air forces of the invasion. It is impossible to say how grave was the error of appraisal since the plan that was appraised was modified by elimination of the D-Day air strike. Had the Cuban air been eliminated, all of these estimates might well have been accurate instead of underestimated. Probably, therefore, the primary fault lay in having one factor (i.e., the elimination of Cuban air) achieve so vital a significance to the whole plan. Although the D-Day air strikes were essential to the destruction of the Cuban air, no guaranty of such destruction was possible even had there been authority for the strikes.

The conclusions summarized above bear on the correctness of the Survey's allegations of deficiencies of execution and major errors of judgment but for the purposes either of understanding what happened or of learning how to avoid such a failure in the future, it is far from sufficient to know that certain activities were (or were not) incompetently performed and certain mistakes were (or were not) made. With many of the deficiencies it is essential to understand why they existed. And with all of them it is important to know what part they played in causing the outcome to be what it was. The central weakness of the Survey is that it is often misleading in its implications as to why certain things were done and it is grossly incomplete in its analysis of the consequences of mistakes alleged to have been made. Accordingly, before proceeding to the detailed discussion beginning in Section II of this paper which supports the conclusions summarized here, it has been felt necessary to make good in some degree these errors of omission by commenting on the nature and causes of the failure in a manner which will be in part alternative and in part supplementary to the Survey.

C. The Decisions That Led To Failure

It has been suggested not only in the Survey but elsewhere that the operation against the Castro regime should never have been allowed to take the form that it did of a military invasion. It ultimately did take this form, however, and it was in this form that it failed. The military failure has been analyzed far more exhaustively and with greater authority by General Taylor and others than this paper can pretend to do. Nevertheless, certain conclusions as

to the nature of the military failure must be restated here if its causes are to be understood.

There is unanimous agreement that the proximate cause was a shortage of ammunition on the beachhead and that this shortage was directly traceable, in turn, to the effective interdiction of shipping and air resupply by the Castro Air Force. It has been less emphasized that Castro's command of the air deprived the Brigade of its capability for battlefield reconnaissance, of the equivalent of field artillery, and of close air support against enemy ground forces. It deprived it, too, of the possibility of "strategic" strikes against enemy lines of supply and communications. Finally, reliance had been placed on daytime and virtually unopposed air and sea resupply as a necessary condition for the activation of resistance groups throughout the Island. It is incontrovertible that, without control of the air, and the air crews and aircraft to exploit that control of the air, the whole military operation was doomed. Even with control of the air it might have failed but without it there could not have been any chance of success. If, then, one wishes to learn what actually caused the military operation to fail, rather than what might have done so, the starting point must be an inquiry into why control of the air was lost and never regained. Of equal significance for an understanding of the whole operation is an awareness of the circumstances that did not contribute to the failure in the air.

Fortunately, it is possible to list without much possibility of controversy the circumstances that led to the outcome in the air. First, the nearest real estate that could be used was Puerto Cabezas in Nicaragua a distance of over 800 miles from the target area. The only way to avoid this severe limitation on the capability of any but the most modern aircraft would have been to use a base on U.S. territory. Second, in choosing types of aircraft, no sort of plausible denial could be maintained unless the project limited itself to the kinds of obsolete aircraft that might plausibly be found in the hands of a privately financed Cuban force. There was the further argument that it was desirable to use types of aircraft that could have defected from the Castro Air Force. The choice was thus rapidly narrowed down to B-26's. Third, policy guidance throughout the project was to the effect that no U.S. air crews could be committed to combat or placed where they might be involved in combat. This restriction was not relaxed until the second day of the invasion and then only in desperation. This had implications not only for the quality of the air crews but also for the number that could be assembled, screened for security, and trained within the time period available.

Given these limitations, the only way in which there was the slightest pos-

sibility of achieving control and maintaining control of the air was by destruction of the Castro Air Force on the ground before the dawn of D-Day when vulnerable shipping would be exposed to air strikes. The one air strike on D-2 was not expected to be, and in fact was not, sufficient to accomplish this purpose. Only one other strike was planned for this purpose and that was canceled. Moreover, in the interests of making the air strikes appear to have been done by the Castro Air Force, a restriction was placed on the number of aircraft that could be committed to these strikes by the invasion force.

Even after the very considerable damage done on D-Day itself by enemy air, it is possible that a determined and major strike on the night of D/D+1 would have crippled the Castro Air Force, the final destruction of which might have been completed the following night. By the evening of D-Day, however, the Cuban air crews were exhausted and dispirited and the opportunity could not be fully exploited.

Even if things had gone better on D-Day, it is questionable whether the 17 Cuban air crews that constituted the air arm of the strike force would have been adequate to accomplish all of the tasks for which reliance was placed on the air arm. The chance of success would have been greater (with or without the D-Day strike) if it had been possible to assemble and commit to action more trained Cuban or U.S. air crews.

D. Washington Decision Making

These, then, were the circumstances which together led to defeat in the air and made inevitable a defeat on the ground. Several things are notable about them. In the first place, it should be emphasized that these all trace back to Washington decisions. The defeat in the air cannot be blamed on bad maintenance at Puerto Cabezas, or on a shortage of spare parts or fuel. It cannot be blamed on a shortage of B-26's, inasmuch as it proved possible rapidly to replace losses from the U.S. It cannot be blamed on the cowardice or lack of skill of the Cuban air crews, who by and large gave a good account of themselves. Nor can it be attributed to bad tactical decisions made either at Puerto Cabezas or in the Washington command post. The crucial defeat in the air was to no significant degree the result of bad execution. It was directly and unambiguously attributable to a long series of Washington policy decisions.

Before exploring the touchy question of whose decisions these were and how they were made, the implications of this conclusion deserve emphasis and elaboration. It suggests that the bad organization, improperly drawn lines of command, low quality personnel and operational inadequacies al-

leged by the Survey were not in the actual event responsible for the military failure. If organization and execution had approached perfection, the invasion would still have failed in the absence of more and larger pre-D-Day air strikes or the use of more modern aircraft from U.S. bases.

To be sure, this conclusion derives from an analysis only of the failure to gain control of the *air*. It is arguable that even if control of the air had been achieved, maintained, and exploited, the beachhead would not have been consolidated nor the Regime ultimately overthrown. Without arguing that point here, however, the evidence strongly suggests that if the Brigade had been defeated by ground action under those more favorable circumstances, it would have been because of errors of planning and conception rather than by errors of execution. The Brigade fought long enough to prove its determination and tactical skill. It appears to have been well handled by its officers. There were ample supplies at hand to support continued ground action. And Castro himself has admitted that the terrain was well chosen. Given control of the air, the Brigade might ultimately have been defeated by a complete failure of any resistance to materialize under conditions which would have encouraged it and permitted air support coupled with continued effectiveness in the face of heavy casualties of the Castro militia. Either of these possible developments would have confirmed the errors of intelligence and assessment that are alleged but would have given no support to the view that errors of organization and execution in the build-up phase were responsible for the military defeat. Despite whatever mistakes of this character there were, the Agency did after all (with the invaluable help of the Department of Defense) build up, train, equip, and deploy a force that proved itself in combat to be of high quality.

E. Agency vs. Government Responsibility

Another notable feature of the decisions that together were responsible for failure to achieve control of the air (in addition to the fact that they were all Washington policy decisions) is that they were all interdepartmental decisions. Other elements of the Executive Branch were involved along with the Agency in making them. This is not to imply that in all cases they were imposed on the Agency. Regardless, however, of how blame should be assessed between the Agency for accepting restrictions and the policy makers outside the agency for imposing them, it is necessary to have clearly in mind the nature of the decision making process in a project of this sort in order to understand how the ultimate failure came about.

Inherent in this situation was a clear conflict between two goals, a conflict of the sort familiar in recent American history. One objective was that, mainly through the various activities comprised in this project, the Castro regime should be overthrown. The other was that the political and moral posture of the United States before the world at large should not be impaired. The basic method of resolving this conflict of objectives that was resorted to was that of attempting to carry out actions against Castro in such a manner that the official responsibility of the U.S. Government could be disclaimed.

If complete deniability had been consistent with maximum effectiveness, there would theoretically have remained no conflict of goals but in fact this could not be (and never is) the case. The most effective way to have organized operations against the Castro regime, even if they would have been carried out exclusively by Cubans, would have been to do so perfectly openly, on the largest scale and with the best equipment feasible. Practically every departure from this pattern of behavior imposed operational difficulties and reduced effectiveness. Inherent in the concept of deniability was that many of these restrictions would be accepted but at every stage over a period of many months questions had to be answered in which operational effectiveness was weighed against the political requirement of deniability.

As those decisions presented themselves week after week, the Agency as the executive agent for the conduct of the operation was usually and naturally the advocate of effectiveness. The State Department and, with respect to certain matters, the Department of Defense were the guardians of the correctness of the country's political posture and thus the advocates of deniability. There was obviously no way in which a generalized policy could have been laid down which would have furnished guidance as to the way the many successive decisions ought to be made. There was no quantitative measure of either the improvement in the chances of success that would have resulted from say, permission to use American air crews in overflights or of the decrease in deniability that would have resulted therefrom. Each of many such decisions had to be discussed and made on its own merits, and in almost all of them several agencies had to take part.

One of the consequences of this state of affairs was that prompt decisions were hard to obtain. Another was that, like so many interdepartmental decisions, these were subject to differing interpretations by different participants in the process. Delays and differences of interpretation were compounded by the constantly changing situation both of Cuba and the Castro regime on the one side and of the opposition on the other, which would

have rendered rigid and entirely orderly planning difficult under the best of circumstances.

The nature of the decision making process had other consequences as well. It explains in large measure the failure to write tidy and comprehensive plans and have them properly approved in writing by competent authority well in advance. It explains why there was a long succession of alternate plans and of modification to plans under consideration. Above all, the constant weighing of costs and benefits in the effort to satisfy the military requirements for success without excessive impairment of the political requirement of deniability explains why the final plan (and most of the variants considered in the last six weeks) was a compromise.

F. Why An "Overt" Operation

Against the background of these remarks on the way decisions were made and on the nature of policy issues involved, it is worth commenting briefly on one of the major errors of judgment alleged by the Survey: the decision to "convert the project into what rapidly became an overt military operation beyond the Agency's capability." In part this "decision" was compelled by the failure of the internal resistance the reasons for which are discussed in later sections and are not germane to the current context. As for the Agency's capability, enough has already been said to suggest that the operation was not so much beyond the Agency's capability as it was beyond the scope of activities judged to be acceptably deniable. The question that is highly relevant to the policy making process is how and why the project was allowed to become overt and, when this had happened, why it remained the responsibility of the Agency.

That it did become "overt" in the sense that there was extensive public discussion of the preparations for invasion and that the military action was widely attributed to the United States Government, both before and after it took place, there can be no doubt. Nor is there any mystery as to why this happened. It was quite out of the question to infiltrate men and arms by sea and air for months, recruit, train and arm a strike force of some 1800 Cubans, to organize the political fronts, first the FRD then the CRC and run a major propaganda campaign, without at least reports and rumors of those activities becoming widespread. Nor were there any illusions either in the Agency or elsewhere in the Executive Branch as to the degree to which the facts were surmised and accepted as true by journalists and other informed persons. Why, then, would anyone continue to regard the involvement of the United

States as plausibly deniable and why was the undertaking not converted into an overt operation, which presumably would have become the responsibility of the Department of Defense?

The answer to the first part of this question is that up to and through the invasion itself the operation remained to an extraordinary degree *technically* deniable. Funds were disbursed in such a way that their U.S. Government origin could not be proved. No Agency case officer who played an active role was publicly revealed as such by true name. No Americans were captured (although the bodies of an American B-26 crew were probably recovered after its loss on the second day of the invasion). In short, even the best informed correspondents in Miami who published what purported to be detailed, factual reports could substantiate them only by quoting Cubans who themselves were often not well informed.

This limited and purely technical maintenance of deniability was less important to the decisions of the Executive Branch, however, than the fact that no one in the Executive Branch was ready at any point until after the defeat officially to avow U.S. support. Indeed, this alternative was never seriously considered. Even the most inadequate fig leaf was considered more respectably than the absence of any cover whatsoever. Indeed, the final changes in the operational plan made in March, the official announcement in April that the United States would not give support to the rebels, and the cancellation of the D-Day strike were all last minute efforts to shore up the plausible deniability of an enterprise for which Governmental support was bound to be conclusively surmised even if it could not be proved. These decisions were made by the senior policy makers of the Government who were reading the newspapers every day and knew well to what degree the project had in fact become "overt." These men simply were not willing to state officially either that the United States itself was about to make war on Cuba or that the U.S. Government was openly supporting a group of Cubans, not even recognized as a Government in exile, in a military invasion. In the aftermath of failure this decision may have seemed a wrong one. Had the operation succeeded reasonably quickly and without too much bloodshed, the decision would probably have seemed a correct one. Be that as it may, it was not the Agency's decision and, as the above cited actions suggest, the pressure to strengthen deniability in the last few weeks came from outside the Agency and led to decisions which were unwelcome to the Agency. To suggest, as the Survey seems to do, that the Agency was responsible for this clinging to deniability is demonstrably false.

G. Government vs. Agency Decisions

The same comment applies in some degree to the three other alleged major errors of judgment. (Those have to do respectively with the treatment of the Cuban exiles, the adequacy of the military planning, and the appraisal of the chances of success. They have been touched upon above and are discussed at some length in Section V below.) In the context of the decision making process, the most important conclusion that emerges is that, whether they were wise or unwise, they were Governmental decisions in a very real sense. As to the handling of the Cubans, this was a matter of the most intimate consultation with the State Department, especially in the two months preceding the invasion when the CRC was in process of formation. As to military planning, the record clearly shows that there was detailed consultation with the Joint Chiefs of Staff, that the JCS considered the successive plans both formally and informally, and that these were the subject of review and discussion at the highest levels of Government. The chances of success were assessed favorably by the Joint Chiefs (minus, of course, the last minute cancellation of the D-Day strike) as well as by the Agency. The Agency must accept a sizable share of the blame for whatever mistakes were made in these three areas but no one who studies the record with care can assert (and no one who has done so has asserted) that the responsibility was narrowly focused on any one of the participants in the decision making process.

H. Conclusions

This introductory and summary section began with a re-statement of the main allegations of error made in the Survey and it followed with a summary of the conclusions reached in this paper (partly in the foregoing discussion but principally in the later more detailed sections) with respect to those allegations. For the most part the allegations are rejected. In concluding this section it may be useful first to list, for comparison and contrast with the Survey, what in the judgment of this paper do appear to have been the strengths and weaknesses of this undertaking and second to suggest some of the lessons to be drawn therefrom. The list is as follows:

- 1) Small boat infiltration and exfiltration operations were slow to start (but by and large were effective and well run in the last three months). Moreover, due to the existence of the U.S. Embassy in Havana, defectors and legal travel, the need for illegal infiltration was comparatively slight until January 1961.
- 2) Partly for this reason, the effort to place trained communicators, para-

military types, and other agents with resistance groups inside the Island, and thereby to create a reception capability for air and maritime resupply, never caught up with Castro's improving security measures. This impaired the build-up not only of guerrilla groups but of intelligence nets. It is doubtful, however, whether significantly more could have been accomplished in building up an effective internal resistance particularly in view of the timing of the whole operation and the lead time involved in recruiting and training.

3) Aside from these weaknesses, alleged defects of organization and execution had little to do with the unsuccessful outcome. In particular, the limiting factor on air operations in support of the resistance was not bad management but the limitations of the reception parties and competence of Cuban air crews.

4) The air arm should have been stronger by the time of the invasion in numbers of air crews, type of equipment, availability of U.S. bases, or some combination of all these. If relief could not have been obtained from any of the politically motivated restrictions, and if a larger number of competent Cuban air crews could not have been recruited, the Agency should on its own responsibility have assembled more U.S. nationality air crews in the hope that their commitment would be permitted in an emergency.

5) There should have been more pre-D-Day air strikes and they should have employed the full strength of the air arm. The D-Day strike should not have been canceled.

6) The military plan was a good one (except for the restrictions on, and possible inadequacy of, the air arm). It was properly worked out as between the Agency and the Joint Staff and was a product of highly competent, professional military planning.

7) The appraisal of the chances of success was probably faulty for reasons summarized above (para. d).

8) The important decisions were Governmental not those of one Agency. It was frustrating but of little practical consequence that the decision making process was at times cumbersome and did not promote tidiness. It was inevitable that the whole shape of the operation was determined as a compromise between the conflicting goals of deniability and effectiveness.

I. Lessons For The Future

What are the lessons for the future to be drawn from this unhappy experience? Perhaps the main one is that the U.S. should not support an operation such as this involving the use of force without having also made the