

International Scenario: Bay of Pigs Invasion (1961)

In 1961, the United States armed and trained Cuban exiles to invade Cuba to overthrow Fidel Castro's government. The goal was to prevent the spread of communism to the Americas. The effort failed.

Background

Fidel Castro launched the Cuban Revolution, overthrowing the Cuban government of Fulgencio Batista in 1959. Castro was a communist allied with the Soviet Union. This caused concern on the part of the United States, who feared that this would give both communism and the Soviet Union a foothold in the Americas from which to spread.

Planning the Invasion

The U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) was tasked with overthrowing Castro's new government in Cuba. Many Cubans meanwhile fled the country when Castro took power, becoming exiles. The CIA began to train these exiles to take their country back. The original idea was that they would sneak into Cuba, gather other dissatisfied Cubans, and launch an uprising against Castro to overthrow him. The plan changed, however, to incorporate giving military help to the exiles to invade the island.

The invasion was originally planned to occur in the city of Trinidad, but newly-inaugurated President Kennedy thought that they needed a more isolated place, so an area called the Bay of Pigs was chosen instead. The idea was that the first planes would destroy the Cuban Air Force. Then 1500 soldiers would land and convince other Cubans to join them in rebelling against Castro. Although the CIA planned the invasion secretly, word got out, and Castro's government knew the U.S.-backed invasion was coming.

The Invasion

The invasion began on April 17, 1961. It did not go well. Although the Cuban Air Force suffered damage early on by air strikes, the Cubans still had planes left with which to repel the invaders. Some of the invading forces landed at the wrong locations. Once the invasion began, the troops and supplies took too long to get off the ships. Before the invasion could get going, Cuban planes sank some of the invading ships. Other Cubans didn't rise up in great numbers as had been hoped. Soon the exile army was surrounded by a much larger Cuban force and ran out of bullets. Though they tried to retreat, most were eventually captured and imprisoned.



Results

The result for the U.S. was embarrassing; the U.S. government, especially the CIA, looked weak. It also seemed to strengthen Castro's government's popularity within Cuba and caused him to look to the Soviet Union for military protection.

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Adapted from: http://www.ducksters.com/history/cold_war/bay_of_pigs.php