

OGC 61-0723 Subject

2 May 1961

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Senate Foreign Relations Committee Hearing on Cuba--  
Department of State - 1 May 1961

1. Secretary Rusk started off by stressing the subversive influence of Cuba throughout South America, the increasingly rigid Communist-type internal controls, and the actual growing military threat. These all contributed to the decision to assist the rebels' invasion. He stated there were three areas of error-- an overestimate of the internal resistance to Castro and of the hope for uprising; an underestimate of Castro's armed strength; the decision by the rebels to try and hold the territory at the beachhead instead of getting inland to join the guerrillas.

2. Secretary Rusk pointed out that legal means of containing Communism were not adequate. He said the Government's estimate of the resistance to Castro was not based on refugees' stories as their reports had been largely discounted. He said all aspects of the project had been thoroughly considered by the appropriate members of the National Security Council and there were no hasty last-minute decisions.

3. Senator Fulbright questioned whether Cuba could actually be a military threat to the U. S., and Secretary Rusk said with jet fighters and missiles in Cuba it could exercise a blackmail power. Senator Fulbright asked if a Russian base in Cuba wasn't similar to [redacted] and Secretary Rusk said theirs would be used for subversion and ours was to maintain peace. Senator Fulbright said he doubted whether there was a military solution to Cuba, and Secretary Rusk said the invasion

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was not intended as a military solution but was to give the opportunity for popular uprising. Senator Fulbright said he doubted if even that would have solved anything.

4. Senator Hickenlooper asked if we could have stopped the Cuban refugees from trying an invasion if we had wanted to, and Secretary Rusk said we could have. The Senator asked if we should not have taken steps to insure success once we decided to start, and Secretary Rusk said the rebels were briefed that no U. S. arms would be used to back them up. Senator Hickenlooper asked what support we can now expect in Latin America, and Secretary Rusk said that while Mexico and Chile would not take overt action in our favor their governments support us and that the general reaction is not too bad; in fact, some places like Brazil are somewhat better. Senator Hickenlooper asked who decided the time and the place of the landing, and Secretary Rusk said he would leave the details to Mr. Dulles but the decision was made at the White House on the unanimous recommendation of senior advisers.

5. Senator Church asked about what the Russians were supplying in the way of arms, and Secretary Rusk said he would leave this to Mr. Dulles to answer. He pointed out that the protest riots in South America were not popular demonstrations but smallish organized riots except in Uruguay. He pointed out that time was not on our side in Cuba although Castro himself is a somewhat tarnished figure in Latin America.

6. Senator Morse asked if there was any opposition to the recommendation to go ahead with the invasion, and Secretary Rusk said there were vigorous discussions. He said it was not correct that he or Secretary Bowles had opposed the project. He said Senator Fulbright's memorandum opposing the operation was considered.

7. Secretary Rusk said he would leave to CIA questions on whether MIG's were present and what sort of training was done for the rebels and by whom. He said training, supplies, and money were supplied by the U. S. to the rebels and the Navy screened the invasion but the planes were flown by Cubans although one soldier of fortune had flown in the invasion in violation of policy.

8. Senator Aiken asked if the Department of State knew the facts on training and the rest of the operation, and Secretary Rusk said the appropriate State officers were fully informed from

the beginning but that possibly in the future means could be worked out to bring all the Department of State's resources into the picture.

9. There was much general sentiment that we must find some way to cope with Castro and the Cuban situation, and Senators Lausche, Symington, and Hickenlooper were particularly in favor of strong action of some sort but no specific proposals were put forward.

10. Committee members present at the briefing were:

J. W. Fulbright (D., Ark.), Chairman  
John J. Sparkman (D., Ala.)  
Hubert H. Humphrey (D., Minn.)  
Mike Mansfield (D., Mont.)  
Wayne Morse (D., Ore.)  
Albert Gore (D., Tenn.)  
Frank J. Lausche (D., Ohio)  
Frank Church (D., Idaho)  
Stuart Symington (D., Mo.)  
Alexander Wiley (R., Wis.)  
Bourke B. Hickenlooper (R., Iowa)  
George D. Aiken (R., Vt.)  
Frank Carlson (R., Kansas)  
John J. Williams (R., Del.)

Present from State were Secretary Rusk; Brooks Hays, Assistant Secretary for Congressional Relations; Alexander Schaefer, Legislative Management Officer.

s/ Lawrence R. Houston

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General Counsel

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