rollback of communism in the United States’ Central American sphere of influence was a “safe” intervention in the sense that it was unlikely to provoke a Soviet military response that might trigger a general war. If carried out covertly, utilizing Central American proxies, a U.S. intervention would also enable Eisenhow to “plausibly deny” U.S. involvement, shielding the administration from outraged protests by its Latin American allies (Bowie and Immerman, Waging Peace, 220; Scott, “Dismantling the Good Neighbor,” 5, 12–13, 28).

72. Scott, “Covert Operations as an Instrument of Foreign Policy,” 134–135; Richard Harkness and Gladys Harkness, “The Mysterious Doings of the CIA,” Saturday Evening Post, 30 October–13 November 1954; Thomas, Very Best Men, 124. Meanwhile, at lower echelons of the CIA, the intelligence officers who carried out the intervention were basking in the confident assurance that “their careers would take off.” “After Guatemala,” the wife of one CIA operative recalled, “it was, ‘You can have any job you want! You can own the world!’” (Thomas, Very Best Men, 126).

Chapter Two. Cuba, 1961

2. Welch, Response to Revolution, 87–88; Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: John F. Kennedy, 1961 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1962), 304–306; Michael R. Beschloss, The Crisis Years: Kennedy and Khrushchev, 1960–1961 (New York: HarperCollins, 1991), 129; Lloyd C. Gardner, Pay Any Price: Lyndon Johnson and the Wars for Vietnam (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1995), 44. As Richard J. Walton noted, Kennedy’s denial of U.S. military involvement in the Bay of Pigs invasion was “quite an extraordinary statement. Not only was the invasion planned by the United States, but the United States recruited, paid, and trained the exile force. . . . The exiles used American military equipment. They were trained by American military men. . . . The warplanes were American, flown by Americans. The frogmen who were the first on the beach were American. American ships carried the invaders, and American naval units accompanied them. Americans were killed in the operation. To claim that America did not intervene was to lie and be caught in the lie” (Cold War and Counterrevolution: The Foreign Policy of John F. Kennedy [New York: Viking, 1972], 49–50).
and geopolitical views of the 6th of July Movement’s moderate and radical factions. See Alzugaryan’s July–August 1998 Internet dialogue with U.S. subscribers to H-DIPLO, the H-NET List for Diplomatic History (h-diplo@h-net.msu.edu), especially his postings of 25 July, 26 July, and 28 July, at the H-NET archives, which can be accessed through the H-DIPLO subscription page at http://www.lsoft.com/scripts/wl.exe?SL=1&H=DIPLO &H=H-NET.MSU.EDU.


40. It was during June–July 1959—at the height of U.S. concern over the Cuban agrarian-reform program—that U.S. officials began to seriously contemplate Castro’s overthrow. Nevertheless, discussion of Cuban matters in National Security Council meetings of 25 June and 9 July focused almost entirely on the issue of Cuban support for revolutionary activity in the Caribbean; the expropriation of U.S. interests was scarcely mentioned. See ibid., 541–555. For a detailed U.S. intelligence analysis of Castro’s efforts to promote revolution in neighboring countries, see Department of State, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, “Castro’s Revolution and Subversive Plotting in the Western Hemisphere (February–April 1959),” Intelligence Report no. 7956.1, 18 May 1959, in OSS/State Department Intelligence and Research Reports: Latin America, 1941–1961, ed. Paul Kearsis (Washington, DC: University Publications of America, 1979), microfilm, reel 8, frame 0427.
44. FRUS, 1958–1960, 6: 830 (emphasis added).
45. Despatch no. 789, Bonsal to Department of State, 27 November 1959, decimal file 611.37/11–2759, Record Group 59, General Records of the Department of State, U.S. National Archives, College Park, MD.
48. Ibid., 519, 605–610, 831 (emphasis added).
52. Welch, Response to Revolution, 112–113.
54. FRUS, 1958–1960, 6: 705; Rabe, Eisenhowen and Latin America, 128.
60. FRUS, 1958–1960, 6: 1089; Beck, “Necessary Lies, Hidden Truths,” 40; Wyden,
Bay of Pigs, 30, 66. According to Wyden, Nixon's press secretary, Herbert Klein, "had been briefed by the Vice President about the Cuban operation" and was hopeful that Castro would be overthrown in October. Klein "was deeply involved in the difficult presidential campaign" and knew that "[a] successful Cuba operation would have been a major plus, indeed a real trump card. He knew that Nixon kept urging Eisenhower on. He worried that no move might come until November. If it had to be November, he would have been grateful if it were to be November 1 rather than closer to the election on the eighth" (8).


62. Beck, "Necessary Lies, Hidden Truths," 50; Quirk, Fidel Castro, 349. Nixon strongly suspected that his Democratic rival had been briefed on the CIA's secret preparations for a Cuban intervention by agency director Allen Dulles and that Kennedy was deliberately using that knowledge to gain political advantage in the campaign. By advocating a militant interventionist policy, knowing all the while that Nixon would need to protect the secrecy of the planned intervention, Kennedy would attract the support of voters who favored strong action against Castro. As Nixon later wrote, "I thought that Kennedy, with full knowledge of the facts, was jeopardizing the security of a United States foreign policy operation. And my rage was greater because I could do nothing about it. I was faced with what was probably the most difficult decision of the campaign. Kennedy had me at a terrible disadvantage. He knew, as I did, that public sentiment in the United States was overwhelmingly in favor of a tougher line against Castro. I had long favored and fought for this line within the Administration, and the covert training of Cuban exiles as well as the overt quarantine policy were programs due, in substantial part at least, to my efforts. Kennedy was now publicly advocating what was already the policy of the American government—covertly—and Kennedy had been so informed. But by stating such a position publicly, he obviously stood to gain the support of all those who wanted a stronger policy against Castro but who, of course, could not know of our covert programs already under way. What could I do? One course would be simply to state that what Kennedy was advocating as a new policy was already being done, had been adopted as a policy as a result of my direct support, and that Kennedy was endangering the security of the whole operation in his public statement. But this would be, for me, an utterly irresponsible act: it would disclose a secret operation and completely destroy its effectiveness. There was only one thing I could do. The covert operation had to be protected at all costs. I must not even suggest by implication that the United States was rendering aid to rebel forces in and out of Cuba. In fact, I must go to the other extreme: I must attack the Kennedy proposal to provide such aid as wrong and irresponsible because it would violate our treaty commitments" (Nixon, Six Crises, 354–355). In the end, Nixon concluded, "The position I had to take on Cuba hurt rather than helped me... The general 'image' to the end of the campaign was to be one of Kennedy stronger and tougher than I against Castro and Communism" (ibid., 356–357).

For additional evidence supporting Nixon's contention that Kennedy learned about the planned intervention during the campaign and used it for political gain, see Seymour Hersh, The Dark Side of Camelot (Boston: Little, Brown, 1997), chap. 12; Beschloss, The Crisis Years, 28–30; and the reminiscences of John Patterson, Democratic governor of Alabama in 1960, in Deborah Hart Strober and Gerald S. Strober, comps., The Kennedy Presidency: An Oral History of the Era, rev. ed. (Washington, DC: Brassey's, 2003), 325–327.

63. Beck, "Necessary Lies, Hidden Truths," 57; Quirk, Fidel Castro, 351. As the campaign neared its end, Castro warned that political considerations might prompt Eisenhower to invade Cuba. According to the U.S. Embassy in Havana, Castro told Cuban army cadets in a 29 October 1960 graduation address "that since Cuba had become a matter of contention in [the] U.S. presidential campaign, there was danger that the present administration would attack Cuba to satisfy interests which support it and to outdo [the] other political party." (FRUS, 1958–1960, 6: 1112). During the campaign's final two weeks, Kennedy's staff was also worried that Eisenhower would provoke a Cuban crisis in order to boost Nixon's campaign (Hersh, The Dark Side of Camelot, 182).

64. Quirk, Fidel Castro, 350; Dallek, An Unfinished Life, 356. Nixon later wrote that "most observers agree that our positions on the Cuban issue could well have been the decisive factor" in the election and that the appearance of being "softer" on Cuba than Kennedy cost him the presidency (Nixon, "Cuba, Castro and John F. Kennedy," 288). See also Fawn M. Brodie, Richard Nixon: The Shaping of His Character (New York: Norton, 1981), 412. According to Gleijeses, Kennedy's "inflammatory language" during the campaign "came back to haunt him" as president. "It limited his options by raising the political cost of scuttling the operation once he was in office" (Piero Gleijeses, "Ships in the Night: The CIA, the White House and the Bay of Pigs," Journal of Latin American Studies 27, no. 1 [February 1995]: 25). During the campaign, former secretary of state Dean Acheson warned Kennedy that his campaign rhetoric was locking him into an untenable position on Cuba (Higgins, The Perfect Failure, 60). The political pressures on President Kennedy to approve the Bay of Pigs invasion are discussed more fully below.

65. Karabell, Architects of Intervention, 174, 195–197; Bonsal, quoted in Pérez, Cuba and the United States, 248. Alfredo Durán, a member of the exile brigade that landed at the Bay of Pigs, offers additional evidence that the Cuban exiles were consciously manipulating U.S. policy for their own purposes. According to Durán, "The Cuban government and some others have said that we worked for the CIA—that the CIA used us. I think that the feeling among the people in the brigade was that we were using the CIA, not the CIA using us." See James G. Blight and Peter Kornbluh, eds., Politics of Illusion: The Bay of Pigs Invasion Reexamined (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1998), 71.


advisers that “the Castro regime had plans to export Castro’s communism” and that “they already have power among the people in the Caribbean countries and elsewhere, particularly in Venezuela and Colombia” (FRUS, 1961–1963, 10: 50). Three days later, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Lyman Lemnitzer personally warned Kennedy that Castro was “slanding agents and arms into other countries of Latin America” (ibid., 54). A 17 February 1961 CIA study concluded that “Cuba will, of course, never present a direct military threat to the United States and it is unlikely that Cuba would attempt open invasion of any other Latin American country since the U.S. could and almost certainly would enter the conflict on the side of the invaded country. Nevertheless, as Castro further stabilizes his regime, obtains more sophisticated weapons, and further trains the militia, Cuba will provide an effective and solidly defended base for Soviet operations and expansion of influence in the Western Hemisphere. Arms, money, organizational and other support can be provided from Cuba to dissident leaders and groups throughout Latin America in order to create political instability, encourage Communism, weaken the prestige of the U.S., and foster the inevitable popular support that Castro’s continuity of power will engender. A National Estimate states: ‘For the Communist powers, Cuba represents an opportunity of incalculable value. More importantly, the advent of Castro has provided the Communists with a friendly base for propaganda and agitation throughout the rest of Latin America and with a highly exploitable example of revolutionary achievement and successful defiance of the United States’” (ibid., 101). In April 1961, Llewellyn Thompson, the U.S. ambassador to the Soviet Union, informed Khrushchev that “what bothered us particularly about Cuba was its use as a base for attempts of overthrow of other Latin American govts” (ibid., 183). “Cuba alone was not regarded as a threat,” President Kennedy told Khrushchev at the June 1961 Vienna summit. “It was Castro’s announced intentions to subvert the hemisphere that could be dangerous” (Sorensen, Kennedy, 547).


75. Paterson, “Fixation with Castro,” 126; Giejeses, “Ships in the Night,” 25–26; O’Donnell, quoted in Dallek, An Unfinished Life, 358; Rostow, The Diffusion of Power, 214; Walt W. Rostow oral history interview, 59–60, in The John F. Kennedy Presidential Oral History Collection, pt. 1, The White House and Executive Departments (Frederick, MD: University Press of America, 1988), microfiche no. 161. CIA Deputy Director of Planning Richard Bissell, the principal architect of the Bay of Pigs invasion, later recalled that “there was nothing that the president wanted less than to see, at the beginning of his term, to be soft in the face of a threat; to be unwilling to use strong measures if they held some promise of success. I’m sure he had visions of being told in the press that he had lost Cuba in the first few weeks of his administration by throwing away a plan to retrieve Cuba from Castro” (quoted in Strober and Strober, comps., The Kennedy Presidency, 335). During a 1966 scholarly conference on the Bay of Pigs invasion, historian James G. Hershberg suggested that “what happened at the Bay of Pigs can be read as deriving mainly from the fear of looking soft on communism. Obviously, for Democrats there was the possibility of this being exacerbated by the fear of attack from the right wing, the fear that they would be accused of not living up to campaign promises—in this case, to emulate Castro.” In reply, Arthur Schlesinger Jr., who served as special assistant in the Kennedy White House, agreed that “the fear of sounding soft on communism was a very strong one. A liberal Democrat like Kennedy had to be constantly concerned with this issue” (Blight and Kornbluh, eds., Politics of Illusion, 62, 65).

76. Quirk, Fidel Castro, 359, 362–363; Wyden, Bay of Pigs, 308; Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1965), 242; Bundy, quoted in Higgins, The Perfect Failure, 88, and in Blight and Kornbluh, eds., Politics of Illusion, 268; Dallek, An Unfinished Life, 357, 359; Sorensen, Kennedy, 296–297; Operation ZAPATRA, 18. Wyden writes that on 11 March 1961 “the president agreed it might be best to let the exiles go to the destination of their choice: Cuba. After all, Ike had urged him to go ahead and the retired President was more than a revered general. He and his party commanded powerful public support. If Kennedy cancelled the project, the Cuban exiles would be loudly furious. The Republicans would call him chicken. The political repercussions would be nasty” (Wyden, Bay of Pigs, 100). According to Higgins, “It would have been difficult—even secretly—for Kennedy to repudiate Dulles’ program . . . so soon after the President’s closely contested election victory. In fact, the President-Elect was deeply concerned over both his marginal electoral victory and Republican criticism of him” (Higgins, The Perfect Failure, 67–68). Also see Welch, Response to Revolution, 161; Rabe, Eisenhower and Latin America, 171; Paterson, “Fixation with Cuba,” 132.

77. Blight and Kornbluh, eds., Politics of Illusion, 64.

78. Sorensen, Kennedy, 399, 534; Welch, Response to Revolution, 77, 79, 80; Kornbluh, ed., Bay of Pigs Declassified, 2; Higgins, The Perfect Failure, 112.


81. Wyden’s Bay of Pigs: The Untold Story remains the best narrative account of the invasion. For contrasting White House and CIA perspectives, see Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, chaps. 10–11; and Bissell, Reflections of a Cold Warrior, chap. 7.


Chapter Three. British Guiana, 1963


5. Spinner, A Political and Social History of Guyana, 68; Sillery, “Salvaging Democracy?” 41–42.


7. Fraser, Ambivalent Anti-colonialism, 181–182; Sillery, “Salvaging Democracy?” 48, 49, 56; Spinner, A Political and Social History of Guyana, 76, 82.

8. Sillery, “Salvaging Democracy?” 78, 80; Fraser, Ambivalent Anti-colonialism, 184, 185; Spinner, A Political and Social History of Guyana, 81–82.

