

# **R E B U T T A L**

**THE TRUTH ABOUT GIRÓN**

**BY COMMANDER JOSÉ A. PÉREZ SAN ROMÁN**

Military Commander of the Assault Brigade 2506

And Commander of the debarkation at the

Bay of Pigs on April 17, 1961.

An explanation? No !

A justification? No !

**AN EXTRAORDINARY REVELATION !**

## A NOTE TO THE READER

This booklet was originally published in Spanish on November 1979 by Carlos Miami Press with the consent of José Pérez San Román (1930/89) to the Bay of Pigs Veterans Association, Assault Brigade 2506, during the administration/leadership of Mr. Alberto Martínez Echenique and being its Press Secretary Mr. Pedro Rojas.

*A limited 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition in Spanish was published on November 2012*

**Note:** This English version has been prepared by Pablo Pérez-Cisneros Barreto, at the request of the Bay of Pigs Museum and Library, Inc. by its Historian, Mr. Vicente Blanco and its Curator, Mr. Esteban Bovo Carás.

March, 2014

## DEDICATORY

*This book is dedicated to my dearest Berta Barreto de los Heros, to whom all the soldiers of Brigade 2506 owe so much, due to her intellectual and physical efforts as well as her spiritual devotion in her determination to obtain our liberation from Cuban prisons. To whom all the Cubans owed so much for her dignity and bravery.*

*With this small big book I want to thank you for receiving me in your generous heart and again, I thank you for allowing me To Be YOUR FRIEND.*

*José Pérez San Román*

*Miami, febrero 2, 1980*

## Introduction

When publishing the present work (*English version*), the Veterans of the Bay of Pigs and members of the Association of Brigade 2506, do fulfill their obligation of allowing the truth to be known about the end result of the invasion, its efforts in the landing and battles that took place in order to secure a beachhead as originally planned at Playa Girón, at the Bay of Pigs, on April 17, 1961.

This way we answer conclusively to a number of created interests which since April of 1961 have been working in order to hide the facts, distorting and/or covering the same; taking away or attempting to subtract from what will eventually be considered general knowledge of what was the actual truth. Which, after promoting, funding, organizing, assisting, and escorting it in its efforts to invade, the Government of the United States of America, due to political reasons of Estate, actually abandoned the project since before the 17<sup>th</sup> of April, 1961, abandoned the Brigade 2506 at Playa Girón at the Bay of Pigs, that was previously told/utilized to disembark on that date, and that once confronted with the alternative of disintegrating the same and returning the Brigade soldiers to the United States with all its political implications, and that this abandoned was done without the knowledge of the Brigade political, or military leaders of the troops that they commanded.

As time passes by and losing its confidentiality or for political reasons that at the time continue to be considered “the Cuban thing,” the facts are resurrected and once more they come back in the best distorted form that fits their purposes; thus, on April 15, 1979 the Miami Herald published an article signed by Mr. William R. Long and Ms. Helga Silva. This article is one among many others that prompted the work that we publish now, since the Miami Herald refuses to publish the same.

Its author is the Commanding Officer of Brigade 2506, José H. Pérez San Román and ALSO, Chief Commanding Officer of the disembarking operations at Playa Girón, in the Bay of Pigs on that fatidic day of April 17, 1961. It is not the testimony of a witness, it is the testimony of an actor, a principal actor. That is why and in the manner that the testimony is written, making conclusive statements of invaluable facts, Commander San Román testimony clearly establishes an extraordinary revelation that clearly tell its readers the historical truth and the reality of the abandoned that were the Brigade 2506 soldiers, as well as the Cuban people.

All of the above is told in a plain, clear and precise language. It is the language of a well instructed Military Professional Army Officer. Nevertheless it is not exempt of literary expression that in occasions arrive at an anecdotic or narrative reference, which he does in order to illustrate an affirmation or corroborate an argument.

Conceived this work as an answer to a newspaper article; it has the format of a communication. To publish it now we wanted to preserve the same, thus no changes were made

from the original letter that was sent to Mr. John McMullan at the Miami Herald that was never published.

Besides the above mentioned, there is another important reason that justifies this publication, which is no other than to demonstrate the revelations that the same brings about.

The Brigade 2506 has never stopped from thinking about Cuba and we shall never abandon the thinking of an aspiration that motivated the men that were part of it and gave it life. The same thoughts and aspirations that continue to be consider in Cuba today. Respect to the dignity of men, and the fulfillment of their duties and obligations.

The above shows us that in the fight for the human and political rights of the Cuban people that the direction and decision of all acts, been military or in any other forms; shall be in Cuban hands and in the hands of those men/women that are ready to assume the permanent interests of the Cuban nation.

Miami, Septiembre 1979

ASSAULT BRIGADE 2506

*Alberto Martínez Echenique*  
President

*Pedro Rojas*  
Press and Advertising Secretary

Mr. John McMullan  
Executive Managing Editor of the Miami Herald  
One Herald Plaza  
Miami9, Florida 33101

Dear Mr. McMullan:

My name is José Pérez San Roman, Commander of Brigade 2506 and Military Chief of the invasion at the Bay of Pigs.

I have read your article dated April 15, 1979 about an investigation (classified SECRET) that took place some 18 years ago about the above mentioned invasion, when the facts just happened and were fresh in the minds of everyone. The result of this investigation is now reported (Declassified), when the facts are now totally or partially forgotten by most everyone and are completely unknown by the younger generations, unless what has been written in the school books. A person that is today 30 years old, then it only had 12. A young man of 21 years today, only was 3 years old at the time of the invasion.

I am in disagreement with what has been reported in the above mentioned article and consider it my duty to respond.

Being a soldier, not a politician, my name has been out of the press in the last few years. The needed publicity and sensationalism to any political career have never being of interest to me, and as such, I have never used my name to climb political positions while living in exile; which could have been easy to obtain. Due to the above , perhaps my identity requires delving in the past, in order for you to ascertain that that writes this letter have sufficient antecedents and experience in the subject matter. I expect that the following and concise information shall qualify me as an experienced person in the matter exposed.

March 1949 .....Joined the Cuban Army

June 1949..... Also enter Havana University as an Architecture student  
Attended only two months due to financial insufficiency.

Mayo 1950..... Accepted at Officer School in the Cuban Army.

1953..... Honor graduate Officers School, Cuban Army.

1953 Sept/Nov....Allied Officer School Combat Engineering U.S. Army  
Graduated in officers Combat Engineering, Fort Belvoir

1954/58.....Combat Engineering Instructor, Cuban Army, 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant

1953/55.....Infantry...Platoon Commander

1955..... Infantry course, Cuban Army.

1956..... Promoted to 1str Lieutenant.

1956..... Course at Cuban Army Staff.

1956..... Graduated at the U.S. Army Infantry School at Fort Banning, Georgia.

1957..... Commence of Civil War in Cuba. Company Commander in Oriente Prov.

1958..... Professor at officer School in Cuba's Army.

1958..... Promoted to Captain assigned as Lt. Coronel as G-3, Infantry Division

1958..... Rebelled against Batista regime. (Not in favor of Castro) Political Prisoner;

1959 Jan/Mar....Officer without a command at the beginning of Castro's government.

1959 Mar/Oct...Political prisoner for hiding and assisting escape of military personnel.

1959 Nov..... Exiled in Miami, Fl. U.S.A.

1960 May..... Recruited by the C.I.A. to fight against Castro.

1960 June.....Useppa Island, subversive training (Examined and tested) Elected Leader

1960 July..... Fort Gulick, Panamá Canal Zone. Training and selection.

1960 August... Guatemala, Base Trax, in charge of Training and Operations while the consideration was to train the volunteer soldiers as guerrilla fighters.

1960 November. Brigade 2506 Commanding Officer when guerrilla concept was change to conventional warfare.

**1961 Apr. 12/19** Military Commander of the invasion at Bay of Pigs and Brigade 2506.

- 1961 April 26... Captured while attempting to escape encirclement. Prisoner of War (Political) Approx. 20 months. Had 5 long conversations with them Prime Minister F, Castro.
- 1961 Dec. 24/62..Liberated thru negotiations conducted between F. Castro and the Cuban Families Committee for the Liberation of the Bay of Pigs Prisoners of War, Inc.
- 1962 Dec. 27....By invitation, met in Palm Beach, Florida, with the U.S. President John F. Kennedy and his family at their house. Was accompanied by Commander Erneido Oliva. Civilian leader of Brigade 2506, Manuel Artime, Enrique (Harry) Ruíz Williams, 2<sup>nd</sup>, who was in command of the heavy weapons battalion at Girón and Alvaro Sánchez Jr., President of the Cuban Families Committee, who was part of the group that assisted the famous lawyer, James B. Donovan, together with Ernesto Freyre, Enrique Llaca, Virginia Betancourt, and the Cuban Coordinator, Berta Barreto de los Heros, together with the assistance of the American Red Cross, in order to finally accomplish our liberation.
- 1972 Dec. 29 Invited (at this request) the Pres. of the U.S., J.F.K. and his wife (J. K.) to the Orange Bowl in Miami, Fl., in order to welcome, meet and review the recently liberated Brigade 2506 troops, and its leaders.
- 1962 Dec/Mar 63..Interviewed at the Pentagon/Washington, with U.S. Military Officers and Government civilians, debriefed about what happened at Bay of Pigs and its outcome and the future of the Brigade 2506. Dubious explanations were given.
- 1963 Mar/June...Guest of the U.S. Attorney General, Robert F. Kennedy's and his family at their home in McLean, Va. ((brother of the U.S. President)
- 1963 June..... At the request of the U.S. Attorney Gen. entered the U.S. Army and was acknowledged as a U.S. Infantry Officer with grade of 2<sup>nd</sup>. Lieutenant.
- 1963 Jun/Oct.... Officers School at Fort Benning, Georgia. Advanced Infantry School.
- 1963 Nov/Dec...Attended and successfully graduated from Parachute School.
- 1964 Jan/Feb.... At Parachute School in Fort Benning, Ga. Graduated Pathfinder School.



1964 March..... U.S. Army Language School, Presidio, Monterrey, California..

1964 Mar/Dec....Spanish Instructor at U.S. Army language School. (see above)

1964 June..... Promoted to 1<sup>st</sup>. Lieutenant, Infantry.

1964 Dic/Jul 65.. 101 Parachute Division at Fort Campbell/Ky.2<sup>nd</sup> in Command of a Parachute Company.

1965 Feb..... Trainer at the Parachute School

1965. Jun. .... Was ordered to go to Vietnam. Refused.... Resigned my Commission

1965 July..... Received an Honorable Discharge from the U.S. Army.

Adjacent to this introduction is my response to the above mentioned article, with the expectation that the same should be published by your paper or other means; the same way yours was read on April 15, 1979..

Respectfully yours

José Pérez San Román  
Commander in Chief of Assault Brigade 2506  
Military Commander of the Bay of Pigs Invasion

**REBUTTAL BY JOSÉ PÉREZ SAN ROMÁN, CHIEF COMMANDER OF BRIGADE 2506 TO THE MIAMI HERALD'S ARTICLE WRITTEN ON APRIL 15, 1979, BY MS. HLGA SILVA AND MR. WILLIAM R. LONG.**

It is sad to contemplate how two badly informed newspaper individuals, using their weapons of paper and pencil, with the additional advantage of 19 years of memories halved forgotten in the minds of their readers, embark in a printed trip against the actual history of what happened...

They quote phrases, fraction, create images and selectively illustrate parts of a 358 pages of a document\* about the U.S. Government investigations completed in less than a month after the Bay of Pigs invasion, in an attempt to appear to “*save face*” of the “important people” in detriment of the “small people”. (*\*document recently declassified*)

It is also sad that respected names as those of General Maxwell Taylor and Admiral Arleigh Burke, involved since the creation of the now extraordinary amount of disinformation I believe now to suffer with Allen Dulles and Richard Bissell for the sad moments that they were subjected during the efforts of the Investigating Committee directed by Robert F. Kennedy, in his great efforts to confuse the facts and hide what actually happened.

If they would have left alone Allan W. Dulles, Richard Bissell, and Admiral Arleigh Burke to conduct the operations at the Bay of Pigs, the prestige of this great nation of the United States of America would not have been damaged, thus avoiding what actually happened due to the multiple erroneous decisions taken by those of higher hierarchy in the chain of command.

It should not be a surprise to notice that one of the first and most important witnesses of this Investigating Committee was Mr. Dean Rusk, the Secretary of State. His actions and that of his Department brought as a result, that our much needed and indispensable superiority in the air was converted into a suicide mission for our Brigade pilots that provided the much needed air assistance and who died needlessly due to the impossible missions that these extraordinary heroes took on.

As a consequence, the ships assigned to assist us with covering fire during the prolonged disembarkation, the Blagar and the Barracuda, as well as the ships carrying our much needed supplies that were considered the heart of our Brigade, decided to leave us. Even though I called them repeatedly, I never saw them again.

It is egotistical and wasteful, to expend this much money from our taxpayers, only to cloud the facts under tons of paper; when the only reason for the failure of the “Zapata Operation” (*new name after 18 years*) was that the ‘Boy Scouts’ of the 2506 were betrayed by

the U.S. Government for political reasons. If the betrayal was done by the Executive or his Assistants, or the State Department; there is no difference. The supreme responsibility falls in the shoulders of the Commander in Chief, the President of the United States. The same way, the responsibility of what the Brigade did or did not do in the area of the military operations that took place; it does fall under my responsibility and rested on my shoulders; since I was the Commander in Chief of that Brigade (Glorious Brigade).

The President of the United States was man enough to assume the responsibility and he immediately explained it to the entire world after the failure at Girón. He later recognized it and personally told me, in the company of Dr. Manuel Artime, as the Representative of the Civilian Government in Exile, Lt. Coronel Erneido Oliva, Lt. Enrique (Harry) Ruíz Williams, 2<sup>nd</sup> in Command of the Heavy Weapons Battalion (my brother, Capt. Roberto Pérez San Román was its Commander), also present as witnesses were Álvaro Sánchez, Jr., President of the Cuban Families Committee for the Liberation of the Bay of Pigs Prisoners of War, Inc., the President's wife, Jacqueline Kennedy and Pierre Salinger, the President's Press Secretary. This happened almost two years after the invasion (Dec. 27<sup>th</sup>. 1962), at his house in Palm Beach, Florida. In that historical reunion, John F. Kennedy, the President of the most powerful nation in the world, explained to us in that meeting, that after the first air strike on April 15 (*D day* – 2) the Russian government threatened with an attack on West Berlin if the United States continued to assist the invading forces commanded by me. The President explained in detail how throughout the night he could not sleep, and further told us that he argued with himself if he should continue to support the Brigade in order to protect the lives of its soldiers and to secure their triumph. At the same time, he faced the risk for the extermination in West Berlin of millions of Germans and American soldiers, and facing the possibility of a Third World War; or if his decision ought to be to abandon the Brigade and avoid the above mentioned possibility. Either one of the two options was bad, the President told us. *“But it was a lesser evil to sacrifice 1,400 men of the Brigade, than war in West Berlin and the possibility of a Third World War”*.

I respected the U.S. President for his honesty when he revealed to us the above mentioned secrets, and as a human being understood the moments that he went through during those black hours of doubt. But at that time I criticized him, and still do so, and say that a man of that prominence and responsibility, as well as those that assist him, should not overstep and ought to consider carefully their options and things to be done, before jumping into action to the support of their enemies.

But there is more: with the President's political experience and his obvious courage, he should have known, guessed, or played the cards at an early date such as April 15, 1961, the Russian threat of attacking West Berlin in order to protect his “Brother-in-danger-Fidel-Castro”; on the other side of the universe, it was only a boast without substance; in the same way that 18

years later and being more powerful during the conflict China-Vietnam, when they threaten China, and at the end nothing was done, even though this second conflict was in their backyard.

It is obvious that in this manner the U. S. Government allowed Russia to blackmail them on April 15, 1961, thus forgetting the words of a wise man and leader who said: "I do not believe that I should have started, but now that that I started it, I'm sure that I cannot stop now", (*Winston Churchill*)

The Miami Herald's newspaper columnists Silva and Long referred to the above as a convenient program of training and calisthenics, when they quoted the following words of the Investigating Committee. "We are of the opinion that the preparation and execution of pro-military operations such as Zapata that the same is done in the format of a Cold War, in which the Country ought to be prepared"; and also, they quote the U.S. President: "Study it in order to reinforce our work in the subject matter". The only reinforce needed them was in the top steps of the ladder, but it is insulting to hear prestigious individuals referring to the lives and future of a pro-American small country, in terms that point out indifference and contempt. And ... I have to confess: I was, without knowing it, a tool of that machinery.

Today I ask myself and ask those that can read my words: Could it not have been better to leave the past buried, with its shames and glories, instead of coming up now, 18 years later with distorted versions of responsibilities and guilt?

It was not my intention to talk about it now; but both, millions of honest Americans and thousands of Cubans, with the exception of those that on doing so are after a political advantage. It is evident that we have to revive the past, but in so doing, it ought to be done telling the real truth. If we lied to the Cubans and Americans before, during, and after the Bay of Pigs/Playa Girón invasion, if others lied to us at the "Orange Bowl" on our liberation and return to the U.S., if lies were told to the Brigade 2506 soldiers and ex P.O.W.'s that were recruited into the U.S. Army in January of 1963, after their return to the U.S., and to those other Cubans that were recruited previously into the U.S. during and after the missile Crisis in October of 1962; If after all those lies and half truths we kept our mouths shut, in order to not offend our American brothers and seeking their assistance in helping us to liberate our fatherland. Why having to accept these now, 18 years later and continue to keep our mouths shut and allow prejudicial information being cautiously selected in order to continue to confuse and deceive the American public opinion?

That is why, against my best wishes and professional ethics I found myself forced to criticize the now dead President of this great country that I respect and love profusely. It is the country that welcomed my family, my friends and me and allowed us to build our homes. But I have to do it because time has the tendency to dilute our conscience of past deeds and Cubans, as

well as Americans forget more everyday and do not remember what the objectives were when the April 17 invasion took place, and how the culpability for its failure was erroneously assigned. Someone was trying to take advantage of the natural erosion of lost memories and attempt to deceive us again.

“When you wonder who commands. When problems are delegated. When in doubt, it becomes dubious” (*As per Boren and the bureaucracy*). Or that is the way it looks when the information is pre-selected and quotes: “THE BLAME was adjudicated among the C.I. A. PLANNERS, the EXILED Cubans that participated in the invasion, the PENTAGON leaders that gave the blessing to the deed, the OFFICERS of the State Department that reviewed the plans and the U.S. President that ASSUMED the final responsibility”. These words of the Investigating Committee bring about many questions.

What exit could have had the C.I.A. with plans that were revoked, modified, cancelled at the last minute, as well as more and more changes were ordered as the situations occurred during the combat, which were going from bad to worse?

How can you accuse the Cuban Revolutionary Council, when they only loyally believed being led by those that they considered knew more, and that they fervently could trust the most?

Did the Cuban Revolutionary Council know what was the plan or new when and where? Were they in a “*voluntary sequestration*”, before, during and after the invasion took place? Did the organizers asked their opinions about those plans? Those proud Cuban leaders of national prestige; such as Dr. Miró Cardona, Tony Varona, Antonio Maceo, etc., accepted the humiliation, because they had faith in the U.S. Government planners. Their country demanded that they swallow their pride in exchange for the freedom of Cuba, and did fulfill the demands requested of them.

Of what can you accuse another Cuban leader, Coronel Martin Elena, “*nominal*” military chief of the invading armed forces? Following please find his words, quoted by Howard Hunt, a C.I.A. Officer in charge of the political action of the invasion plans”. “*I do not see how can I make believe that I’m in command, when in reality I do not command anything*”, and after the answer to that question, When would I’ll be allowed to see and study the military plans for the upcoming invasion? And after that question, “*Then, should I resign?*” but as a good Cuban patriot, he swallowed his pride and said: “*Still, I want to do what I can, thus, tell Rod\* that he can count on me*”. (\*Rod...”*Coronel Rodrick*” *Superior C.I.A. Official in charge of Military Operations stationed in Miami*).

And to further demonstrate the “*access*” that the Cubans had to military plans and secret information, “*they went through with the mission*”. Here is another fact: Is it true or not that

Captain Oscar Alfonso Carol, the first Cuban at Trax base in Guatemala was removed and was not allowed to participate, because he demanded that the Cuban leaders of the Brigade ought to have something to say about how the military operations should be conducted and how the same ought to be managed, once the fight continued inside Cuba? The answer is **YES** is true I know, I was there.

Perhaps the Assault Brigade 2506 under my command, did not fulfill its mission of taking and hold the approximately 600 square miles of beachhead at Girón, and held the same for three grueling days of fierce combat, with only sufficient ammunition and food for 1 day, and with all the possibilities of triumph against us? Did the writers of the bogus article of the Miami Herald, Silva and Long (*since Robert F. Kennedy and General Maxwell Taylor did know*) that the mission of the Cubans was only to secure this beachhead; and that the military unit under my command did accomplish it? Did these newspaper reporters know that the reason to hold that beachhead was to establish a portion of a free Cuban territory, and to bring to that beach head the previously designated Cuban Government Representatives in exile, in order to establish the Civilian Cuban Government in Arms in that place; and according to promises made; that that Cuban Government in the field of war would have been internationally recognized? Did the writers know that this international recognition would have brought about political, economic and military assistance that had been previously arranged and ready to be fulfilled by the U.S. Government with the assistance of several Latin American nations?

Was not Dr. Manuel Artime just where his duty called for, in the field of battle, standing straight, with a valiant attitude and inspiring the troops? Does not Dr. Artime, always on his feet, fulfilling auto-assigned duties, assisting the Brigade General Staff or running to assist our illustrious and intelligent Commander José (*Pepito*) Andreu, of the Brigade G-5, in order to protect the civilian population that was within the field of battle? Or helping our full of ideas and religious Commander, José (Yayo) Varona, of the G-2 Intelligence Unit, in his work of interrogating and processing more than 300 militia volunteers that were at that time prisoners of war and held by our military police (MP's), and that these prisoners were treated according to the Geneva Convention, regarding the treatment of the P.O.W.'s.? and yet, Dr. Artime found time, visiting constantly our MASH or First Aid Station, in order to comfort our wounded with a few words or assist the medical doctors to tie a tourniquet. A man, whose only mission at that time was to quietly stay out of danger until the Civilian Cuban Government in Arms arrived.

Perhaps it is not true that the 2<sup>nd</sup>. Battalion of the Brigade became a legend at Playa Larga due to its courage? Captain Hugo Sueiro, Commander of that Battalion, who had 370 soldiers , when he was re-enforced by the 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion of Captain Valentín Bacallao, fought and demolished the enemy time and time again. Those men assisted first by a one tank first and three more afterwards, and with 69 mm and 81 mm mortars, demolished Castro's 339 Battalion in the "Battle of the Lost Battalion". Assisting Captain Hugo Sueiro and his courageous men, two B-

26's of the Brigade's Air Force came to their aid and further engaged the enemy. Unfortunately, after several fierce ground and air battles were they produced many losses to the enemy, both airplanes were shot down by Castro's superior Air Force.

That same night, Captain Sueiro and his men were able to push back over 3,100 men of the Castro's forces, when they were able to repeal the enemy attack that included the assistance of the 122 mm Howitzers and 20 Stalin and Sherman Tanks. That day, a group of valiant men wrote a new war history when they were able to demolish forces in numbers seven times superior to them in a night battle that was full of brilliant leadership and excellent military command.

Where was the 2<sup>nd</sup>. in command of the Brigade 2506?, Lt. Coronel Erneido Oliva, in the fighting at Playa Larga and later on at Playa Girón; but using his strong personality, influence and leading qualities in order to motivate his men. ?

Where was Commander Ramón J. Ferrer, Chief of Staff of the Brigade, but at my side, under constant artillery and air attacks? Or you can find fault and blame Commander Ferré Mena while he was making constant trips in the road to San Blas, under enemy fire of artillery, airplanes and snipers? Trips that he undertook as a substitution, due to our poor radio communications, and with the only purpose of passing on my orders, study the military situation of all our valiant north forces and to bring me in person the much needed information of the different battlefronts?

What was done by my enthusiastic G-4 of the Brigade, Captain Roberto Pertierra, so one day of grenade and munitions supplies for the different weapons that we had could last at least three days of combat, distributing the same under a strict control and where they were needed the most? Miracles and more miracles were done by those distributing the same and by the valiant soldiers who had to use sparingly the meager supplies in their field of battle.

The honest answers to all of the above questions demonstrate that the failure was not the fault of the C.I.A., or of those Cubans who implemented their plans. The only blame that the Cuban leaders had , is to allow Washington decided the destiny of the Cuban war. That is the only blame that I accept without any shame. Because that is why (*criticize me if you want*), without noticing its repercussions I did, from the moment I was recruited in May, 1960, to the day of my captured, in April 25, 1961.

The last quote of the words of the Investigating Committee about the chronological orders as to whom to blame, ought to read as follows: The blame for the failure shall be distributed between the DEPARTMENT OF STATE, that prevented and ridiculed the C.I.A. and the Pentagon plans, and the PRESIDENT of the U.S., who HAD (did not assume) the maximum responsibility and made the last decision to abandon; that ought to signify:: "TO BETRAY".

The Miami Herald writers Silva and Long, in their efforts to cover the ocean with a towel, later on mentioned in their article: "*News of the plans were been profusely filtered before "D" day and that is the first thing that came out wrong*". And immediately they quote a C.I.A. official, "*unknown*", that said: "*the Cubans cannot keep their mouths shut, and before we knew it, we had in our hands, as in a Roman Circus, filtrations to the Miami and the New York press, etc.*" It is obvious that this was written with the purpose of confusing, and badly interprets the findings. Yes, it is true that there were infiltrations, but these were no obstacles for my troops to surprise Fidel Castro unprepared, looking toward other places, which allowed us to meet our goals...YES! The soldiers of the Cuban Brigade were not silent in the area of the Zapata swamps, but the absence of silence was not due to the behavior of the Roman Circus, but to the noise and uproar of that well trained and discipline army that was hitting the enemy like a bolt of lightning.

The mission, apparently forgotten by the Investigating Committee, was to find the reasons of why the failure. Even though it was an answer that they already knew before they met for the first time. The C.I.A. and the Revolutionary Council, the Brigade army, navy and air force, despite the so called "filtrations", met their mission; but if they still wanted to argue the above, let's argue it profusely.

Who created the unnecessary bureaucracy in Miami? The same had more civilian members in its payroll than soldiers in the training camps, which by the way, those civilians could not make any decisions regarding how the fighting would be conducted. The Government of the Unites States, and I quote: "*The Officers of the Administration insists that the Bay of Pigs invasion ought to look to the exterior world as if all the military plans and decisions were made by the exiled Cubans*". If the Officers of the Administration were the ones that made all the plans and made all the decisions, why did they needed so many Cubans sitting behind their desks in Miami, which is against the counter-intelligence dictates? Probably all that these Cubans wanted was a bed and a rifle in Guatemala, instead of a "desk" in Miami.

But what damage in their conversations could have done the Cubans in Miami and New York, when you compare that to the national laborers and coffee bean collectors that worked in the proximity of our military training camp of Guatemala, while they were only paid for their work \$0.40 cents per day? That military base was selected by the American Officers within a mountain range to the west of the Pan American highway. Where was the Cuban air force training base? Again, that place was also selected by the American officers, and it was exactly close to the centre of the town of Retalhuleu, which at the time had approximately 4,000 inhabitants of doubtful political inclinations. "*A secret base for a secret operation*"....



Are the Investigating Committee and reporters Silva and Long to tell me that the President of the U.S. did not know where those “supposedly” clandestine military bases were located, knowing that there was a grave security risk if found out?

And, are they going to tell me when the U.S. President did not know, that Fidel Castro did know because the Cubans in Miami and New York have a “*loose tongue*”.

Besides, When, in the history was possible to hide from the enemy a massive preparation of a conventional frontal attack? Was it possible for General Eisenhower during the II World War to hide from Hitler the massive preparation for the invasion of Europe?

No, Ms. Silva and Mr. Long: all that the Cubans and the C.I.A. could have hidden the same it happened with Eisenhower in the invasion of Normandy and Calais was the when? where? and how? The exiled Cubans, as well as Fidel Castro, did not have the answers to these questions, until it actually happened.

Besides all the above mentioned reasoning's; for me, a career military officer, the same applied to my military staff as well as most of the Battalion and Company Commanders. These security deficiencies were a continuous concern that we attempted to dissipate, using the technique: “*Uncle Sam knows what he is doing*” and continuously training our troops to keep their mouths shut and staying vigilant of our perimeters. My tranquilizing hypothesis, “*Uncle Sam knows what he is doing*”, at the end, was not the proper one to use, when all the theorems and bright colors, not do to filtrations of information to the enemy, but due to the fundamental fact of the hypothesis: The unyielding determination of the President of the U.S. was not inflexible, and did not have the necessary strength. This lack of a strong determination from the White House was the only reason that determined the final result on the filtrations of information. This lack of determination resulted that the U.S. Government did not fulfill its mission, which was a fundamental part of the plan; to guarantee air superiority and a constant influx of weapons, munitions and supplies (*food, fuel and medicines*) A skipped mission, even though the photographs taken by the U-2 airplanes taken after the first and only softening air attack demonstrated without any doubt that unfortunately Fidel Castro's air force had sufficient airpower, due to the quality and quantity of his combat airplanes, as well as the proximity of their bases to the invading forces, thus securing him their much needed air superiority.

As a result of those maneuvers in the acrobat's rope that supported the U.S. Government and their State Department decisions, in order of not complying with the obvious of their mission, the following occurred:

Number ONE: The American Officer, Captain of the Blagar (the leading ship), felt forced to leave his assigned landing area at the Bay of Pigs, after two of the ships of the small fleet were

sunk due to the air attacks. Against my express orders to remain and fight. the American Captain of the Blagar decided not to maintain his position and left his assigned disembarking area (it is a military principle that the Commander of the assisting forces should follow the orders of the area Commander). "*Superior authority*" ... "*has ordered me to the contrary*", was his answer to my express orders, and the ships, full of war supplies took off, to never return. Due to this unexpected abandonment of our fleet, the Brigade lost the assistance of the recoilless 75mm cannons and the most needed caliber 50 machine guns that were position on all the ships. To add insult to injury, with the leaving fleet there went to never return thousands of tons of supplies weapons, munitions, vital communication equipment, much needed hospital surgical equipment and drugs, fuel for our vehicles, water, food, , etc. If this was not sufficient, on those ships were also the vital fuel and equipment for our airplanes, such as all kind of bombs, and munitions for our B-26's, in order for them of avoiding the unnecessary trips (*back and forth*) of more than six hours flying time from Nicaragua to the Bay of Pigs area and vice-versa.

Number TWO: Castro's air superiority due to the indecision of the White House destroyed our airplanes in the air, due to their ability to constantly participate in the battle with their faster and closed by airplanes and allowed Castro's forces to eventually move against our troops that were running short of ammunition.

These historical truths of infinite responsibilities are forgotten and hidden under tons of papers, with the apparent intention to concentrate the prefab blame on the "*little ones*" I'm placing an example here: The first operational event was programmed to occur to the east of Guantanamo by a group of 168 men to disembark on the night of the 14/15 of April. The diversionary landing did not happen due to the possible weakness of the Cuban officer in charge of that group. The strong or weak character abilities of their Commander, Nino Díaz, since it is not my intention to discuss here, because simply, I do not know him. The only thing that I'm going to argue is the following: I knew very late that the diversionary forces commanded by Nino Díaz were part of the overall plan, when Commander Ramón Ferrer, my Chief of Staff and I were about to board the leading ship "Blagar" in Puerto Cabezas, Nicaragua, and about to depart in our "Von Voyage" towards the Bay of Pigs. Simply put, it was too late to argue, the time and date to disembark were already set. The minutes were precious, therefore, forward with my mission towards the principal objective and forget my concerns.

Perhaps the only things that I can criticize the C.I.A. during the preparation of this operation were the following:

First: To hold on to the above information until it was too late to do anything about that diversionary force and its Commander, Nino Díaz. During our specialized training at Fort Gulick, in the Panamá Canal Zone, this officer did not restrain himself to tell everyone that Captains Carol, Ferrer, Blanco, Roberto Pérez San Román, Hugo Sueiro, Alejandro del Valle,

Chiqui García and I as well as the rest of the previous professional military men that were part of the group, were considered his enemies, the same as Fidel Castro, since we were considered by him to be “pro-Batista” soldiers. He further indicated in his mind there were Cubans and Americans, and went so far as to refuse to obey orders or fight shoulder to shoulder with any of us, before he was eventually removed from Fort Gulick. If the Government of the United States, or Commander Nino Díaz were able to complete their mission, I would have found myself with a serious discipline problem, having a Commander in the Oriente province that was not willing to accept my command. But instead of a victory, what was waiting for us was defeat, and the fact that Commander Nino Díaz and his 168 patriots would have disembarked or not, still brought plenty of attention to Fidel Castro and his military forces, while Nino Díaz forces were escorted by two U. S. Navy destroyers, since practically they were practically parading the whole length of the northeast coast of Cuba and around the Maisí Point, like shark bait that he and his men supposedly were destined for (*or so it seemed in the plans*). Fidel Castro and I argued extensively about our respective roles and counter-roles in combat, during my time in prison. As a result of these conversations I was led to believe that Castro’s forces had been very substantial, while they were expecting Nino Díaz and his troops to disembark, since they were following all his movements at sea. The massacre of his troops would have taken Castro’s forces just a couple of hours, not because Nino or his troops did not have the conditions or valor needed, or that the troops did not receive adequate training before the battle, but because their debarkation was destined to fall into a very well prepared trap. On the other hand, when you compare their debarkation against ours, that was in a unexpected large inhospitable area, covered by a force of only about 500 militiamen; practically our debarkation was a surprise, and with the exemption of Castro’s ability to have his planes within a short distance to attack us, he did allowed us to consolidate our troops at Girón, while at the same time he was wondering if there were other areas where his enemies would disembark, thus slowing his initial response to our disembarkation..

Second: Another critique of the C.I.A. is the erroneous information from their intelligence archives that they provided to my officers and me about our landing area. The same was so incorrect that they even included photos of their U-2 flights that showed the tarmac of the landing area at Girón still under construction. This “old” information forced us to take dozens of gasoline powered saws, in order to cut the trees that no longer were there, along the adjacent road to the airport, so our B-26’s and C-46’s airplanes could have landed unobstructed. Another consequence of this erroneous information was that at a strong request of my advisor, Coronel Frank J. Eagan of the U.S. Army and a Seabee, I had to leave behind, one of the ships with more than 200 soldiers on board (plus the boys of Operation Forty), in order to load on that ship bulldozers, motor-levers, and additional heavy equipment, so we could finish and make operational the Girón airport, with a reduce but very skilful group of combat engineers. When we finally arrived at Girón, to our dismay we found out that the airport was actually finished, and to the last detail, including a control tower. On the side road next to it, there were no trees that

could have encumbered our small and medium size planes take off or approach. What a frustration! The aerial photos that we had used in our military intelligence were several months old. The beaches where the disembarkation occurred was no sandy beach, but a very sharp coral reef and rocks. Nevertheless, the incorrectness of that erroneous information was not the cause for the final result: The non-existing beach was not a sufficient obstacle for the unyielding diction of the Brigade to disembark and fight to free our homeland, and besides, the beachhead was occupied in time. The fact that the airstrip was finished or not did not change absolutely the situation; why? What was the purpose of using that airstrip, or have the ability of refueling our airplanes and re-supply our troops, since after all, since we expected that Castro would not have the use of his war planes, in the previously planned subsequent air bombardments, before the landing was to take place. The promised air superiority "*in such amounts that it would have clouded the Cuban skies, thus avoiding Castro's movement of troops*"... did not occur! "*The sky will be yours*"... never happened!

But, let's read other quotes from the article... "*I do not believe that the failure was due to a missing nail*". I agree with the American adviser (*name censored*), "it happened due to a lack of loyalty". They gave us sufficient nails, but they forgot to give us the promised hammer.

After the invasion the C.I.A. mounted a "*silent war*" against Castro. Attacks led by the C.I.A. and infiltrations supposedly conceived and financed by exiled groups when on, without much public knowledge or much success until 1969, explained Silva and Long, thus demonstrating that they did not have much knowledge on the subject matter. After the "Missile Crisis" in Cuba, with the supposed removal of the missiles, in exchange of the compromise that John F. Kennedy gave to the Russians through conversations that his brother had with the Russian Ambassador, with the supposed removal of the missiles and the President's promise that the U.S. would never support the exiled Cubans in their war against Castro. The "*silent war*" mounted by the C.I.A. according to White house orders, was nothing else but a ruse to keep the very demanding Cubans in exiled in a tranquil mood, busy and fool of hope. Obviously, there was no serious interest to overthrow Castro, due to the previous compromises made with Russia in October of 1962.

Later on, in the same article, in what it looks like an effort to show the Brigade 2506 like a disorganized group of people without any preparation, the reporters of the Miami Herald quote another American Officer Instructor that said: "*I would say that physically they are in good condition, of course, in a war, it would be like placing a bunch of BOY SCOUT S against our marines.*"

The answer to that sub-estimation of values and truths could have been obtained from Fidel Castro himself. It is probable that he is the one that tells the story of how it happened. During the hours of 12:00 P.M of April 16 and 5:00 P.M. of April 19, Fidel Castro thought that

his troops were engaged against a very skillful, well prepared and equipped force of at least 10,000 men, because of what was happening to his men in the battlefield. During the several interviews that Castro had in my prison cell with me (*at least they were 5 of them*), he could not deny the admiration that he felt for the unit under my command, Assault Brigade 2506 in general and the paratroopers, commanded by Alejandro del Valle, for their courage and military discipline, with a lot of courage.

Robert K. Davis, Chief of the project for the C.I.A. in Guatemala, substantially underlined the concept of the Brigade as a military unit and not a faction, when he said: "According with Idígoras (President of Guatemala), these Cubans are the best Combat Unit in all of Latin America, without counting any numbers. Nevertheless, some of Idígoras advisors were concern since they felt that the Brigade could have taken over their country". Witnesses to that conversation were Mr. Roberto Pérez Alejos, owner of the Helvetia ranch, located in the mountains of Guatemala and the site where the Brigade was conducting their military training. (*I do not mentioned the above in order to boast, or with the desire to disrespect the Guatemalan Army or Latin America in general. I only do it to point out non-Cuban opinions; those of the President of that country that gave us shelter and of the American C.I.A. Principal in Guatemala , who were in direct contact with our Cuban troops of liberation and very well knew of their capabilities and limitations*).

Mr. Alejos was the brother of Ambassador of Guatemala in the United States. Another witness was Mr. Howard Hunt, Chief of the Political Action of the C.I.A. In their discussions regarding the Guatemala uprising against President Idígoras in 1961, they were not sure if they should ask or not for the assistance of Brigade 2506, in order to "*calm things down*". The end result was that units of the Brigade were sent to assist Idígoras. These units made a public demonstration in a strong rebel forces area, and that action helped to deter the uprising. (Some historians said that it was done with the Americans as well as with my blessing, let's leave it there).

For those who do not believe the admiration of Fidel Castro or considered the power of the Brigade by President Idígoras through direct contact and personal observation of our maneuvers in make-believed combat in their country, in which he was there in a good number of occasions, at continuation please find some historic data that should not be erased.

Under constant enemy fire, the Brigade performed an excellent amphibian operation at night, on a beach full of sharp coral and rocks that would have stopped many undecided hearts, as well as parachuting in inhospitable areas. The Brigade, based on their courage, rigorous discipline and knowhow of the military arts, and who physically took away from the enemy a 20 mile deep beachhead by 30 miles wide. After capturing approximately about 300 war prisoners, that were courteously treated and fed before our own troops, the Brigade proceeded to stop the attack of the enemy and was able to push back the better equipped enemy forces, that were supplied and reinforced during three days with its nights of continuous fighting.. This enemy

army of about 60,000 troops (*Castro's troops were about 50 to 1 in their favor during D + 2 and D + 3*) were located within the battle areas that were continually under fire. They were constantly retained, repelled, and many times Castro's forces were completely destroyed by a much smaller unit, that were not 'Boy Scouts' (*These words are not directed to the Boy Scouts of America or the world, whom this writer admires*), and who's only advantage was that the terrain was in their favor. This military unit was in reality formed by an inspired and courageous small army, that were seasoned soldiers and professional classes of the previous regular Cuban Army, and others formed by new patriots that seriously learned the use of their assigned weapons, and who were highly motivated and eager to learn, in order to participate in the liberation of their fatherland. Among them there were others that had fought against the previous Cuban army within the Castro's forces in 1958, but who in 1959 and 1960 understood the sad direction that Castro was bringing the country, and decided to join forces with us, full of dignity and courage. This small army that represented all of Cuba and its history was commanded by professional Cuban soldiers, with many years of experience in training, organization, and combat. It was an army that fought during three days and nights, equipped with munitions and food for one day, against incredible odds, harassed by superior groups of men and weapons and abandoned by their highly superior allies.

2.- The Brigade's Air Force, more than being professional, wrote page after page of glory, on a blue sky with traces of red, when its experienced and brave pilots offered their lives in suicide missions; when they attempted to assist their brothers on the ground in a unequal fight against more and faster enemy planes. Chirino Piedra and all his fellow pilots, dead or alive, none of them stepped back, they are sculpted in our hearts, as well as the four American pilots that were shot down in the proximity of the Australia sugar mill and the other one, in the water, close to the Bay of Pigs. These American pilots volunteered to fight in order to relieve the exhausted Cuban pilots in their hour of need. It was an impossible task full of courage, determination and patriotism. Fidel Castro forces had four T-33 jet fighters, armed with 20 mm cannons. They also had some Sea Fury's, which were at the time the faster's airplanes using propellers, and a few B-26 bomber-fighters. The enemy's B-26's were better equipped than our own planes, since they had in their tail a Cal. 50 machine gun. Our B-26's did not have a tail gun, since they had to sacrifice the space due to the need for extra fuel, since they had to fly for more than 3.5 hrs. from Nicaragua to Cuba and vice-versa. Their air time in the area of combat was of less than 30 minutes. Nevertheless, the valiant pilots fought on the understanding that they could not be less than their compatriots on the ground, even though; they were there either to win, or to die in the effort. As to the Castro airplane fighters, they had their air bases, gasoline and armament supplies within a few minutes of flying time from the battlefield and counted with more rested pilots to take over from them and continue to harass our small units in the air, sea or land 24 hours per day.

3. - Our Tank Company was composed of five M-41 (Bulldog Walker) tanks that were already considered a relic and declared obsolete by the U.S. Army, since they were built at the end of World War II and saw action during the Korean conflict against the better equipped T-34 Russian tanks. They were built in such large quantities that they would have surprised Patton, Montgomery and Rommel, and if these well versed and knowledgeable heavy armor Generals, would have known of the extraordinary deeds performed by the Brigade aces on the 17<sup>th</sup> thru the 19<sup>th</sup> of April, 1961, they would have given them a medal. Unfortunately, in their article, Silva and Long quoted some “*knowledgeable*” Military Instructor, who had the nerve to called them “*Boy Scouts*”. Names such as Elio Alemán, Torres Mena, Torres Jiménez, Gonzálo Carmenate, Jorge (*Huevito*) Alvarez, and others that sadly escape my memory, wrote the impossible in the history of the heavy armored side of the military conflict.

4. - The Heavy Weapons Battalion commanded by Captain Roberto Pérez San Román (*brother of the writer*), exerted more damage to the enemy troops with their 4.2 mortars, the 75 mm recoilless rifles and their 50 mm caliber machine guns, that impeded the concentration of movement of the enemy troops, thus avoiding the damage that they could have bestowed to our troops. The sophisticated Russian artillery of their Commander, Ramón (*Gallego*) Fernández, that with all his superiority in number of troops, number of pieces of equipment, a stronger fire capability, the superior caliber of his cannons and a considerable better logistical support. It was not due to the inexperience of the Artillery Commander (*Gallego*) Fernández, whose knowledge and ability in artillery matters were well known and respected by the military professionals who knew the subject matter.

5. - In the morning of April 17, Captain Roberto San Román disembarked his Battalion. I had ordered that change to the original plan that had assigned that unit, together with the Tank Company to disembark the night before, with the rest of the Brigade. This change to the original plan was requested due to the treacherous reefs in the proximity of the beaches, instead of risking the loss of the heavy weapons and armored vehicles of those important units. Thus, Roberto disembarked his unit at the new ordered time; unfortunately under aerial fire from two enemy Sea Furies as well as various B-26's. On the ensuing battle one B-26 was shot down from the fire of the disembarking launches of that unit. All of the above was realized under complete control and excellent discipline of the soldiers, which indicates that the valorous men were well trained and led by a professional Officer who knew what he was doing.

6.- Additionally, this Battalion Commander, without relinquishing his other functions as Artillery Officer, personally conducted innumerable infantry rescue missions, traveling on top of one of the tanks or a truck with some of his men, under the noses of the enemy carrying a 3.5 bazooka launcher.

Roberto and his valiant 2<sup>nd</sup> in command, Enrique (*Harry*) Ruíz Williams, with their ignition flame and unyielding decisions, were the ones that later on assisted and encouraged the Cuban Families Committee for the Liberation of the Bay of Pigs Prisoners of War, Inc. to go forth in their work with the difficult negotiations for the liberation of the rest of the P.O.W.'s. Both, Roberto and Harry at this writing, still carry the shrapnel wounds received in combat.

7. - History never rests when it needs to write the truth. That is the way it appears in our records of how the admirable Paratrooper Battalion, under the command of Captain Alejandro del Valle accomplished their practically suicidal mission of taking and hold the enemy access roads, on the north side of the Zapata marshes. The Brigade paratroopers jumped at sunrise from their C-46 airplanes without a fighter cover and under enemy fire from Castro's fighters, as well as from the ground. Once on land, they were reinforced by our Heavy Weapons units with caliber 50 machine guns and 75mm recoilless rifles. The Heavy Weapons Battalion and the advance paratrooper units held their positions, including the attack of marabunta and/or crazy ants that made it more difficult to hold our front positions. With the exception of Lieutenant Tomás Cruz, whose jumping zone was missed due to a navigation error of the pilots of the C-46's and his equipment and ammunition were lost due to falling in the marshes of the surrounding swamps. Many of the men commanded by Tomás Cruz also fell behind enemy lines that clearly indicated the navigation failure, since their mission was not to vertically surround the enemy. Even though this was a navigator's error, I understand that mistakes do happen in all the battles; thus obligated the combatants under the command of Oliva and Hugo Sueiro in Playa Larga to work and fight harder in order to maintain their positions; but even that; it was not the cause of the end result later.

The harshest combats were held in Covadonga and Guayaramas, were dozens of men of the Paratrooper Battalions held their positions against thousands of men. This valiant north front occupying San Blas, Covadonga and Guayaramas was the last one to leave the positions that they held since the morning of the 17<sup>th</sup>. They simply ran out of ammunition.

The name of Alejandro Del Valle heads the list of the fallen heroes, in which all of them offered their lives in exchange of the glory of pursuing an ideal.

8. In the meantime, Captain Bacallao, calm and conscientious, supported the three combat fronts with his valiant "Bon Blin" (*Armored Battalion*). The reserved 6<sup>th</sup> Paratroopers Battalion, commanded by Captain Montiel, jumped gladly and highly motivated, in order to reinforce Del Valle in San Blas on D + 2. These paratroopers did that knowing by all, that failure was imminent. The same thing happened with the 3<sup>rd</sup>. Battalion, commanded by Captain Montero Díaz (*el liviano*), in a good number of skirmishes that his unit had to carry out.



The capture of the Girón beachhead on April 17, 1961, a "fait accompli" by the so called "Boy Scouts", was in the history of warfare the first amphibian operation held at night that was planned by the Americans and executed by Cubans. It was a rotund EXIT. Unfortunately, this EXIT was converted into a FAILURE, due to POLITICS and BETRAYAL.

10. Returning to our interview with the U.S. President and the First Lady at their house in Palm Beach (*Dec. 27, 1962*), I clearly remember the President praising the Brigade with words that appeared sincere, indicating that he knew all about their fighting against insurmountable and unexpected obstacles. A couple of days later the First Lady, Mrs. Jacqueline Kennedy, speaking in Spanish to more than 40,000 Cubans, and welcoming the former Brigade P.O.W.'s at the Orange Bowl in Miami, said that she asked in her prayers that her son John (*then a small child*), could grow to be as valiant as the men of the 2506 Brigade: "*a group of the more courageous men in the world*".

11. A few days later, the Attorney General of the U.S., Robert F. Kennedy and I often talked about the past and the future, while horseback riding in the beautiful pastures near his home at McLean, Virginia, when for about three months (March/June 1963) my family and I lived as his guests, at a house a few blocks away from the Kennedy's home. At the end of every week Bob Kennedy arrived at my house riding a horse, and holding another one by the bridle for me. In one of our many long conversations, in which he always showed me great admiration, he told me: "*Castro's forces suffered more men dead than the total of Brigade soldiers that disembarked at Girón, and that according to the U.S. intelligence sources, the communist troops suffered approximately 1,800 dead and from 3,000 to 4,000 wounded*".

Since then, my thoughts are a mixture of endless pride and a sad sentiment of culpability. Endless pride as a professional military man, since I was the commander the biggest amphibian operation in the Western hemisphere, the first one accomplished at night in the war history of the world. Prouder even by having the honor of being the commander of a renowned group of officers and soldiers, of a more than exceptional unit, a military unit of such devotion to duty that I never heard before or afterwards, during my long military career in Cuba and in the United States.

The number of enemy losses per capita does not have historical antecedents. The behavior of the soldiers of the Brigade was exemplary, from Nicaragua to the Orange Bowl. Exemplary during disembarkation, during the harsh combat, during the allied treacherous actions, our behavior while in prison, . Exemplary due to the dignity and honorability of all its members during the farce of the summary trial (*March 29/30 and April 1, 1962*) at the Principe Castle, were the propaganda "show" that Castro had prepared and that turned against him , and had to run and take out the T.V. cameras from the central patio (*La Estrella*) were the trial was being held, due to the exemplary military manner in which the war prisoners conducted

themselves and towards each other. I should also mention as well, the exemplary behavior of those that managed to escape after we ran out of ammunition and the battle was over. Not a single member of the Brigade ran away during the three days that the combat lasted. After I ordered the troops to retire and to seek a way out, a few managed to escape at great risk in the treacherous swamp marshes. Those soldiers that arrived at my command post, after their units had been overrun or destroyed, found out that no longer was a Brigade commander to give them orders, since my chieftaincy and I, trusting that my instructions had been received, had left with Dr. Artime and the General Staff, or whatever was left of it, towards the marshes of the Zapata swamps, in order to wait for the arrival of the promised allied assistance that never came. But this group that escaped during the prevailing chaos, did not run away in desperate egoism. Only those brigade soldiers that could do it, were assisting the wounded, and the ones that could not swim, were holding the abandoned fishing boats, for those that did not know how to climb into it. Once drifting in the ocean, if one of them caught a fish, it would be shared with the others, and those that were thirsty will wait until the infirm drank first. The two Battalion commanding officers that were able to escape with these men imparted instructions in the fishing boat (Celia) and maintained discipline. Still, the dehydrated, underfed and dying soldiers had to abide by it, and due to the exemplary example that these officers were able to impart; they were an example of personality, military preparation, dedication and courage to their men. Out of 22 escaping soldiers, drifting in the ocean for about 15 days, only 10 managed to stay alive, when they were finally rescued in the Gulf of Mexico, near New Orleans, Louisiana. Afterwards, once in a U.S. hospital, and after a couple of intravenous serum inoculations, and a few days of medical treatment and rest, you could still hear the Cuban National Anthem being sung out of their emancipated bodies. A few weeks later, these men were ready to participate once more, riding in clandestine ships infiltrating into Cuba, or talking to the T.V. cameras and press or debriefing interviews with members of the U.S. Government, or assisting the future members of the Cuban Families Committee, in order to assist them in their quest to find a way to help their comrades that were now prisoners of war, and at the same time, finding ways to continue to fight for the liberation of their country from Castro and communism.

This is why I'm so proud: To be the commanding officer of these courageous men, and still, 18 years later, to continue to receive their courteous signs of respect. This pride, together with its sad moments is already part of the history of Cuba, and hopefully, one of these days their feats or exploits shall be written and included in the History of the United States; only, this time explaining how it really happened, and when an honest U.S. Government takes over, as the high quality of its well deserved citizens are entitled to. That history will be written when the press is willing to write editorial notes demanding that the truth be told and heard, and/or when erroneous articles written by the Miami Herald, such as the April 15<sup>th</sup> one, that I respond to today, or the one from Guy Gugliotta: "*The extraordinary Alumni*" date April 17<sup>th</sup> of this year, and published by the same newspaper, whose article does not even deserve a reply.

Going back to what I was saying before, and mixed with my sentiments and pride, still ride others of sadness and guilt. Of sadness toward my men for bringing 1,400 patriots to Playa Girón, without demanding first guarantees to the promised commitments from our ally. Sadness towards the nine brigade soldiers that still remain in prison, for at least not trying to mutineer the Brigade P.O.W.'s while in prison and demand from Castro the freedom of all, with the alternative of none of us, if they were not released. Of blame towards my fatherland due to the sanguinary slaughter of approximately 1,800 enemy soldiers and the Bay of Pigs epic at Playa Girón, that could have, with our triumph, saved Cuba, and that unfortunate converted itself into an epic defeat, when our country sank deeper in to the communist abyss, as a result of four different effects.

- a) For Fidel Castro: The triumph at Playa Girón made him surer of himself, turning him into a more aggressive person and disrespectful of exterior threats.
- b) For the Cubans in Cuba: Assisting Fidel Castro due to ideals or because there were no alternatives; since the United States had been defeated and no longer were omnipotent. Thus, perhaps it was better for them to remain with Castro, since he showed everyone more determination. Playa Girón transformed itself for Castro into a symbol of a baptism of fire.
- c) For the Cubans who opposed Castro inside the island, for the members of the brigade, and for the exiled Cubans, their faith in the U.S. Government and its closed door policies, that was a loss.
- d) For Latin-America and the rest of the world: Castro's figure grew in gigantic proportions, as a strong and determined leader, while the U.S. was constantly losing prestige.

Let's change the subject and for a moment study the "*calendar of preterit events*" concocted by the Investigating Committee, which obviously shows mistakes that do not look genuine:

- 1) "July 1960 a selected group of exiled Cuban (*I was among them*) started military training in Guatemala" MISTAKES:
  - a) Was in June 1960, not July.
  - b) Did not start in Guatemala, but in Useppa Island, in front of the shores of Fort Myers. From Useppa Island we went to Fort Gullick in Panamá. From there we went to Guatemala, where we were reunited with the communications officers of the Brigade that had been left behind at Useppa Island when we left for Fort Gullick,

- 2) On "June, 1960 the C.I.A. changes the concept of guerilla warfare to a conventional, frontal warfare. The Cuban Air Force is established and equipped with B-26 airplanes." SEVERAL MISTAKES:
- a) The guerrilla concept to conventional warfare was not changed until the end of November of 1960, after the Presidential elections that elected Kennedy as the new U.S. President. As to when the C.I.A., on their own authority could change the military plans of such drastic international and political repercussions; it is something difficult to assimilate. It is also difficult to believe that the C.I.A., without orders from competent authorities could impart theirs to the Army, Navy and Special Forces of the United States in order than these military groups commanded the first class professional advisors that arrived at TRAX Base in Guatemala the last days of November, 1960. Someone, very high in authority, above the C.I.A. was imparting those orders. Contrary to what the "*calendar*" of the Investigating Committee said, we were training in guerrilla tactics from June thru November of 1960. The change of the training to that of conventional warfare started after the results of the 1960 election of President Kennedy was known. .
  - b) The B-26 Air Force of the Brigade did not commence until August of that year and the intention was to be using them as support for the guerrillas about to be formed.
- 3) "*November 18, 1960. Kennedy, the new U.S. President elected learned about the Cuban plans upon a telephone call to his house on Palm Beach from Allen Dulles, Director of the C.I.A.*" ...? ... Odd, since according to the Miami Herald's article, Castro already knew them. Way before.
- 4) "*April 15, 1961: Attacks from the air against the Cuban Air Force bases are done according to previously approved plans. Considerable damage upon their debriefing are reported by the pilots.*" ERRORS: The first one is not true, and the second one reflects little knowledge of military strategy.
- a) Only one sortie took place out of the three air attacks that the original plans called for. The State Department and the weak determination of the President of the U.S. took care of the rest. The two much needed and planned air strikes had been cancelled. .
  - b) It is true, as told by the Brigade's pilots in their debriefings after the air sorties, that the damage inflicted on the first air strike was extensive. Nevertheless, it is also true that there exists a Science or subject matter called "*Military Intelligence*", that studies, analyzes, interprets and process the information received; before accepting the same as "*definitive*". Later on, decisions are to be made, based on that military

intelligence. It is well known by the military professionals, which among the members of the Investigating Committee there were some of the above mentioned "military professionals", which were of high hierarchy and had a lot of schooling. While this Committee wrote their report hiding blame, they very well knew that the U-2 photographs taken immediately after the first "*authorized*" aerial attack, that even though the damage was extensive, still remained untouched a sufficient number of Castro's fighters, thus allowing his Air Force to maintain air superiority..

Nevertheless, the Investigating Committee was not seeking the truth, but excuses, and conveniently preferred to ignore that solid and undeniable evidence, in favor of the information that had not been processed. Their intention was to make appear that the C.I.A. and the Brigade were disorganized and less than efficient, thus followed through with summons to other witnesses. First, a "Cuban Officer" with a last name of Betancourt, and a "frog man" named Royorosa are summoned, and one and the other one made the following declarations on the record: 1) "*We only had a working boat to disembark the troops that worked*" (an outboard motor boat). 2) "*The boat operators did not know how to operate the same, or simply put, they simply did not know how to do it.*" 3) "*There was a lot of confusion*". 4) "*There was no Officer in charge of disembarkation*". 5) "*It was terrible*".

We cannot deny that we had some problems with some of the boats. It is also normal that there will exist some confusion in the first amphibian operation done at night in the history of warfare, among soldiers that had never practiced it before and that had to climb down from their swaying ships using ropes and loaded with equipment, to an aluminum boat, also swaying in the ocean, in absolute darkness and under enemy fire. Nevertheless, if what the so-called witnesses said was a true picture of what was happened in our exit from the mother ships, how can the Investigating Committee, their witnesses and the Miami Herald, that had the nerve to publish it explain how the disembarkation of 1,242 men, tanks, trucks, jeeps, heavy mortars, cannons and machine guns, etc.;

Another demoralizing quote in order to substantiate the reasons for the failure found out by the Investigating Committee was: "*The Fifth Battalion, a unit that had very little military training was having problems to disembark. The commander of that unit had been accused of not having reasons to hurry up*". This carrier officer so amply faulted founded by groups that according to their convenience whitewashes or darkens with mud, never had the opportunity to defend himself of those vile attacks. He is one of the nine members of the Brigade that were not liberated during the exchange of P.O.W's for food, medicine, surgical equipment, etc. For the last 18 years he is being held in a prison in Cuba. He is still there. Among the many versions, there is one that has never been published, that very well fits his personality and character. This version claims that he personally was fighting against Castro's fighter planes behind a caliber 50

machine gun, in his practically sunk ship "*Houston*". I believe that a man deserves the right to be present when in a court of law and to face those that accuses him. Those that accused him now, are doing showing very little gentlemanliness. As to the above mentioned unsubstantiated occurrence were one of the reasons for the failure of the Brigade,; the absence of one battalion of 150 men from the defense lines, as I said before, that did not impeded the Brigade to fulfilled its mission.

*"Castro's military forces were finally able to defeat the invaders. They did not convert themselves into guerrilla units". "That is right".* General William Lemnitzer claims that he said it to President Kennedy on April 19, (D + 3) *"this is the moment for this unit to convert itself into a guerrilla unit..."* and he exclaimed afterwards: when he was surprised by Richard Bissel (C.I.A.) said to him: *"The Brigade was never trained a guerrilla unit"*.

This so well known plan contingent on being formed as a guerrilla, and so high up in the estimation of the defenders of President Kennedy, and those that blame the C.I.A., they encountered themselves with an empty argument. This empty subject matter is intended to be used as a political apology in the book "*The Bay of Pigs*" written by Haynes Johnson., and published in 1964. This book, in which I appear, together with Artime and Oliva as co-authors (*as a result of another political maneuver of the Kennedy Administration*) emphatics' to the utmost the gravity of the supposed C.I.A. error, when they did not informed me of the supposed guerrilla contingency plans. No professional military commander needed to be guided to those extremes. Accordingly to the ensuing situation, the commander makes his decisions. The Assault Brigade 2506 was still under the command of a professional military man. Besides, I knew the terrain; not only thru maps, but because I lived there, thou not very big, it was my own country, of which I had been a soldier for many years. The decision that I took of holding our positions, of conventional warfare, besides the difficult situations that we encountered ourselves, was not taken under the assumption that I had or not other instructions. The Brigade did not need those instructions. Nor they didn't have another decision to make or additional training to come up with one. What the Brigade needed was not received. That is the loyalty of their ally. I kept the Brigade in the fighting thru conventional means for two simple reasons:

The number one reason was my faith in the Government of the United States and their Armed Forces. It never went thru my mind that we had been abandoned with my small unit (*small in number of men only*) and much needed military supplies that Uncle Sam was supposed to deliver. My thoughts were that something went wrong and the government machinery had come to a halt and got stuck. That the above mentioned government machinery was not doing its part, that was evident, but eventually (I thought) the issue will be resolved. The assistance re-established and the Cuban Government in exile shall be brought immediately, as planned, to the beachhead... During the overall part of the three days of combat (24 hours on April 17<sup>th</sup>, 24 hours on Aril 18<sup>th</sup>, and 17 hours on April 19<sup>th</sup>), I was in constant communication with the War Room of

the United States Advisory Group through Graynston Lynch, who re-transmitted from the Boxer Aircraft Carrier, of the American Navy, that was nearby. These radio messages never told me that since April 15, two days before disembarking the concerns about how to deny the American participation in the armed conflict. It was obvious, without being informed, that these concerns had been more important than the previous plans themselves, as the Russian menace and the violent arguments between the Cuban secretary of State at the U.N. and the U.S. Delegate, Adlai Stevenson. We did not know what was happening and never received a communication telling us that we were on our own; that in reality it was what happened; even though, we were never told. We were constantly led to believe that assistance from the United States was on the way. All we had to do was to hold and not allow the enemy to advance. Obviously somebody was not telling Graynston Lynch the truth, and he was in, between the White House on one side and the Brigade in the other side. To change the purpose or direction of our mission on a 90 degree angle and run towards the mountains close to the city of Trinidad, 90 kilometers away, was neither feasible, nor necessary. Uncle Sam was on his way. All we had to do was to hold the enemy advance, and at the same time try to save our munitions and wait for Uncle's Sam machinery to turn itself loose. My faith in the U.S. as such, that even though after three days (*ought ay five*) of listening to lies and half truths, I ordered my Battalion commanders to disengage from the combat and retire by Company units to the swamp, and to avoid contact with the enemy" *until Uncle Sam arrives"*,

My second consideration of not running towards the mountains to establish a guerrilla unit was tactical. For the last three days Fidel Castro was pushing towards an attack to the left, in front of the beachhead, (to the *West was Playa Larga, North was Covadonga, and to the Northeast was Yaguaramas*). While defending my right flank (to the *Este*) at the beginning I had a Battalion, but later on, as the situation in the West and North required additional troops, I left that sector under the protection of a small security force. The western approach of the road from Playa Larga to Cienfuegos was never under enemy attack. For the badly informed strategist in Washington, the Cienfuegos road looked as a clean approach to the Trinidad mountains. For me, the soldier in the combat area, responsible for the lives of our soldiers, even though the road looked so clean, that it smelled as a trap. Why Fidel Castro was so fast in bringing to the conflict approximately 60,000 men and posted them in the worst approaches towards the combat zones did not bother to organize a western front that would have destroyed the Brigade; it was a childish equation. The only obvious military reason spelled out Castro's intentions that were to entice us into an ambush, and considering that alternative afterwards, would have converted itself into gigantic clamp, were the terrain would be against us.

My second in command, Erneido Oliva, was not much aware of the enemy actions in the other fronts, due to the abnormal situation that required his constant presence in the occidental front. The same occurred with Roberto Pérez San Román and Alejandro Del Valle, in charge of the north front. That same abnormal situation demanded my constant presence at the

communications center. The above left me very little time to exchange concerns or to listen to suggestions of the three commanders, which carried on their shoulders and in their own fronts the extraordinary weight of the battle. When finally we all found the time to get together, against the exogenous "tic tact" of our watches, Oliva proposed a move towards the mountains, When I explained to him the reasons 1 and 2 that I just mentioned above, in order to hold on to our positions, he understood that my reasons had some weight to it and that my decision was the only option left to us.

Two weeks later, while sitting in the floor of my cell, Fidel Castro visited me and within the conversation that ensued, discussed this tactical point with me. Smiling when he heard this, he told me that my decision was the only correct and appropriate one and using a very Cuban expression, exclaimed "*I was waiting for you with all the irons*" (*Te esperaba con todos los hierros*)

Castro's plan of preparing an ambush on the road to the mountains was not the only consideration that he had. The same way that I had serious concerns in going in that direction, he also was afraid to bottle up his armies at the beachhead, where maneuverability of large troops would be limited due to the terrain, and where he erroneously thought that the Brigade was only a decoy to what was coming afterwards; the terrible American attack that Castro mistakenly assumed as being the principal component of the plan. In a certain way, Castro accredited the U.S. Government the same honorable behavior and loyalty that existed among the soldiers of the Brigade towards them. It also did not occurred to him to imagine that the U.S. had abandoned the soldiers that were recruited, trained, equipped, fed and brought to that point in the history of the stronger world leader.

To summarize, it is my opinion that this operation, based on some facts and deductions, that the U.S. Government under pressure from Russia and some left wing or liberals in Washington, not knowing what to do with us Cubans, when ahead with the disembarkation at Girón, in order to get rid of the military trained Brigade, and at the same time of the U.S. political responsibility. That on April 15<sup>th</sup>, two days before the debarkation at Girón, the intention to assist us, was no longer there. That at the time, this fiasco and abandonment was the cheapest act of international politics perpetrated by any of the past U.S. Governments. That Castro erroneously assumed a strong determination by the White House and kept us on our feet during three days. If Castro would have known what was really happening in Washington, with the voluntary assistance of Dean Rusk, and Chester Bowles; his armies could have gotten rid of us in about 48 hours at the most. Why: Let's be frank: We were good, but not supermen, and the enemy advantage in numbers and the assistance of their rear guard, logistic, transportation and air advantage, etc., etc., were incalculable; what was supposed to be the normal thing should have been that we would not have lasted that long; as we did. It did happen that way because on



my mind and in the mind of my men and in Fidel Castro mind, we all had only one thought: "Uncle Sam is going to finish what he started."

It would be unjust when considering the caliber of my men and mine if I gave you the impression of what I wrote in the last paragraph above, that we expected the Americans to take our place and liberate our country for us. We did not want that others foreigners (not even our respected American brothers) disembarked in Cuban soil. What we did expect is that they corrected their mistakes of political origin, which had been the result in air supremacy in favor of the enemy. We expected as duty is to honor, that our allies would have done the following:

- A) Not allowing Castro's air force sufficient airpower to keep us pinned down in one place.
- B) Destroying Castro's air superiority using the U.S. air power, since ours was not to be, due to the unexpected change of plans.
- C) Re-establishing our often interrupted lines of logistical support, with a demonstration of the power of the U.S. Armed Forces.

Due to the unexpected turn around of events produced thanks to the serious mistakes made by the White House; that was the only feasible solution in order to salvage the situation. We erroneously expected that they would comply.

William Henry Chamberlains said: "In the practice of international politics there are two mistakes worse than committing a crime: One is to threaten the use of force without been prepare to use it. The other one is to start using that force and as a result of external pressures severing contact before reaching the objective."

I cannot finish writing without referring to Chapter 4 of "THE BAY OF PIGS" book written by Haynes Johnson. The writer mentions in this chapter the terrible "if's" (*if that or the other would have happened*) to the defeated orphans: "*(If Nino Díaz had landed and fought his diversionary action in Oriente)*"; "*(if the landing area (at Bay of Pigs/Girón) would have been properly explored and charted in advance)*", "*(if military landing craft had been used instead of boats with outdoor motors)*", "*(if the Brigade would have had the appropriate equipment to disembark)*", "*(if the second bombing raid on Monday had not been cancelled)*" "*(if the Brigade had been trained to take alternative action as guerrillas)*"; if...if...if...to no end and empty words. Haynes Johnson would have save a lot of time and paper I he had only used one important and capital IF, and he plain forgot: IF THE PRESIDENT WOULD HAVE DONE HIS JOB... (*SI EL PRESIDENTE HUBIERA CUMPLIDO CON MSU DEBER*).

JOSE PEREZ SAN ROMAN  
Commander in Chief of Assault Brigade 2506  
and Cuban Military Commander of the Invasion at the Bay of Pigs.

**ARTICLE PUBLISHED IN THE MIAMI HERALD ON APRIL 15, 1979**

SECRETS REVEALED ABOUT THE BAY OF PIGS

Kennedy saw in Girón an instructive experience.

Searching for a coup d'état for an uprising.

By: Helga Silva and William R. Long, writers for the Miami Herald.

Convinced that it was a just cause and resolved to attain a victory; the young President was carefully listening to the war dispatches. from his office at the White House in that spring morning.

The President believed that the United States was secretly hitting vitally hard in favor of liberty, at a swamp someplace in the Caribbean. The secret name given to that military campaign started 18 years before was Operation Zapata.

But the fragmented military reports did not revealed to John F. Kennedy until it was too late, that the invasion at the Bay of Pigs in Cuba was dying at the beaches.

What he did not know, (that was *left for the historians*) was that the invasion had been condemned to fail; even before the Cuban exiled Brigade 2506 was formed.

The conclusion extracted from this failure of the U.S. government was the resolution of being more effective in their future secret campaigns. For that reason they sought to take profit by the lessons learned in Cuba and in Vietnam.

*“I believe that we have to prepare some sort of a plan in such a way, that we can measure before hand what’s going to happen; before arriving at the sad conclusion that we are going to be demolished”.* Those were the conclusions derived by Robert F. Kennedy, then the U.S. Secretary of Justice.

For about 18 years this Kennedy phrase and all the other discussions held by a group of experts placed together on instructions by them President John F. Kennedy, in order to analyze the Bay of Pigs case; which was considered an estate secret. This 358 pages report prepared by the Investigating Committee regarding the now known 21 meetings, were previously held at the archives of the Central Intelligence Agency (C.I.A.), with the qualification of: **“Ultra Secret”**.

Once removed the confidential or Ultra classification, copies of those declarations and conclusion of the above mentioned group of experts were obtained by the Miami Herald, under the law of Freedom of Information Act. These documents became like a chronic of how at that time the U.S. government officials and functionaries considered that this country was the principal defense of the world against the advance of communism.

It was a window were one could contemplate the manner in which deliberations were conducted during the cold war at the time of the Kennedy’s administration. These deliberations were a precursor of the mentality that conducted the U.S. participation later in the Indochina war.

Even though President Kennedy did not participate in those meetings, his shadow was always over the conference table.

Only three months before assuming his Presidency, Kennedy was seriously criticized for starting a secret mission, which had previously considered by the Eisenhower government.

Upset by the Bay of Pigs failure, Kennedy requested to the newly created group to come up with ideas on how to stop similar chaos from occurring again.

The President ordered the Bay of Pigs investigation on April 22, 1961, just five days after the invasion started and two days after Fidel Castro gave the "coup de grace".

The group (Investigating Committee) was headed by General Maxwell Taylor, Military Adviser of the President, and the investigation ended in less than a month. These documents evidenced that president Kennedy as well as Gen. Taylor, considered the Bay of pigs fiasco as an instructive experience.

As General Taylor indicated in a letter that accompanied the just released "Ultra Secret" document; the President requested from the group: "*to study the governmental functions and the programs in the activity sectors within the military and para-military activities, guerrillas and anti-guerrilla activities, in such a way as to avoid a declared war conflict, and to improve the work to be done concerning these aspect*".

*"We are of the opinion that the preparation and executions of the para-military operations such as Zapata are a variance of the cold war that the country must be ready to commence"* said one of the final conclusions of the report.

In the Committee, together with Gen. Maxwell Taylor and Atty. Gen., Robert F. Kennedy, there were men that are indelible sculpted in the history of the time: Allen Dulles and Richard Bissell of the C.I.A. and Admiral Arleigh A. Burke, Chief of Naval Operations.

Also assisted the Investigating Committee a group of Pentagon functionaries and the C.I.A. that were interviewed, besides dozens of other individuals; from the Secretary of State, Dean Rusk, Defense Secretary, Robert McNamara, as well as C.I.A. agents, exiled Cubans and combatants that were able to escape the encirclement and finally rescued in different forms.

The investigation was like the autopsy of a failure, an examination of the one after the other mistakes and entangled errors and judgment failures. The blame was divided among the planners of the invasion at the C.I.A., the Cuban exiles that took part in it, the Pentagon Chiefs that gave the final O.K, the functionaries of the State Department that supervised the plan and the U.S. President that assumed the final responsibility.

Nor in the minutes of the Investigating Committee, nor in the conclusions of these meetings anything was said about the moral reasons pertaining to the U.S. participation in deeds such as the Bay of Pigs, but they did emphasize on how to do it better in the future.

The political wars in the Southeast weighted heavily on the minds of the participants at the Bay of Pigs requiem. The minutes of those meetings in 1961 and the final recommendations were splashed with references of the sharpness of the Indochina conflict.

General of the Army, Lyman L. Lemnitzer, and Ex-Joint Chief of Staff was the object of the following question in one of the meetings: *"How can you put together a military operation within the governmental machinery?"* *"I believe we should prepare a national plan for any of these situations, like the one we have in Laos"*, answered Gen. Lemnitzer, and continued: *"We have now a guy whose name is Vietnam. We instruct our staff to coordinate the activities within the Department (Defense) and we ought to make it more effective than before."*

A Colonel gave the Committee a report about the Special Forces of the U.S. Army and their *"non-current Military techniques"*. *"Suppose that we will like to place now in war footage non-conventional military units"*. The Committee asked the Colonel.

*"It would not be difficult"*, responded the Colonel, *"for the last six years we are training people in Southeast Asia, including Vietnam."*

Those that were inclined to a hard line were the military men, many of them defended a more active participation of the U.S. in Vietnam and other countries threaten by communism.

*The American people do not consider that they are at war at this time; therefore, they are not willing to make the necessary sacrifices to start a war.* "Declared General Walter Bedell Smith, and continued: *"When we are at war, cold war if you like, we have to count with an amoral agency, which can operate in secret and is not obligated to have press conferences."*

The planners of the Bay of Pigs invasion at the C.I.A. did not called for press conferences, but the news of the plot filtered profusely, before the debarkation. That was one of the first things that went bad.

In the minutes of the meeting sustained by the group on the 24<sup>th</sup> of April, 1961, A C.I.A. functionary whose name was erased from the documents (cleaned-up by the censors), complained of the anticipated publicity given to the plans. *"The Cubans cannot keep their mouths shut and very soon we saw each other with our hands together, as in a Roman circus; filtrations to the press, etc. etc., as much in Miami, as in New York"*, declared the witness.

It was considered that the unwelcomed publicity threatened not only the military success, but the possibility of *'denying in a plausible way'*, the American participation in the enterprise.

Either way, the problem of the plausible denying of the enterprise when confronted with the experience at the bay of Pigs did not stop the Committee's recommendation of a new special frame within the government, in order to supervise future operations (*under-cover*).

The '*first recommendation*' of the studying committee was to create a group of Strategic Resources with a permanent character and integrated by members of the State and Defense Departments, "*to a level of Sub-Secretary and of the C.I.A.*".

The group would provide direct information to the President, "will coordinate and guide the cold war strategy and maintains a 'Cold War *Indicator Center*', were all the useful data and were they will constantly revise the Cold War situation. It will also commence the revision of important concealed-operations, either in process, or in the future.

*"We are of the opinion that we are actually loosing in many fronts and that this tendency can only be change thru a decided and coordinated efforts of everyone, by all the executive departments and all the government agencies under its direction."* Wrote Gen. Taylor.

The recommendations of Gen. Taylor's Committee were theory and at the same time premonitory ones. The punctilious minutes of the meetings demonstrate in detail how difficult was to bring the theories to reality in an effective manner.

*"The first phase of the operation was going to be at the east of Guantanamo and a Brigade group of approximately 160 men were going to participate. The same was planned for the night of April 14<sup>th</sup>, to the 15th. The debarkation did not occurred, due probably to a weakness of the Commander in Chief responsible for the operation "*. (Memorandum No. 1 of General Maxwell Taylor Committee).

The American and exiled Cuban offices and departments blamed each other for the failure. It was at the end that the Executive (Pres. Kennedy) accepted total responsibility. About a decade later the same anguish repeated itself with a national scandal of world repercussions towards our involvement in Vietnam.

In 1961, Robert McNamara, U.S. Secretary of Defense declared: "*It was not a C.I.A. debacle; it was a debacle of our Government.*"

On the contrary, the Special Advisor to the President, McGeorge Bundy underlined in a letter to the Committee: "*I'm not in agreement with any judgment that this operation was managed or directed by the White House.*" Bundy sustained that: "*the "military planners, to whom the previous government had given them instructions, turned out to be defenders, instead of impartial analysts of the problem "*

The declarations made by the military emphasized that the absence of the previously planned air strikes before the invasion, had been the principal reason for the failure of the operation.

The State Department objected particularly at the tactics of the launching of the air operation, "*unless these airplanes had their bases, real or make believe in Cuban soil*", according to the conclusions of the Committee.

An American advisor, whose name was censured in the documents, attributed many of the blame to the C.I.A. agents that managed the operation. "*I believe that the men that worked in this operation went into a world of their own. I do not believe that the failure was due for the failure of a detail*".

Even though the failure at the Bay of Pigs was a humiliating one, they did not consider the same as a definitive one. "*There exists a general opinion that we cannot live for a long period of time with Castro as our neighbor*", said the Recommendation No. 6 of the Taylor Committee, and continued: "*There are only two ways to look at this threat: Or we have the hope that time and internal discontent eventually will put a stop to it, or we take active measures to force its elimination.*"

"*At the light of all the now known factors, an evaluation of the Cuban situation is recommended in a definitive manner, that is, looking towards new political, economic, propaganda and military measures to be taken against Castro*".

After the invasion, the C.I.A. organized "*a silent war*" against Castro. The coastal attacks patronized by the C.I.A. and the infiltrations conceived and financed by the supposedly exiled groups continued until 1969, without any noteworthy success.

The same way that the United States entangled itself in infantry combats in Southeast Asia, as "*military advisors*", the officials of the U.S. Government insisted that the Bay of Pigs fiasco would have to be looked at by the world as an operation organized by the Cubans in exile.

But this stipulation had a double edge, since "*once the participation of the U.S. in the rules is limited*"; it would also limit the success of the Cuban expeditionary forces.

"Physically they were in good shape, but I would say that once in combat, it would be like facing our marines against boy scouts. I am of the opinion that the general possibilities of success were about 15 percent, and that from a logistic point of view, it is probable that the operation will fail. That I already affirmed during the initial evaluation by the Joint Chief of Staff.

The transport was completely inadequate. Trucks were assigned to individual commanders, instead of having them under a central command. They did not have the needed fuel in order to support their air force operations. The 50 gallon barrels of fuel weighed 400 pounds and they had to be moved by hand. The handlers did not have the means of making the necessary bridges. They did not have beacons; therefore, they could not be able to properly move the troops on the beach at night. Their distribution plans of provisioning themselves from the supply centers were practically none existing. Besides some hand tools, they did not have any maintenance equipment". Said an American training officer, not identified...

The same interests that characterized our Vietnam experience were found within the United States Government officials and were the standard at Bay of Pigs.

The concerns of the State Department in order to deny the U.S. participation brought about the cancellation of the essentially considered aerial attacks by the military experts the day before the debarkation took place.

The above concerns also provoked the cancellation of "Trinidad Operation" which was the proposed debarkation "*II War World style*", closer to the Escambray mountains, which had the initial support of the military planners.

A QUESTION" "*Did you tried to advise the President about the importance of the air strikes?*"

DEAN RUSK, SECRETARY OF STATE: "*I've did talk to him and assured the President that if there were no absolute priority considerations , the second air strikes should not take place . Since during that conversation Mr. Bissell and General Cabell refuse to discuss the issue with the President, therefore, I thought that there were no priority considerations to be mentioned to him. I've never thought that the air strikes at daybreak of the following day were important.*" (As per the minutes printed by the Investigating Committee on May the 4<sup>th</sup>, 1961' based on the declaration done by the Secretary of State, Dean Rusk).

When the military officers pointed out that they were done with the new plan: "Zapata Operation"; there was only sufficient time to proceed with it, with a very small revision.

The Brigade officers wanted more time, but unfortunately the C.I.A. told them that time was an essential factor. Therefore, I quote Intelligence reports showed to us, which indicated that Castro was about to receive Cuban combat pilots trained in Czechoslovakia and supersonic Mig 17 fighters made in Russia, and that they were at that time in route to Cuba.



MR. (Roberto) SAN ROMAN: *Why we did not have air support? "We were supposed to have it."*

ANSWER: *"Were you told that you will have naval air support?"*

MR. (Roberto) SAN ROMAN: *"No, but it was previously planned that our own fighter/bombers were to strike certain military targets before the actual landing, and that was not done, if without telling us they had cancelled the much needed air sorties; I do not understand why the Americans did not suspend the operation;. It was obvious, that without air support, it was for sure that we were to die, attempting the impossible".* (Extracted from the minutes written by the Investigating Committee, regarding the declarations made by Captain Roberto Pérez San Román, who commanded the Brigade Heavy Weapons Battalion)..

The army formed by approximately 1,400 Cuban exiles, was also a reason of some concern. The bureaucrats of the Kennedy Government were concerned for their President, the same way they were concerned later for Presidents Johnson and Nixon; regarding the South Vietnam Army.

If the Americans did not utilized the Cuban Brigade soon, the same was going to transform itself into a political issue, warned the American advisors to their government in 1961.

"If we do not proceed with the invasion intent, we would have to bring it back to the United States, declared McNamara.

"It appeared that the general conclusion was that the above mentioned would happen, thus becoming the trained soldiers of the Brigade, a disposal problem"

And they also were of the opinion that: *"we will never have the opportunity to overthrow Castro, without the use of the Americans"*, added McNamara.

Thus, the invasion did continue according to plan, besides the very evident defects of the operation and its preparative's, that afterwards became obvious.

*"We had nine landing crafts (18 foot aluminum boats with outboard motors), and only two motors were functioning, and at the end, only one of the motors worked. The whole thing was a disaster."* Declaration of a Cuban officer identified as Mr. Betancourt.

As it occurred a few years later in the Asiatic Southeast, nothing came out according to plans.

While the disembarkation occurred, Castro's fighters were able to strike with machine guns and rockets fire to the ships and the men at the beachhead, the radios that were going to be used to coordinate the landing operations from the beachhead, were damaged when they got wet with salt water, and became useless.

The 5<sup>th</sup> Battalion, a unit with relative very little military training, took a long time to abandon the ship, "*Its commanding officer was not in a hurry*", said to the Committee an American advisor, whose name is still censored. An exiled frogman with a last name of Royorosa, gave another version.

QUESTION: *Are you of the opinion that the men assigned to the boats did not know how to handle the same?*

MR. ROYOROSA: *Yes, these men only two days of training and did not know how to operate them.*

QUESTION: "Who were supposed to unload the ships?"

MR. ROYOROSA: *Well, see here Sir, the messages were received, and the Captain of the ship did not speak Spanish, thus I had to translate the orders. Each time that he saw something that he did not understand, I had to explain it to him. There was a lot of confusion since we did not have a disembarkation officer assigned"* As per the minutes of the testimony given by a Cuban frogman.

As in Vietnam, there was no adequate coordination when it was needed the most.

Attacked from the air, two invading freighters in charge of the supplies, the Atlántico and the Caribe (aware of the danger) moved out of the bay (against orders) towards the high seas. The declarations given by the military and by the C.I.A. to Gen. Taylor Committee clearly indicated that the need of supplies and war material and equipment, contributed extensively to the disaster that ensued afterwards.

*"The merchant ships (freighters) ran out and abandoned us. They had the ammunition. All the ships had ammunition. The principal communications equipment was on board the Atlántico, and this freighter left us"*. American officer (not identified, assisted to coordinate the invasion).

As it happened afterwards in Vietnam, the intelligence reports frequently mentioned to the officers what they wanted to hear.

Dean Rusk, the Secretary of State, said that: *“The purpose of the invasion was not to indefinitely defend a beachhead, but to deal a blow to Castro’s forces, the kind of forceful blow that would help initiate a popular uprising.”*

*“We believe that a popular uprising was uppermost an essential part of the equation, in order to eliminate Castro from the scene”.* Said Rusk.

QUESTION: *“Would you send 1,200 American marines to do that work?”*

GENERAL SHOUP: *“No, I would not, unless the 1,200 marines were to receive the assistance of 30,000 Cubans.”*

PREGUNTA: Did someone say that there will be 30,000 Cubans?

GENERAL SHOUP: *“No, no one told me, but we were preparing the war materials for that kind of a group.”* (From the minutes done on May 8<sup>th</sup>, 1961, based on the declarations of General David M. Shoup, Commander of the U.S. Marines.

The Secretary of Defense, Robert McNamara said to the Investigating Committee that in the planning stages, the possibilities of an uprising were consider “probably in the order of 40 to 50 percent “. This brought them to believe that the completing of the operation was marginal. It did not occur to them that in police estate, uprisings could occur with sufficient speed in order to support the landings.

Even though, they still had to recognize that the possibilities of success were marginal. The Joint Chief of Staff *“wanted to try anyway”* Declared McNamara, adding that: *“if the uprising does not happen, the invading force would have converted itself into a guerrilla operation and would have gone to the Escambray Mountains for that purpose.”*

Castro knew since previous weeks that an invasion was eminent . On April 15, after the first bombings and strafing of the exiled Cuban pilots , the Castro government initiated a gathering and jailed dozen of thousands of disaffected and/or those that were suspected of being “counterrevolutionaries”, in order to stop what would have been obvious, a general uprising. Of course, that possibility never had a chance..

On April 19 Castro’s military forces defeated the invaders and eventually made 1,196 prisoners of war. The possibility of converting itself into a guerrilla unit, simply, never happens.

General Lyman Lemnitzer declared that he said to the President on April 19<sup>th</sup>, that: *“this is the right moment for the Brigade to convert itself into a guerrilla operation. And I received a surprise when told by Mr. Bissell that these men were never trained in guerrilla tactics.”*

PREGUNTA: *“Once we recognized that the situation was turning critical, did at any time was it mentioned the possibility of organizing a guerrilla unit?”*

SR. BETANCOURT: *“No that I knew of”.*

PREGUNTA: *“During the training; was it discussed at any time?”*

SR. BETANCOURT: *“No”.* (As it appears in the minutes)

Nothing or very little was plan, as to what would have been the reaction of the American people in the case of a failure.

The 19<sup>th</sup> of April, 1961 the White House ordered its Navy Destroyers *“to evacuate the escaping Brigade soldiers hiding on the beaches and swamp marshes to the limits of their capabilities”*, so the Investigating Committee minutes indicated. *“If the Castro forces shoot against our destroyers, they are authorized to return fire in order to protect themselves, while they are taking care of this humanitarian work.”* Nevertheless, the conclusions pointed out that the American Navy in the area, didn't count with amphibian vessels capable of handling an evacuation.

I do not believe that there was complete information (*as to what happened*) All the messages that indicated the critical stage of the situation were not shown to the President. But in general, they knew that there was very scarce ammunition. We were told the day of the debarkation that the ships that had run away from the beach, were over 15 miles away from the Bay of Pigs and that it was their intention to return to the beachhead to disembark the much needed military supplies.

That day the President said that he rather preferred to be called the aggressor, to a brute, and that he was ready to go as far as necessary to be sure of success, but were always about 5, 6, or 7 hours behind in our information.

*“The following morning of the debarkation (D + 2) we knew that the freighters with our needed supplies had not returned for reasons that we did not understand and that there was a great shortage of ammunition. At that point, we did not have the assurance that we could hold and defend the beachhead, even if the intervention of the American Navy was ordered at that time. Therefore, about 1:00 P.M. of that day Admiral Burke received instructions (from*

Washington) to instruct and send Navy pilots to recognize from the air the situation and to send us a message asking us, if they could help us defend the beachhead. Unfortunately, the message that those pilots sent to their superiors, indicated that there was little fighting, therefore they saw no need for their intervention.

The morning of the 19<sup>th</sup>. (D + 3) *“There was another message saying that the beachhead had fallen and that they wanted to evacuate their soldiers, but at that time the evacuation was already impossible, due to the fact that the beachhead was not big enough, therefore, it is too late to do anything”*. Said Robert F. Kennedy at the meeting of May 18<sup>th</sup>, as per the Minutes.

## **THE BAY OF PIGS CRONOLOGY**

### **Playa Girón was a weapon of the Cold War...**

The Bay of Pigs invasion, backed up by the United States was conceived as a diplomatic weapon of the *“cold war”* under the Government of President Dwight D. Eisenhower and took place on April 17<sup>th</sup>., 1961, during the Presidency of John F. Kennedy.

**At continuation please find in chronological order the events as they were planned and propelled the invasion; prepared as a report to President Kennedy, from General Maxwell Taylor.**

1958.- The Central Intelligence Agency (C.I.A.) concocted two failed intents in order to avoid Castro assuming power, since they were sure “*beyond a reasonable doubt*” that he was an individual that “*no one would expect Castro to be acceptable to the interests of the U.S.*”.

January 1959. - Castro assumes power on January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1959. On December of that year the C.I.A.. Decides to recruit and secretly trained some exiled Cubans, in order to infiltrate them into Cuba.

January 1960<sup>th</sup>. - The C.I.A. establishes and operating force of recruits to developed the Cuban operation.

March 14, 1960<sup>th</sup>. - The C.I.A. shows President Eisenhower a formal plan of subversive activities to betake place in Cuba.

March 17<sup>th</sup>, 1960<sup>th</sup>. - Eisenhower approves C.I.A. plans to overthrow Castro.

May 1960<sup>th</sup>. - Radio Swan, a radio station set up by the C.I.A. starts transmitting to Cuba propaganda against Castro.

June, 1960<sup>th</sup>. - The Democratic Revolutionary Front (Frente Democrático Revolucionario -F.D.R.-), an exiled Cubans organization is utilized as a frontage to recruit and trained Cubans in para-military operations. The C.I.A. changes its original plans towards guerrilla activities with the concept of an invading force in the coasts of Cuba. They organize a small tactical air force, using Cuban pilots and B-26 bombers of World War II fame.

July 1960<sup>th</sup>. - A selected group of exiled Cubans start training in secret bases in Guatemala and later on in Nicaragua.

August 18<sup>th</sup>. - President Eisenhower and his Cabinet approves budget of \$13 million for the military operation, and allowing the use of military equipment from the U.S. Defense Department.

November 18<sup>th</sup>. - Allen Dulles, Director of the C.I.A..Informs the President elect (Kennedy), to his house in Palm Beach, Fl. via a telephone call, of the Cuban plan.

January 11<sup>th</sup>, 1961. - A Work Committee is organized, formed by the Joint Chief of Staff, (J.C.S), Department of Defense and the State Department and the Central Intelligence Agency (C.I.A.).

January 22<sup>nd</sup>.-the members of the Cabinet of the new U.S. Government of President Kennedy are informed about the Cuba project. Among them were: Robert F. Kennedy, Justice Dept., Robert McNamara, and Secretary of Defense, Dean Rusk, State Department.

January 28<sup>th</sup>, 1961.- Kennedy receives the first information as President. Authorizes the increase of sabotage and airplane flights over Cuba. Also ask the Defense Dept. to revise the plans proposed by the C.I.A. and the State Dept. to prepare an action plan with other Latin American countries, in order to isolate Cuba by economy and diplomatic means.

March 10<sup>th</sup>, 1961.-The Joint Chief of Staff approves a plan that requires disembarkation at Cienfuegos, close to Trinidad, Cuba and qualifies the same as with “*good probabilities of success*”. President Kennedy ask for an alternative “*less spectacular*”, in order to denied if need be, the participation of the United States.

March 16<sup>th</sup>, 1961.- The C.I.A. presents a modified plan. President Kennedy authorizes to proceed with the plan but retains final approval . The President reserves the right to call of the plan 24 hours before the disembarkation takes place. This time, at the Bay of Pigs in Playa Girón.

March 29<sup>th</sup>, 1961.- The D-Day initials the Zapata Operation, which is planned to happen on April 5<sup>th</sup>, the date is changed by the President for the 10<sup>th</sup> of April and again for April 17<sup>th</sup>, or D day were the disembarkation took place.

April 12<sup>th</sup>, 1961.- the C.I.A. presents to the President new changes to the “Zapata Operation” that was originally first approved for April 5<sup>th</sup>, the President does not approve the changes to the final plan, but is informed that there is not much time left.

April 14<sup>th</sup>, 1961.-A distraction disembarkation plan fails in the East coast of the Oriente Province. Does not take place.

April 15<sup>th</sup>, 1961.-. Air strikes at sunrise against three military airports in Cuba take place, according to plans.

April 16<sup>th</sup>., 1961.- president Kennedy formally approves the invasion plans at the Bay of Pigs.

April 17<sup>th</sup>, 1961- The Cuban exiled forces disembarked in Playa Girón, at the Bay of Pigs.

April 18<sup>th</sup>, 1961.- The Cuban regular forces start to turn the tide on the invaders, due to shortage of ammunition.

April 19<sup>th</sup>, 1961. The already taken beachhead is lost as well as the organized resistance of the invaders.

April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1961.- President Kennedy ordered Gen. Maxwell Taylor his Military Advisor) study the failure of the Bay of Pigs, in order to improve the possibilities on future covered operations in foreign counties. .