

Prados insert

Russos inserts

Eisenhower was careful to see to it that he would not be blamed for what he initiated, what he approved, what he wanted and got, and that on the failure of his plan his successor would be blamed for it. He kept from his successor all the doubts he had about the possibilities of his own plan and he actually planned for the invasion to be during the administration of his ~~own~~ successor — to whom he communicated none of the ^{doubt} ~~doubts~~ he had. When Eisenhower, at the very end of his administration, did not dare cancel his ^{own plan} Cuba invasion project, he knew very well that the ^{coming} President ~~so~~ would not dare do that. He gave Kennedy a situation about which Kennedy could do nothing, as a matter of practical politics, other than what Eisenhower arranged for him to do, to go ahead with Eisenhower's seriously ^{flawed} ~~flawed~~ and actually impossible plan that was actually a ~~plan for~~ scheme for getting the United States directly involved in the overthrow of Castro ^{But} that had no possibility of succeeding without United state involvement in it. Eisenhower, former General of the armies, the general who lead the defeat of Hitler after Hitler had conquered more than all of Europe, understood the realities and was careful to see that none of the responsibility that ^{his} ~~was~~ would ~~fall~~, fall on his shoulders. He was likewise careful to see to it that only Kennedy would be blamed for what Eisenhower wanted and turned over to Kennedy when the realities of that situation were that Kennedy could not cancel it and survive politically. What it could have meant for the country to have a President who was ruined in the first days of his Presidency can only be conjectured but it would have meant a disaster for the country ~~as~~ as well as for Kennedy.

That Eisenhower's scheme ~~was~~ worked is obvious from all the calumny ~~he~~ heaped on Kennedy's head over it, without any major element of the media, without and political leader, without any great thinker, laying ~~any~~ responsibility ~~for~~ for it on Eisenhower himself.

Aside from his cunning in this, Eisenhower was the President who greatly

escalated United States intrusions into other lands, the intrusions that became
the accepted and approved national policy. This John Prados makes clear in
his President's Secret Wars: CIA and Pentagon (Covert) Operations from World War II
Through the ~~GILFURASRPRXXX~~ Persian Gulf (Ivan R. Dee, Inc, Chicago, 1986,
1996). Three pages of what Prados writes about Eisenhower and his Cuban operation
he contrived to be Kennedy's responsibility and the realities of which he was
careful not to communicate to Kennedy, begin at the top of page 191 in
one of Prados' chapters on Cuba and extend to the bottom of page 193. Nothing
is omitted from what is quoted:

3

60 presidential elec-
d in favor of a con-
les would establish a
tee to declare a pro-
States assistance. Ac-
vember 4, Trax had
ventional training for

o the 5412 Group on
ned by on the twenty-
70 days later. Ike in-
ons but did not make
a option.

senhower questioned
bold, given the need
ere being done effec-
D. Pawley, a well-
the President about
ter of the *frente* (too
aid he was unhappy
ransition of adminis-
to be "in the position
f a developing emer-

of Operation Pluto
hree thousand exiles,
e training bases other
led the CIA's choice

to go over much of
on the conventional-
g developments. The
as dragging its feet in
lease Special Forces
les.

ial Operations, which
rations, had been reg-
cine and Ed Lansdale
y acerbic in his com-
who was representing

indent
single
space

the Pentagon at these Cuba meetings. In the discussion on Decem-
ber 8, Douglas agreed to recommend the release of twenty-seven
Special Forces advisers but made it clear the Pentagon in no way
supported the CIA plan.

For his part, Eisenhower worried that there was not enough syn-
chronization among different agencies on Operation Pluto. On De-
cember 7 the President approved the selection of special
representatives at CIA and State who would serve as focal points in
the bureaucracy for all matters related to the Cuba operation. Dick
Bissell chose Tracy Barnes as his representative; State's man was
Whiting Willauer, who had done so well during Operation Success
in maintaining the Honduras base for the CIA's Guatemala coup.

The leaders of the secret war gathered again on January 3, 1961,
to discuss both ending diplomatic relations and the progress of
Pluto. Dick Bissell reported that Ydigoras of Guatemala had asked
for the Cubans to be removed from his country by March 1, and
that the exiles' own morale would suffer if they did not see action
by that time. Willauer agreed that there was also a time problem
with the OAS and that the only suitable alternative to Guatemala
would be training on American bases, a suggestion that had been re-
peatedly rejected already. There was, however, considerable confi-
dence in the exile troops—Gordon Gray mentioned an observer's
report that called the Cubans the best army in Latin America. Al-
though he warned of some equipment shortages, General Lyman D.
Lemnitzer agreed.

President Eisenhower summarized: The only two reasonable al-
ternatives were supporting the Cubans to go in March or abandon-
ing the operation.

Exactly one week later a detailed account of the Cuban training
in Guatemala by Tad Szulc was on the front page of *The New York
Times*.

Did the President bequeath his successor a "developing emer-
gency"?

President Eisenhower's administration ended with the Cuban op-
eration in mid-course. Only two days before the inauguration of
John F. Kennedy, Ike's councils were still uncovering problems
with Pluto that could only be passed along. It was left to Jack Ken-
nedy to choose between the alternatives that Ike had summarized
on January 3. It was a tough choice for a novice President.

4

indent, single space

162

PRESIDENTS' SECRET WARS

By not confronting that choice himself, Eisenhower has left questions history has yet to resolve. The consequent CIA failure at the Bay of Pigs has usually been cast as the fault of the Kennedy people, who came in implicitly trusting the secret warriors. Eisenhower had been sitting at the apex of the secret war for eight years; he knew better. He knew the difficulties with the 5412 Group, the CIA's penchant for keeping implementation issues out once approvals had been given, and the conflicts between military and civilian intelligence agencies. Ike also knew the current status of Pluto and the specific problems of the Cuban operation. On January 3, or up until the time that JFK stood to take his oath of office, President Eisenhower could have shut down the Cuba operation with just a few words. But he didn't.

The recently declassified memoranda of the Operation Pluto meetings in December 1960 and January 1961 reveal that the arguments Kennedy was given to continue the operation were well rehearsed. Before JFK assumed office, many in high places were aware there were significant weaknesses in the CIA's operation plan. It was clear that Castro's FAR forces were much more powerful than any force the exiles could raise. Moreover, the point had also been raised, by State on January 3, that American forces would have to back up an invasion force. The conditions necessary for success simply had not been created.

On the morning of the inauguration, as they left for the ceremonial motorcade to the site, Ike advised JFK to do whatever was needed to ensure the success of the Cuba operation.

Eisenhower believed in the secret war. His administration had consistently made efforts to improve the efficiency and range of covert operations while protecting both presidential control and plausible deniability. These aims were just too ambitious. In the operations themselves, failures were as common as gains, while leaks routinely occurred. Mechanisms designed to preserve plausible deniability had deteriorated to such a degree that the President allowed himself to become a principal participant in special group discussions of the Cuba operation.

Control of covert action would seem to imply the imposition of some discipline in the costs of these activities. But, such spending data as are available indicate that *no* major operation of this period was accomplished within the original budget estimated. Operation Ajax in Iran was estimated as low as \$100,000 or \$200,000, but cost

ower has left ques-
CIA failure at the
Kennedy people,
riors. Eisenhower
or eight years; he
5412 Group, the
ues out once ap-
n military and ci-
current status of
ration. On January
ath of office, Pres-
ba operation with

Operation Pluto
veal that the argu-
tion were well re-
high places were
e CIA's operation
much more power-
ver, the point had
rican forces would
s necessary for suc-

eff for the ceremo-
do whatever was
tion.
administration had
ency and range of
lential control and
mbitious. In the op-
s gains, while leaks
preserve plausible
at the President al-
nt in special group

ly the imposition of
But, such spending
ration of this period
timated. Operation
r \$200,000, but cost

incident
single
space

\$10 million. Operation Success cost twice as much as the \$10 million allotted to it. Before the last failure of a Cuba operation, the \$13 million or \$15 million estimated for Operation Pluto would mushroom to something over \$100 million. It seems that once the aim of a covert operation was accepted, the controls were thrown away.

The question of direct American involvement in Operation Pluto also illustrates that the control system had gone awry. That no Americans were to be involved in combat was one of the fundamental assumptions. After the fiasco in Indonesia it is doubtful whether Ike would have accepted any direct American involvement. But, before the end of his administration, Americans were flying with the Cuban rebel air force, and CIA agents were commanding the rebel LCI mother ships.

Two years after President Kennedy's tragic death, Dwight Eisenhower would maintain, in interviews and in his memoir *Waging Peace*, that he had never approved a specific invasion plan because the exiles had never had a unified political leadership. According to Ike there had been a "program" but no plan. This recollection is supported by Ike's son and some others from the White House staff. Yet the date on the CIA's plan for a conventional invasion around Trinidad, Cuba, is December 6, 1960. There was a date for the invasion, too—March 1961—as well as a specific timetable for invasion-related events.

Ike's memory is correct only in a technical sense: Approval was withheld from *the* invasion plan because the President's counselors found problems with it. Eisenhower nevertheless had approved *an* invasion plan, and he knew that John Kennedy was entering office without the detailed understanding of the evolution of Operation Pluto that would have facilitated a decision. Not acting to halt the operation was tantamount to an approval—the only real question remaining was the landing site.

At numerous meetings on Pluto, Gordon Gray remembers, the President repeated one conclusion he had reached. "Now boys," Ike would say, "if you don't intend to go through with this, let's stop talking about it."

Prados is cautious and understates. He says that "By not confronting the choice himself, Eisenhower has left questions history has yet to resolve."

But in Eisenhower's and Kennedy's lifetimes history had resolved this and had placed the blame on Kennedy when it was Eisenhower's contrivance and responsibility.

There was never any talk about getting even by assassinating Eisenhower. It was Kennedy who was blamed for what Eisenhower contrived ^{and it was Eisenhower} and who arranged for there being no real choice for Kennedy and for Kennedy not to have been fully informed after he was elected. As a result, and as a result of their ignorance, the Kennedy assassination is written about as a kickback against what is attributed to Kennedy and was really Eisenhower's responsibility. The Bay of Pigs fiasco was the Eisenhower plan and the CIA/mafia attempt to kill Castro was also Eisenhower's, with no Kennedy knowledge of it ^{until it was public knowledge}