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'61 CUBAN FIASCO— THREE NEW ACCOUNTS

Who was to blame for the disaster at the Bay of Pigs?

In the space of two days, the nation has just been given three different accounts of that 1961 fiasco by three former U. S. officials.

All agree that many major mistakes were made. But one major difference of opinion emerges. The issue:

- Did the plan for the invasion of Castro's Cuba by 1,400 Cuban exiles ever have a chance to succeed?

- Or might the invasion have succeeded if the late President Kennedy had not canceled a second air strike by exiled pilots that had been scheduled for the morning of the invasion?

On one side in this dispute are Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., and Theodore C. Sorensen, both former White House assistants to President Kennedy.

On the other side is Richard M. Bissell, Jr., chief planner of the invasion for the Central Intelligence Agency.

Mr. Sorensen, in a "Look" magazine excerpt from his soon-to-be-published book, "Kennedy," says this about the invasion plan:

"With hindsight, it is clear that what in fact the President had approved was diplomatically unwise and militarily doomed from the outset."

Mr. Kennedy is quoted as saying: "How could everybody involved have thought such a plan would succeed?"



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CASTRO'S GUNS at the Bay of Pigs—Could a second air strike against the defenders, canceled by President Kennedy, have staved off defeat of the invaders?

Mr. Schlesinger, in a "Life" magazine article, says: "Kennedy came later to feel that the cancellation of the second strike was an error. But he did not regard it as a decisive error."

In the opinion of Mr. Schlesinger, who opposed the whole invasion idea:

"The second strike might have protracted the stand on the beachhead. . . . It might have made possible the eventual evacuation of the attacking force."

"But there is certainly nothing to suggest that the second air strike could possibly have led to the overthrow of the Castro regime on the terms which President Kennedy laid down from the start—that is, without U. S. intervention."

Mr. Bissell, in an interview with "The Washington Evening Star," disagrees with the idea that the invasion never had a chance. Said "The Star":

"Bissell still feels that the decision

to cancel the second scheduled air strike by the Cuban B-26 bombers because of a rising tide of criticism from other countries might have made a critical difference in the outcome."

"The Star" quotes Mr. Bissell: "If we had been able to dump five times the tonnage of bombs on Castro's airfields, we would have had a damned good chance."

President Kennedy is pictured by his onetime aides as angry with his intelligence and military advisers for concocting an invasion plan that failed—and angry with himself for accepting it.

Mr. Sorensen quotes Mr. Kennedy as saying: "How could I have been so far off base? All my life I've known better than to depend on the experts. How could I have been so stupid, to let them go ahead?"