

U.S. Military Program For Cuban Exiles Ends

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The Pentagon has told the Bay of Pigs leaders who entered the U.S. armed forces last year after being ransomed from Cuban prisons that they must choose a normal military career or return to civilian life.

For the veterans of the ill-fated Cuban Brigade, this meant giving up their hopes of spearheading a new invasion of their homeland and most of them are quitting in frustration.

It also means that of the over-all 3000 Cuban refugees commissioned or enlisted in the U.S. armed services under the special Cuban program, only 150 to 200 will be left in American uniforms, scattered through the forces. For all intents and purposes the Cuban recruitment program is liquidated.

Choice Offered

Reports two months ago portrayed the officers of the former Cuban Brigade who fought in the Bay of Pigs as being embittered because they felt the Johnson Administration had reneged on a U.S. promise to support a fight to free Cuba. They reportedly threatened to resign.

Two hundred and ten leaders of the brigade accepted

commissions in the U.S. armed services. They have been attending U.S. military schools since then. After their complaints in late February, Pentagon representatives investigated.

Defense officials said yesterday that the Cuban officers were told in a series of conferences that the time had come—at the conclusion of their training—to choose between returning to civilian life or accepting a normal U.S. officer's career with assignments throughout the service.

They were told of their prospects in the services. Under the terms of their recruitment, all held second lieutenant or ensign commissions and one or two of the senior officers of the former Cuban Brigade, who served in the Cuban army and are in their late 30s or early 40s, were offered promotion to captain. Some ten others were offered special advancement to first lieutenant.

Commitment Denied

Of the original 210 Brigade officers commissioned, about 38 had resigned before the offer, and of the remainder "well over half" have decided since to resign, Pentagon officials said. Perhaps 50 of the younger Cubans may stay and take regular assignments, it was said.

The Defense officials stressed that there never had been any commitment to assign the officers to an all-Cuban unit or to prepare for operations against Communist Cuba.

But many of the group felt that President Kennedy pledged a fight to free Cuba when he addressed them in the Miami Orange Bowl, Dec. 29, 1962, after they had been ransomed.