

International Incidents

Bay of Pigs (1961)

Tension between the United States and Cuba grew following the Cuban Revolution of 1959. Dictator Batista was ousted and revolutionary Fidel Castro came to power.

Prior to this revolution, the United States had had significant influence in the economy and politics of Cuba, but Castro did not want to be influenced by the U.S. Even when the United States applied economic pressure through an embargo that cut off trade, Castro refused to give in. In fact, he established even closer ties with the Communist government of the U.S.S.R.

In **January of 1961**, President Dwight D. Eisenhower had decided to break off formal diplomatic relations with Cuba. The Central Intelligence Agency had been training Cuban exiles for a possible invasion of the island as a means of overthrowing Castro's leftist regime without revealing U.S. involvement.

Most Cubans resented U.S. intervention in Cuban affairs, but Cuban exiles living in the United States worked with U.S. personnel to try to unseat Castro.

On **April 17, 1961**, approximately 1,300 United States-backed Cuban exiles, armed with U.S. weapons, unsuccessfully attempted to overthrow the government of Cuban Premier Fidel Castro in an invasion at the Bay of Pigs on the south coast of Cuba.

This brief military misadventure ended in total failure and quickly became a political and foreign policy debacle for President John F. Kennedy, who had approved the plan three months earlier.

The exiles had hoped to reach Havana, but, because they did not get support from the local people, Castro's army stopped them.

The fighting ended just 2 days later. About 100 of the Cuban exiles had been killed and the rest taken as prisoners. Despite information to the contrary from the Central Intelligence Agency, the Cuban people had never widely supported organized resistance to Castro's regime, so the plan may have been doomed from the start. Historians have called the Bay of Pigs "the perfect failure."

Forty years later, wariness and tension still characterize the relationship between the U.S. and Cuba, and Fidel Castro is still in power.



Fidel Castro

*Maine military personnel who participated in activities associated with the **Bay of Pigs Invasion** are remembered:*

I am voting in honor of my brother, Dennis A. Porter, who was born into a family of 7 sisters. He served on the *USS Hank* that was stationed off Cuba during the Bay of Pigs Invasion. His home port was Norfolk, Virginia, and he served in the Navy for 4 years.

Marlene J. Redlevske, Norridgewock

My brother, Gary Henry, served five years in the U.S. Navy as a Sonarman 2nd class and he was stationed in Vietnam and the Bay of Pigs in Cuba.

Robert Henry, Rockport

Served in the U.S. Navy