

# CRISIS SIMULATION

## THE BAY OF PIGS 1961



## ***Letter to the People:***

Honorable Delegates,

Welcome to the sixth annual Douglas Southall Freeman Model United Nations Conference! It is our privilege to welcome you to the Bay of Pigs crisis committee.

Your chairs will be Dwani Suresh, Aabha Badhrayan, and vice chair Lucy Yuan. Dwani is a junior in the Center for Leadership, Government, and Global Economics at Freeman. She has been participating in Model UN and speech for over 6 years now and loves the public speaking experience it comes with. She's on the cross country and tennis teams and loves being involved in the school as an SCA Officer and vice president of her class. Aabha is a freshman in the Center for Leadership, Government, and Global Economics at Freeman and could not be more excited for this year's conference. She has participated in Model UN for five years and counting. She enjoys playing the piano, writing, and being involved with the school in as many ways as possible. We hope this committee will help delegates love MUN as much as we do.

This committee will start in early April 1961, with Committee Session I taking place 1-2 weeks before the invasion, allowing delegates to debate revisions to the issue, while the invasion and any crises as a result of it will start in Committee Session II. This committee is set up to have multiple views pertaining to the operation in hopes to bring to light issues and solutions that can be the stepping stones to change.

Awards will be given based on performance in not only the front room (on-the-spot debate), but also in the back room (where you will be making secret, behind-the-scenes moves). Position papers are strongly recommended and are required for awards. **Do not use AI to write your position paper (we can tell!!)** We hope that your experience at FreeMUN will be just as rewarding as ours has been, and we are looking forward to meeting everyone! If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact us at [bayofpigsfreemunvi@gmail.com](mailto:bayofpigsfreemunvi@gmail.com).

Your Chairs,

Dwani Suresh, Aabha Badhrayan, and Lucy Yuan



*Douglas S. Freeman High School Model United Nations Conference*

## Historical Crisis

### *The Bay of Pigs Invasion*

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**Topic I:** *Planning and Execution*

**Topic II:** *After the Invasion*

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#### **Introduction**

The Bay of Pigs Invasion in April of 1961 was a result of tensions between the Soviet Union and the United States during the Cold War. Specifically, the Kremlin-backed Cuban Revolution brought tensions to a near boil in the Caribbean. To understand the failed CIA-backed operation, the planning and foreign policy of the United States must be analyzed. Furthermore, the political set up in Cuba and the rise of communism led by Fidel Castro caused more and more anger throughout the US. This in turn led to severed ties between Cuba and the United States government which initiated events that were headed and approved by two American presidents.

Cuba was extremely economically dependent on the United States of America prior to 1959. After the Spanish-American war, Cuba became an informal U.S. protectorate under the 1901 Platt Amendment, which allowed the US to intervene in Cuban affairs. This ended up leading to the long-term occupation of Guantanamo Bay (Perez, 2006). Throughout the early 20th century, American businesses controlled large portions of Cuba's economy, including 80% of its sugar exports and its utilities. This was all happening while

leaders like Fulgencio Batista maintained power using authoritarian means and support from Washington (Gott, 2004). Batista's government, though friendly to U.S. interests, was marked by corruption, repression, and growing inequality, creating public unrest across the island.

It was in this environment that Fidel Castro and his 26th of July Movement emerged. After a failed attack on the Moncada Barracks in 1953, where Castro was briefly exiled to Mexico, Castro returned to Cuba in 1956, launching a guerrilla campaign in the Sierra Maestra mountains alongside revolutionaries such as Ernesto "Che" Guevara and Camilo Cienfuegos (Wyden, 1979). For the next 2 years, the rebel group gained support from rural peasants. Batista, facing declining U.S. backing and military setbacks, fled the country on January 1, 1959. Castro's entry into Havana symbolized the beginning of a progressive chapter in Cuban history. Even though the US initially recognized Cuba's Government, relations started a straight decline as Castro began to nationalize American-owned property without compensation. He also crossed fine socialist lines. Agricultural reforms and the seizure of foreign businesses were all causes of alarm in Washington. In response, the

Eisenhower administration began plotting Castro's removal as early as March 1960, authorizing the CIA to organize, fund, and train anti-Castro Cuban exiles for a possible invasion (Office of the Historian, 2021). Around the same time, Castro deepened ties with the Soviet Union, signing trade agreements and beginning to receive arms and economic support from Moscow (Pérez-Stable, 1993).

By the middle of the 1960s, it started to become very obvious that Cuba was aligned with the USSR. Soviet oil began arriving in Cuban ports and when U.S.-owned refineries on the island refused to process it, Castro nationalized them. Eisenhower then slowly imposed trade stoppers until October 1960, when a full ban on exports to Cuba was imposed (except on food and medicine). Castro responded to this by nationalizing all American property and businesses that remained and by expelling many U.S. diplomats from Havana. To add on to this, by December 1960, he openly announced that there would be a socialist revolution (BBC, 2011).

For the United States, the prospect of a Soviet-aligned state just 90 miles from Florida represented a grave strategic threat. Within the broader Cold War context—shaped by the domino theory and fears of communist expansion—Cuba's transformation from a U.S.-backed republic to a socialist ally of the USSR was unacceptable to Washington. This geopolitical shift set the stage for more aggressive measures against Castro, leading directly to covert planning that would span

two administrations and culminate in one of the most infamous operations of the Cold War.

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## Topic I: Planning and Execution

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After tensions between Cuba and the United States reached a breaking point, the U.S. government began developing a covert plan to remove Fidel Castro from power. The strategy focused on organizing a force of Cuban exiles who opposed Castro's leadership. This group would be trained, supplied, and transported to Cuba in order to spark an uprising and encourage Cubans to turn against the government. While the operation had political approval from the highest levels, much of the planning was handled in secret by intelligence and military officials.

When examining the Bay of Pigs invasion, it's clear that a combination of misjudgments, miscommunication, and unrealistic expectations led to its failure. One major miscalculation was the assumption that Cubans opposed to Castro would spontaneously rise up once the exiles landed. In reality, intelligence had overestimated local support. By early 1961, most anti-Castro activists had already fled or been imprisoned, so there was little internal resistance to sustain the effort after the landing (Ancient Scholar, n.d.; Wikipedia, 2025).

Another critical error involved selecting the Bay of Pigs as the landing site. Chosen for its remoteness, it was cloaked in secrecy, but it also proved to be treacherous terrain. The swampy shoreline and coral reefs made landing difficult, slowed the invasion force, and exposed them to immediate enemy fire (History HowStuffWorks, BBC, 2021). Air support was meant to be a strong suit of the operation but became a glaring weakness. Initial airstrikes using CIA-trained pilots in B-26 bombers failed to eliminate Castro's air force. The decision to cancel a second wave of air raids—aimed at preserving plausible deniability—left the invasion force without needed aerial protection. As a result, Cuba's planes were free to attack the invaders and their supply ships (History HowStuffWorks, n.d.; History.com, n.d.; JFK Library, n.d.; BBC, 2021).

Support for the mission came in different forms. Cuban exiles were trained in camps outside of the country, often in Central America. They received weapons, equipment, and basic military training to prepare them for the invasion. Aircraft were also used to carry out initial bombing runs meant to weaken Cuban defenses before the main landing. However, how much support should be sent, especially from U.S. forces, was debated. The leaders wanted to help the exiles without making it obvious that the U.S. was directly involved.

Coordination and communication breakdowns further hampered the mission. Some units landed at incorrect locations,

reinforcements didn't arrive on time, and support never materialized when needed. There was no unified command structure, causing confusion between the CIA, military advisors, and the exile fighters. Communication channels broke down under pressure, leaving troops isolated and unable to respond effectively to the unexpected challenges on the ground (Combat Analysis, n.d.; History.com, n.d.).

Behind the scenes, the CIA's internal management fell short. A post-incident review by the CIA's Inspector General criticized the agency for poor organization, inadequate staffing, lack of contingency planning, weak Spanish-language capacity, and overconfidence in seizing power without preparing for political or logistical setbacks. The report also noted that planners pushed beyond their capabilities while presenting an overly optimistic picture to Washington leadership (National Security Archive, 2011; Wikipedia, 2025; LAB, 2011).

Brigade 2506, the exile force at the center of the operation, faced overwhelming odds. Of the roughly 1,500 trained exiles, only about 1,297 actually landed, and they were quickly pinned down. Without substantive internal support, lacking reinforcements, and hit by Cuban air power, the mission collapsed. Fewer than 200 managed to escape; over 1,100 were captured or killed (Wikipedia, 2025; JFK Library, n.d.).

Looking at these failures, planners in similar situations would need to think more

carefully about gathering accurate information on local conditions before committing to an operation. They would also need to ensure that supply lines are secure, communication is reliable, and the goals of the mission are realistic for the resources available. In the case of the Bay of Pigs, even if the invasion had gone more smoothly at the start, the lack of strong internal resistance meant the chances of long-term success were always low.

### **Questions to Consider:**

1. How can there be outside support for the mission without revealing the identity of who is running the operation?
2. What can be changed to ensure there is a balance between keeping the whole mission a secret and also having enough resources?
3. How can the secrecy of the invasion be protected to maintain the element of surprise?
4. What are some risks with providing additional support to the troops and how can they be avoided?
5. How can command structure be quickly changed to ensure better communication between the military and the exiles?

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## **Topic II: Consequences of the Invasion**

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After roughly a year of planning the military attack on Cuba, the failed mission started on April 15 of 1961. Eight bombers

left Nicaragua to bomb Cuban fields in falsely painted Cuban Air Force planes to ensure that their mission will run smoothly and secretly. The first mishap on this day occurred when the bombers missed many of their targets and left most of Castro's air force intact. Like fire, news caught and spread the information of the attack, causing photos of the repainted U.S. planes to become public.

These planes revealed American support for the invasion which led to President Kennedy canceling a second air strike. The public exposure of the U.S. planes embarrassed Kennedy and put him in a difficult international position. A major goal was to hide the U.S. government's hand in the attack, and a second, more obvious strike would have made this impossible, forcing Kennedy to prioritize political considerations over the military objective.

On April 17, the Cuban-exile invasion force, known as Brigade 2506, landed at beaches along the Bay of Pigs and immediately greeted with heavy-fire. Cuban planes fusilladed the invaders, sank two escort ships, and destroyed half of the exile's air support. Environmental conditions were unfortunate leading to soldiers having to work with soggy equipment and inadequate ammunition. Over the next 24 hours, Castro ordered roughly 20,000 troops to advance toward the beach, and the Cuban air force continued their persistent, dominant attacks.

Retaliation attacks from the United States of America just led to more destruction, and fighter planes were shot

down or had to return confused. Some exiles escaped to the sea, while the rest were killed or rounded up and imprisoned by Castro's forces. Almost 1,200 members of Brigade 2506 surrendered, and more than 100 were killed. (John F. Kennedy Presidential Library & Museum, 2024).

From May 1961, the Kennedy administration unofficially attempted to provide ransom to retrieve the prisoners, but the efforts of the Tractors for Freedom Committee failed to raise the \$28,000,000 needed for heavy-construction equipment demanded by Castro as compensation. The conditions for the ransom changed several times during the next several months; after meticulous negotiations by James B. Donovan, Castro finally agreed to release the prisoners in exchange for \$53,000,000 worth of food and medicine. Between December of 1962 and July of 1965 the survivors were returned to the United States (Britannica, 2025.)

The failed invasion strengthened the position of Castro's side which included his administration. This openly influenced him to pursue closer ties with the Soviet Union and intention to adopt socialism. This failed mission also led the Kennedy Administration to reassess Cuban policies and form a committee under former Army Chief of Staff General Maxwell Taylor and Attorney General Robert Kennedy to examine the causes of the defeat suffered at the Bay of Pigs. Although the Bay of Pigs was a failed mission, John F. Kennedy did not stop there.

A project called Operation Mongoose was established on November 30, 1961 after the failed military launch. Operation Mongoose was designed to do what the Bay of Pigs invasion failed to do: remove the Communist Castro regime from power in Cuba. This operation covered many factors, ranging from military sabotage to proposed assassination attempts on key political leaders, including Castro (U.S. Department of State, n.d.).

Unfortunately, Operation Mongoose was ultimately suspended in October 1962 due to a more pressing concern: the presence of Soviet nuclear missile shipments in Cuba. With the threat of communism on the United States' doorstep, Cuba became an extremely sensitive topic as it would be a crucial country if a nuclear war were to break out. The failed coup by the United States only strengthened the likelihood that Cuba would ally with the USSR, making the situation more dreadful for the United States (Santa Clara University Digital Exhibits, n.d.)

## **Conclusion**

Ultimately, the fate of the invasion is in the hands of the delegates now. With little time before the invasion commences, delegates must quickly deliberate on last-minute adjustments before launching the invasion. Delegates must also deliberate on supporting the troops post-landing, balancing the invading force's integrity with the operation's covertness. Finally, the invasion will inevitably cause shockwaves in international relations and the wider Cold War, no matter the outcome. Delegates must

deal with those shockwaves to ensure American interests are protected.

**Questions to Consider:**

1. How should the United States balance national security concerns with respect for international law when planning furtive operations?
2. How can fallout resulting from a faulty invasion be mitigated?
3. What future steps should be taken should the invasion be successful and Castro's regime be overthrown?
4. What future step should be taken in Cuba should the invasion fail or only succeed partially?
5. What future steps can be taken to prevent Soviet influence in the Americas?
6. What measures can be taken to prevent covert interventions from escalating into larger international conflicts?



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