

Option B: 20th Century topic**WHO OR WHAT WAS TO BLAME FOR THE BAY OF PIGS FIASCO IN 1961?**

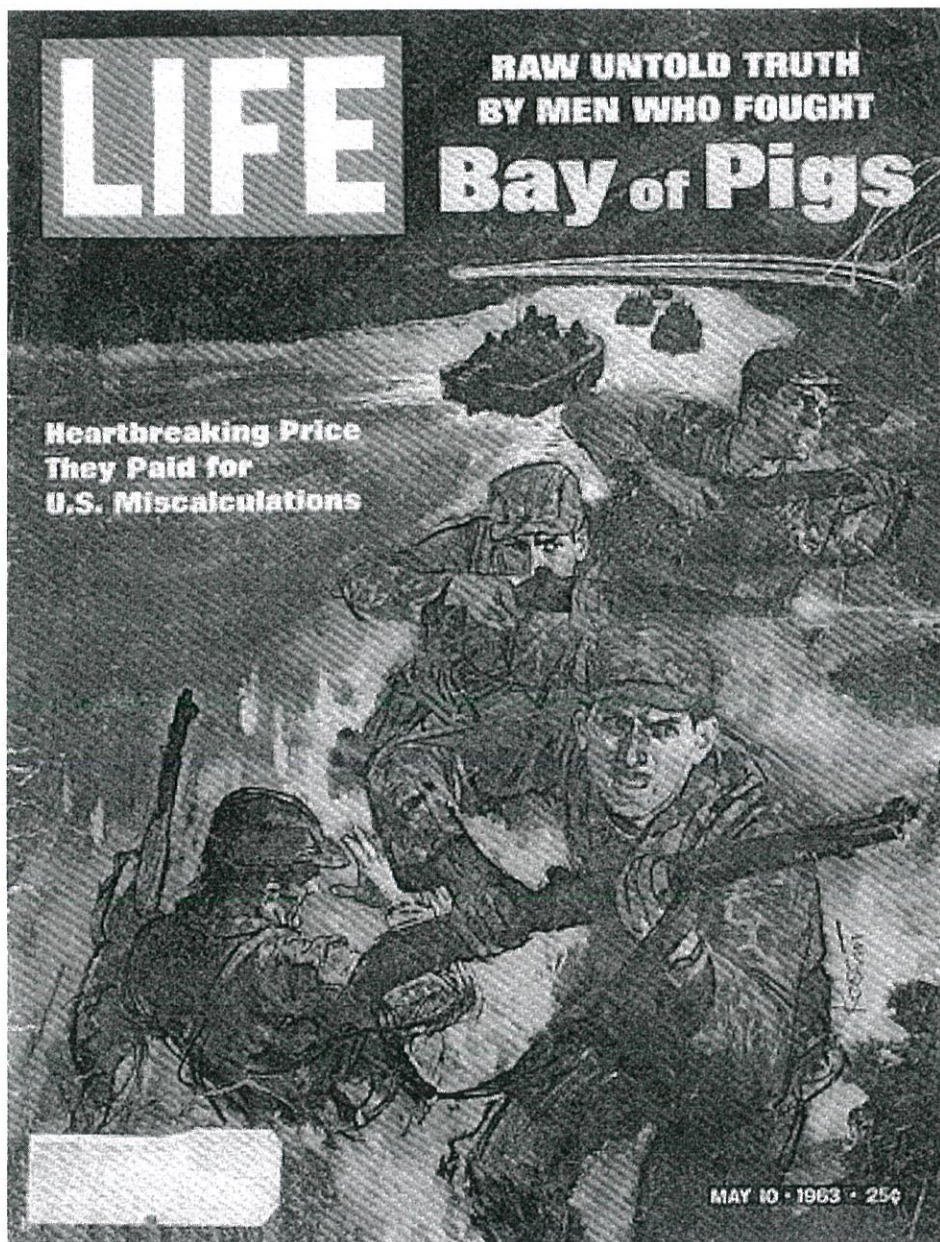
Study the Background Information and the sources carefully, and then answer **all** the questions.

Background Information

On 17 April 1961, less than three months after Kennedy became President of the USA, 1400 Cuban exiles invaded Cuba in an attempt to overthrow Castro and his communist government. The invasion was a disaster. Within three days the Cuban armed forces defeated the invaders, who had barely got off the beaches where they had been pounded by Cuban artillery and infantry.

The invasion was planned while Eisenhower was still President, with Vice-President Nixon and the Central Intelligence Agency (the CIA) being the driving forces behind the plans. The failure of the invasion was enormously embarrassing for Kennedy, but who was really responsible for the fiasco?

SOURCE A



The front cover of a popular American news magazine published in May 1963.

[Turn over

SOURCE B

That such a regime as Castro's, 40 miles from the United States' coast, should align itself with America's principal enemy was unacceptable and the United States would have been well within its rights in seeking to overthrow Castro. But there was an uncertain response, first from Eisenhower, then from Kennedy. So nothing was done under Eisenhower, though many plans were considered.

When Kennedy took over in January 1961 he found a proposal, apparently supported by the CIA, and by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, for 12 000 armed Cuban exiles to be landed in an area called the Bay of Pigs and start a popular uprising. It is hard to believe that the experienced Eisenhower would have given final approval to this naive scheme. Eisenhower would have waited for Castro to make a false move that would have allowed America to intervene openly.

Kennedy lacked resolution and weakly allowed the operation to go ahead. The Chiefs of Staff were worried by the CIA's insistence that the operation was to be preceded by an air strike launched from bases in Nicaragua, by US aircraft, acquired by the exiles, painted to resemble Cuban aircraft. The operation was a total disaster primarily because Castro was able to read all about it, in advance, in the US media; and once things went wrong Kennedy refused to authorise the US carrier, cruising 10 miles offshore, to come to the rescue of the stricken men pinned down in the swampy bay. Eisenhower described the operation as 'a profile in timidity and indecisions'. American opinion was outraged and would have supported direct intervention. One senior policy maker thought a decision by Kennedy 'to send in troops or drop bombs would have had the support of at least 90 per cent of the people'. But the government dithered.

From a history book published in 1997.

SOURCE C

The day before he was inaugurated as President in January 1961 Kennedy was briefed by Eisenhower on a number of topics, including the plan to help anti-Castro guerillas. Kennedy was surprised by the size of the plan but he was not opposed to it. He allowed the CIA to organise Cuban exiles for an invasion. However, he insisted that any American involvement must be concealed.

Despite the CIA's continued confidence, there were problems with the plan. The CIA's assumption that, if things did go wrong, the United States would support a failing mission by direct military involvement, ran counter to Kennedy's public position. From the beginning everything did go wrong. Only six American bombers painted in Cuban colours, as if flown by rebel Cubans, took off from Nicaragua in support of the invasion which depended on air cover for success. Contrary to CIA expectations, the attack provoked no popular uprising against Castro.

Kennedy called a crisis meeting and considered sending unmarked US jets. However, everyone in the meeting recognised that the situation was hopeless. At the end of three days fighting, the survivors surrendered. The CIA had vastly overestimated the support of the Cuban people for a military operation to 'liberate' them.

From a history book published in 1998.

SOURCE D

On 4 April, a meeting will be held at the White House at which a decision will be reached on the Cuban adventure. I find the proposal disturbing. My concern arises from a deep personal conviction that our national interests are poorly served by an operation of this kind when our new President is appealing to the world on the basis of high principle.

Those most familiar with the Cuban operation seem to agree that as now planned, the chances of success are not greater than one out of three. This makes it a highly risky operation. There is the possibility that the Castro regime will be a failure without any further intervention by us. The spirit of rebellion in Cuba is likely to grow. I realise that this operation has been planned over months and a great deal of time and money has been put into it, and many able and dedicated people have been involved. We should not, however, proceed.

From a note written on 31 March 1961 by Chester Bowles, Under-Secretary of State, to his boss, Secretary of State, Dean Rusk. Rusk was in charge of American foreign policy in Kennedy's government.

SOURCE E

A cartoon published in a Russian newspaper shortly after the Bay of Pigs invasion. The three ravens are Eisenhower, Nixon and Truman. They are sitting on Kennedy's shoulder.

[Turn over

SOURCE F

A cartoon published in Britain on 21 April 1961. The cigar represents the Bay of Pigs invasion.

SOURCE G

In evaluating the CIA's performance it is essential to avoid grasping at the explanation that the President's order cancelling the air strikes was the chief cause of failure. If the project had been better conceived, better organised, better staffed and better managed, would that issue ever have had to be presented for Presidential decision at all?

The fundamental cause of the disaster was the CIA's failure to give the project the top-flight handling which it required – appropriate organisation, staffing throughout by highly qualified personnel, and full-time direction and control of the highest quality. Insufficiencies in these vital areas resulted in serious mistakes and in grave mistakes of judgement.

The CIA became so wrapped up in the military operation that it failed to judge the chances of success realistically. It also failed to keep the national policy-makers adequately informed of the conditions necessary for success. The CIA reduced the exiled leaders to the status of puppets, thus losing the advantages of their active participation. It also failed to build up a resistance organisation in Cuba. It failed to collect adequate information on the strengths of the Castro regime and the extent of the opposition to it. The project was badly organised. The CIA entered the project without adequate assets in the way of boats, bases, training facilities, agents and Spanish speakers.

From a secret government report on the Bay of Pigs failure, October 1961.

SOURCE H

The allegations are rejected. Alleged defects of organisation had little to do with the unsuccessful outcome. The limiting factor on air operations was the competence of Cuban air crews. The air strike should not have been cancelled. The military plan was a good one. The important decisions were governmental, not those of the CIA.

From the CIA response to Source G, January 1962.

Now answer **all** the following questions. You may use any of the sources to help you answer the questions, in addition to those sources which you are told to use. In answering the questions you should use your knowledge of the topic to help you interpret and evaluate the sources.

1 Study Source A.

What can you learn about the Bay of Pigs invasion from this source? Explain your answer using details of the source and your knowledge. [7]

2 Study Sources B and C.

How far do these two sources agree? Explain your answer using details of the sources. [7]

3 Study Source D.

Are you surprised by this source? Explain your answer using details of the source and your knowledge. [8]

4 Study Sources E and F.

How similar are the messages of these two cartoons? Explain your answer using details of the sources and your knowledge. [8]

5 Study Sources G and H.

Does Source H prove that Source G is wrong? Explain your answer using details of the sources and your knowledge. [8]

6 Study **all** the sources.

How far do these sources provide convincing evidence that Kennedy was responsible for the Bay of Pigs fiasco? Use the sources to explain your answer. [12]