

The United States' Failure in the Bay of Pigs

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Abstract

The failed CIA attempt to overthrow the Fidel Castro Regime in Cuba, at the Bay of Pigs, is a direct result of the failure to destroy Castro's air force with B-26 bombers. The cancelation of the second strike, and abandonment by the United States government doomed the exile brigade.

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The failed attempt to overthrow Fidel Castro is one of the United States greatest military and political failures. The failure of the air raids on the Cuban airfields, and the U.S.A's abandonment of the exile brigade was the direct cause of the defeat in the Bay of Pigs.

The Anti-Castro Program

The U.S's Anti-Castro Program began in 1960 when President Dwight Eisenhower approved a plan, *A Program of Covert Action against the Castro Regime*, to replace the Castro regime with one better for the people, without any speculation of United States intervention. (Sierra, 2007) Later that year Eisenhower approved a budget of 13 million dollars for the operation. Plans were made for an amphibious assault with at least 1,500 men. Three months before the operation John F. Kennedy became president. The new president was briefed on plans of an invasion by sea with significant air support.(cia.gov, 1979)

The Trinidad Plan

The CIA and the Joint Chiefs of Staff favored the plan for a daytime landing at Trinidad, a city on the southern coast of Cuba, but Kennedy wanted a night time landing near the Bay of Pigs. This kept the U.S from looking involved, and as a bonus there is an airstrip close to the beach. The plan was almost set, but what soldiers would the CIA get to fight this war? The CIA couldn't go in themselves, or have U.S soldiers invade Cuba. The solution was exiled Cuban's in Florida. The CIA trained 1,400 Cuban exiles who would make up the soldiers of Brigade 2506. The final plan was a combined Air and guerrilla attack. They would have light bombers (B-26 Invaders) for support. There would be three days of bombing starting two days before invasion

The U.S Failure in the Bay of Pigs

day. Then the Exile Brigade with tanks, heavy machine guns, recoilless rifles, and mortars would make up the invasion force. (cia.gov, 1979)

Two Days Before Invasion

There was one key advantage for the CIA, air power. They also believed that a small number of aircraft would be easier to deny. This led them to only strike with eight planes at a time. To make it so no one thought the U.S was behind the attack, they painted the B-26s identical to that of the FAR's (the Cuban Revolutionary Armed Forces). To further hide the United States involvement they came up with the defector plan. One of the exiled Cuban pilots flew to Florida and landed in distress. Then once he was arrested by officials, he claimed to be a Cuban air force defector and said that it was him and two other defectors behind the attacks on the airbase.(cia.gov, 1979) On April 15th the initial bombing began. Eight B-26 bombers would assault three Cuban airbases in Libertad, San Antonio, and Santiago. Their primary target was Castro's air force which consisted of 30 combat aircraft. Castro's air force poses the greatest threat to the bombers and landing force, if not destroyed quickly. The bombings were effective. On the 17th Castro gave a speech claiming to only having two T-33s (combat jets), two Sea Furies (fighter planes), and two B-26s. After the bombing the foreign minister and UN representative of Cuba called an emergency UN session, where she charged the U.S as the instigators of the attack. The United States representative to the UN, Adlai Stevenson, unknowing of his government's deception, sticks to the defector story. He presented pictures of the "defectors" plane in Florida to the UN. The story fell apart because of the plane's metal nose, which was unlike the plastic nose that was standard for the FAR's B-26s. The political attention to these attacks made it impossible for the U.S to get any more involved, without drawing international attention.

The U.S Failure in the Bay of Pigs

One Day Before Invasion

On April, 16, 1961 Fidel Castro attended the funeral for the eight Cubans that were killed on the previous day of bombing. In his speech at the funeral, Castro damned the United States, warning of the evils of the CIA and of the U.S imperialists. Castro also ordered all military units to be on alert, and ready for action. The CIA's covert operation wasn't covert anymore, and the invasion had lost any advantage of surprise. Fearing more political attention, the second strike was canceled. As Col George Gaines put the situation "We had the key to Cuba already in hand. All we had to do was eliminate those few other airplanes"(1961). With Castro still in control of a working air force, and the cancelation of the second strike, the operation was doomed.

Invasion Day

Around midnight on the morning of the 17th, the exile brigade began their invasion of the Bay of Pigs. With the air strikes having done little besides warn of the invasion, and the loss of air superiority, the 1,400 Cuban exiles would be on their own. At dawn the surviving Cuban warplane engaged the exiles. The Cuban planes made the difference that day by sinking two of the exiles vital supply ships.(history.com, 2014)

Invasion Day Plus One

With the loss of their supply ships, the exiles were running out of ammo. Pinned down by Cuban artillery and warplanes the exile brigade requested the support of some United States destroyers in the region. Not wanting an escalation of the situation, President Kennedy denies the exiles request for help, abandoning them to die. (Rasenberger, 2011)

Invasion Day Plus Two

Only two days after the invasion began, the exiles were out of ammo and out of hope. They dispersed into the swamps and mountains around the Bay of Pigs, where they were soon

The U.S Failure in the Bay of Pigs

flushed out by Cuban forces. The surviving exiles were questioned by the Cubans and then sent back to the United States.

The Cuban victory at the Bay of Pigs marked the beginning of the end of United States imperialism. A David vs Goliath fight, and David won. The United states failure was a combination of militaristic and political losses. The Bay of Pigs invasion will mark the beginning of hostile relations between the United States and Cuba that lasts to this day.

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