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THE FORTUNE READS DEFEAT

A RESEARCH PAPER ON THE BAY OF PIGS SUBMITTED TO DR. FEINMAN

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

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Outline

Thesis: The Bay of Pigs invasion was launched as an attempt to rid the Western hemisphere of the Soviet influence of Communism in Cuba, which was a clear and evident violation of the Monroe Doctrine and United States policy, but the failed mission only served to intensify further problems between the Cold War rivals, the United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

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The Fortune Reads Defeat

President James Monroe, in his famous 1823 "Monroe Doctrine" stated that for the defense of the United States government, "we should consider any attempt on the part of [the Europeans] to extend their system of government to any portion of {the Western] hemisphere as dangerous to our peace and safety." He also made it known that the Western Hemisphere was "not to be considered as subjects for future colonization by any European powers.² However, after the United States turned down Fidel Castro's request for financial aid after discovering that Castro was conducting mass trial executions of Batista supporters, Castro was forced to turn to the Soviets for help.³ This new Cuba, with an allegiance to the Soviets was not acceptable to Eisenhower's administration nor to the Central Intelligence Agency. As a result, they devised a plan to overthrow Castro's Communist Government, an event that would become known as the Bay of Pigs Invasion.⁴ The Bay of Pigs Invasion was launched as an attempt to rid the Western hemisphere of the Soviet influence of Communism in Cuba, which was a clear and evident violation of the Monroe Doctrine and U.S. policy, but the failed mission only served to intensify further problems between the Cold War rivals, the United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

U.S. Undersecretary of State Christian Herter informed President Dwight D. Eisenhower on December 23, 1958, that the majority of Cubans opposed having President Fulgencio Batista as their leader. The Undersecretary also cited that Fidel Castro was the least anti-American of all the revolutionaries trying to infiltrate the Batista government.⁵ Herter explained that there was a relatively low chance of Castro aligning

with any Communists.⁶ As such, a Democratic America, being sympathetic to the Cuban people's strong opposition to their leader, conceded to the principle that Batista had to be replaced. However, America was not a great admirer of the guerilla fighter Fidel Castro and by no means desired that he take over the leadership role.⁷ The United States was forced to accept him however because there were no other alternatives.⁸ Shortly thereafter on New Years Day 1959, Batista fled from the island-nation, leaving Castro to become Cuba's new Chief of State.⁹ The Cuban people quickly rallied behind and supported their new leader for his heroic and joyous leadership in carrying out a successful revolution.¹⁰

In the beginning, Fidel Castro started out with the Marxist ideals to create unity and equality among the Cuban people.¹¹ To that extent, he set out on a campaign to end illiteracy in Cuba and to outlaw racial segregation.¹² These were clearly ideal things for the new leader to accomplish. Following through with the teachings of Karl Marx and Frederick Engel's Communist Manifesto, Castro destroyed Cuba's political parties as well.¹³ However, in his quest to achieve unity and equality, he went to the extreme of having any one who was caught criticizing the Castro regime arrested and at times executed.¹⁴ Not to mention, in Castro's disillusioned vision, he may have really felt that his control over the radio, television, and the press was a formidable and necessary step to ensure tranquility.¹⁵ However, the question remains as to when Fidel Castro actually crossed over the line of being a theoretical Marxist to become an active Communist. So therefore, it was hard to decide whether making any kind of allegiance with him and his government was really possible?¹⁶

Senator John Fitzgerald Kennedy, in his October 1959 book, *The Strategy of Peace*, criticized Eisenhower's administration for their bad handling of diplomatic relations soon after Castro gained power.¹⁷ Kennedy said that if the administration had given the "fiery young rebel a warmer welcome in his hour of triumph" that Castro might never have become a Communist.¹⁸ However, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., an historian who would later serve as a top advisor to Kennedy during his Presidency, did not believe that the U.S. did anything to push Castro into an allegiance with the Soviet Union.¹⁹ Nonetheless, the Eisenhower administration realized the mistake that had been made in helping Castro to secure power in Cuba, and knew that something had to be done to get him out.²⁰

The Eisenhower administration, as a result of pressure from angry Cuban exiles in Florida and the C.I.A. realized that they had to act fast. However, Eisenhower did not believe in unilateral action by the United States.²¹ Instead, he chose to work in conjunction with the Central Intelligence Agency to create a plan that would oust Castro from power by assassinating him, and one that would cover up any U.S. government involvement.²² It was a move that the great American President, Franklin Delano Roosevelt would never have approved of because he feared that if the United States started assassinating Chiefs of State, that it would never end.²³

On March 17, 1960, Eisenhower finally approved a plan to start the operation to overthrow Fidel Castro.²⁴ Soon after, the C.I.A. began training a Brigade that was filled with anti-Castro Cuban exiles that eventually would be sent into Cuba in an attempt to take over its government. Each of the Cuban Exile fighters fighting in the Brigade was given a number by the C.I.A., starting with 2500, to make Castro's

the number assigned to a fighter meant that he was more courageous than the next higher number. Brigade 2506 was named in memory of Carlos Rodriguez Santana, a young Brigadier who was killed accidentally in the early stages of the operation. Originally, there were only supposed to be Cuban guerrilla forces trained in Cuba by other Cubans under the direction of the C.I.A. to infiltrate into Cuba. However, in October 1960 the C.I.A. informed Eisenhower that a larger, more formal invasion was needed instead because Castro was being supplied with new weapons by the Soviets. As a result, Eisenhower, in November 1960, changed the operation, into a Paramilitary Invasion, which included air support by the United States.

It would not be long before the Cuban Intelligence discovered the American intent to invade Cuba, and they did not wait long to pass along that knowledge to the rest of the world. In the Spring of 1960, Cuba's Foreign Minister Raul Roa "let the cat out of the bag" when he overwhelmingly supplied proof before the United Nations that the United States was planning an attack on Cuba. ³⁰ He cited from several circulating reports that the Central Intelligence Agency was recruiting and training people in Florida, Louisiana, and Guatemala with the sole purpose of taking over the island-nation. ³¹ On July 10, 1960, the Soviet leader Nikita Krushchev threatened Eisenhower by informing him that if the United States intervened militarily in Cuba, that he would retaliate by launching rockets at the United States. ³² Krushchev believed that the Monroe Doctrine had "outlived its time and should now be buried as a corpse." ³³ Eisenhower, however, was not to be intimidated as he quickly responded that he would never allow Communism in the Western Hemisphere. ³⁴

According to a March 11, 1961 document, the Central Intelligence Agency believed that the Castro government was becoming more stable and without America's immediate involvement to overthrow the Communist leader, he would become even more powerful as the Cuban citizens who initially fought with the idea of him being their leader, would gradually decline and conform to accept his government.³⁵ It was on this day as well that President Kennedy ordered the invasion location changed from Trinidad to a new location in Cuba, so that a less "spectacular" mission could be carried out, hopefully hiding the U.S.'s hand.³⁶ Originally, Trinidad was chosen as the location for a Cuba invasion because of its desirable location near the Escambray Mountains. The Escambray Mountains were desirable because they were seen as a place where the Brigade could escape to, hide, and conduct a guerrilla war from until reinforcements came to help them in the event that things did not go as planned.³⁷ However, Brigadier General David Gray, believed that even under the most favorable conditions, meaning that there would be a large scale defection of Cubans joining the Brigade, air supremacy, and the ability to survive attacks by Castro's forces for at least a week before new troops would arrive by hiding in the Mountains that there would still only be a fair chance to eventually oust Castro. By fair chance, he meant a thirty percent chance for success, which means that the odds were stacked against them.³⁸

There is a possibility that having changed the location from Trinidad, to the only other possible spot, the Bay of Pigs, may have been the reason that the operation failed. At the Bay of Pigs, there were no port facilities with docks where equipment and supplies to support he Brigade could have been unloaded.³⁹ As such, on April 8, 1961, the two sub-commanders in charge of the Bay of Pigs operation, Jacob Esterline and Jack

Hawkins planned to resign because they did not believe that the mission could be a success with the change in location from Trinidad to the Bay of Pigs. However, they were convinced to stay by the C.I.A. Deputy Director of Plans, Richard Bissell.⁴⁰

For the Bay of Pigs invasion to have been a success, the C.I.A. believed that there had to be four elements carried out. First, "there had to be an unspectacular night landing," second, "the possibility of conducting air operations from a base on seized territory," third, "a build-up period, after the initial landing, to precede offensive action against Castro," and fourth, "the terrain suitable for guerrilla warfare in the event the invasion force could not hold a lodgment." However, several of these things could never be accomplished.

On April 10, 1961, Bissell told Attorney General Robert Kennedy that the invasion had a two out of three chance of succeeding. This was yet another lie that Bissell concocted. C.I.A. director Allen Dulles and Richard Bissell told Kennedy that if the Brigade could successfully establish a permanent base on the island, then one quarter of all the Cubans on the island would join in and support them. However, what Kennedy did not know is that Bissell was secretly paying the Mafia, who had interests of their own being threatened in Cuba, to assassinate Castro. Bissell felt that this would have made the Bay of Pigs invasion much easier to win with the anarchy that would have ensued, but it was never pulled off. As for the invasion, it was believed that once the Brigade had a stronghold in Cuba that the U.S. government could then justify supplying them with economic, political, and military support.

To prepare for the April 17, 1961 invasion, President Kennedy ordered Brigade 2506 to fly eight B-26 Bombers stationed in Nicaragua and bearing a counterfeit insignia

of Cuba's Revolutionary Air Force into Cuba two days prior and start bombing raids against three different cities, Cuba's capital city of Havana, San Antonio de los Banos, and Santiago de Cuba. 46. However, this turned out to be an unsuccessful attempt to destroy the few combat aircrafts that Castro had in his arsenal. 47 This decision was against the views of Kennedy's advisor Arthur Schlesinger Jr. who believed that "no matter how 'Cuban' the equipment and personnel, the U.S. will be held accountable for the operation, and our prestige will be committed to its success." The Bombers managed to hit parts of

In response to the attacks, Fidel Castro, in an address to the Cuban people, preached that Cuba was the victim of "criminal imperialist aggression," and further denounced imperialism making references to how the United States deceives its own people. To prove his point, Castro read the headline from an April 15, 1961 dispatch from the Associated Press claiming that the attack on Cuba was from "three Cuban bomber pilots, fearing betrayal in their plans to escape Fidel Castro's government fled today to the United States after strafing and bombing the airports in Santiago and Havana. Before the World Community at the United Nations, United States Ambassador, Adlai Stevenson denied however that the U.S. had any involvement in the bombings. Stevenson, truly believed that the planes that landed in Florida belonged to Cuban defectors, as he had been told, when in reality, they were ordered to fly from Nicaragua and bypass Cuba to give the impression that they were defectors. The embarrassment and the deception were discovered after reporters in Florida recognized that the planes were not Cuban and that they were American B-26 Bombers painted over

to look Cuban.⁵⁴ Schlesinger was right.⁵⁵ Nobody believed that the planes belonged to a Cuban defectors.

In order to prevent further embarrassment to American prestige, Kennedy made it clear to the C.I.A. that he would not provide any more American assistance than had already been given, although Bissell naively believed that he could change Kennedy's mind.⁵⁶ Jack Hawkins, a sub-commander in the Bay of Pigs operations believed that it was Secretary of State Dean Rusk who finally convinced Kennedy not to use further air strikes.⁵⁷ As Albert Persons, an American pilot who was hired by the C.I.A. to help in the Bay of Pigs operations claims, "there had never been any plan to use United States air forces in the invasion in the first place. Nevertheless, it became widely accepted that lack of United States military air support at the Bay of Pigs was the reason for its failure."58 A Statement in an April 13, 1961 C.I.A. document as well attests that the Brigade 2506 officers did "not expect help from the U.S. Armed Forces." 59 While Kennedy did not want to supply further American assistance, he did not desire to cancel the entire operation. Besides, if he did cancel it, the Cuban fighters who were now well trained, even though Kennedy's advisor, Arthur Schlesinger doubted their competence⁶⁰ could have attacked Guatemala, where many of the Brigadiers were stationed and have caused even more embarrassment to the United States than what was caused in their defeat.⁶¹ In any case, he could have cancelled the whole Bay of Pigs invasion after United States involvement was discovered and he had the chance, but he chose not to and so, the invasion proceeded.⁶² As C.I.A. Inspector General Lyman Kirkpatrick concluded, canceling the Bay of Pigs invasion would have been embarrassing, since the World Community was expecting an invasion, however it would have avoided failure, which caused the U.S. more embarrassment as well as a loss of prestige.⁶³ But on the other hand, Kennedy did not want to appear to be a liar to the American people who he had already told "there will not be under any conditions…be an intervention in Cuba by United States Armed Forces.⁶⁴

Each Brigadier that entered Cuba in the early morning of April 17, 1961, D-Day for the Bay of Pigs invasion, was equipped with an automatic weapon and a portable radio transceiver.⁶⁵ The transceiver was given to them so that in an emergency, if the invasion did not go as planned and the Brigade had to scatter and fight a guerrilla war, they would each have the transceiver to be able to stay in contact with one another.⁶⁶ However, the Brigade itself was never informed that Kennedy had decided not to conduct further air strikes in Cuba.⁶⁷ However, the Joint Chiefs of Staff did not believe that it would matter because they did not expect that Castro would be ready for the Bay of Pigs attack, ⁶⁸ however he was ready.⁶⁹ Paramilitary Chief Jack Hawkins believed that the mission should have been cancelled if there was not going to be ample air support for the Brigade.⁷⁰

Brigade 2506 was made up of fifteen hundred and eleven men who were transported by air from Guatemala to Nicaragua. Then, they were transported more than eight hundred miles⁷¹ by sea from Nicaragua, with the exception of one hundred and seventy-seven paratroopers that were to be dropped into Cuba by eleven B-26 Bombers.⁷² However, the B-26 Bombers were unexpectedly met by Castro's Air Force. Castro's Air Force, catching them by surprise, was able to shoot down four of the planes, force four of them to land in other countries, and force three to retreat to their original base.⁷³ As for the Cubans coming in by ship, they did not fare much better. Once reaching shore, many

of them tired to escape through woods and by crossing through swamps, which as Mario A. Martinez recalls was "unbelievably freezing" and the coldest place that he had ever been in.⁷⁴ However, Castro's militia fiercely pursued the Brigade for three days until one thousand, one hundred and eighty out of the one thousand three hundred and thirty-four Brigadiers that came on the ships to the Bay of Pigs were captured.⁷⁵ They remained prisoners in Cuba until the end of 1962, when agreement was finally reach by the U.S. and Cuba to exchange the prisoners for fifty-three million dollars in food, medical, and pharmaceutical supplies.⁷⁶

On the morning of April 17, 1961, following the night attack at the Bay of Pigs, the Cuban Revolutionary Council in a press release claimed that a large part of the Cuban Militia had turned against Castro in support of the new Cuban Revolutionaries.⁷⁷ However, this was a ploy to win Americans support for Castro's removal and not just an imperial lie as Castro believed.⁷⁸ But in the end, it did not matter, as Castro was never unseated. In the end, we can analyze that the C.I.A. did not desire to invade Cuba because it feared that they would one day pose a threat to the United States or any South American countries.⁷⁹ Therefore, it can only be presumed that the United States invaded Cuba because they were against the principle of not being able to control every aspect of the World, or in other words, they were in fact guilty of imperialism. Kennedy told the press after the Bay of Pigs defeat that "there's an old saying that victory has a hundred fathers and defeat is an orphan. I am the responsible officer of the government."80 Whether he was responsible or not, he accepted responsibility and Americans praised him for it. Secretary of State Dean Acheson tried explaining to Kennedy that 1,500 Cubans in Brigade 2506 were no match for the 25,000 Cubans that were loyal to Castro. 81 But that did not stop Kennedy from continually probing the question to himself of "How could I have been so stupid to let them go ahead?" 82

In trying to understand what exactly went wrong for the U.S., former C.I.A. director Allen Dulles, who oversaw the whole Bay of Pigs operation, claimed that Kennedy lacked "a determination to succeed, a willingness to risk unpleasant political repercussions, and a willingness to provide the basic military necessities."83 However, historian Peter Wyden counters that claim, saying that "if the C.I.A. acting out of control and independently, had not escalated its plans against Fidel Castro from a modest guerrilla operation into a full-fledged invasion, President Kennedy would have suffered no humiliating, almost grotesque defeat.⁸⁴ It has long been believed that success depended on an immediate uprising in Cuba, however C.I.A. director Allen Dulles testifying at a hearing before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on May 2, 1961 spoke otherwise, saying that the C.I.A. hoped for an uprising, but that they did not count on one. 85 Brigade 2506 who were attempting to start a new revolution in Cuba had only intended to create the illusion of a rebellion from within that if successful would have gotten other Cubans to turn against Castro. 86 However, there was never really a chance for an immediate uprising because for security reasons, the people in Cuba who resisted Castro and could possibly have started a rebellion were never informed of the Bay of Pigs invasion ahead of time.⁸⁷ Not to mention that there were swamps surrounding the Bay of Pigs location so that even if there were Cubans that wanted to support Brigade 2506, they would not have been able to get to them. 88 But as C.I.A. Inspector General Lyman Kirkpatrick Jr. revealed in recently declassified documents of his October 1961 report analyzing the failed invasion, he concluded that even if one hundred thousand Cubans had turned against Castro that it would not have led to his overthrow.⁸⁹

The Joint Chiefs of Staff later believed that the C.I.A. had made some big mistakes in its planning of the mission. They had failed to get an independent and neutral evaluation of the mission, they did not advise Kennedy that unseating Castro had a low chance for success, they did not recognize that the mission had been discovered and that the plan had gotten so big that they could not handle it alone, and the fact that they failed to communicate the mission properly with the President for his approval. 90 Dulles later admitted that the invasion plan was thrown at Kennedy upon taking office and that Kennedy never really favored it, but he felt that he could not cancel it, even though he personally was not sure that an invasion was the right course of action to take against Cuba. 91 Bissell, as well adds that the C.I.A. did not pass along the agency's organization and managerial problems Kennedy and as such, he was not organizationally prepared to handle the paramilitary invasion. Bissell also concedes that since the mission became so big, that only the President was capable of coordinating it, but he was not given all of the information he needed. 92 However, Jose Ramon Fernandez, who was the Commander in charge of the Cuban Military that won at the Bay of Pigs, said "From a strategic and tactical point of view, the U.S. operation was not flawed..." He believed that the loss was because of Cubans who showed faith and support in Castro because they believed that he could and would better their future. 93

Castro, with good reason, feared that the United States would not stop in their attempts to oust him from power, so as a result, he signed a defense pact with the Soviet Union that would install nuclear missiles in Cuba, which would eventually result into the

Cuban Missile Crisis for the United States.⁹⁴ The Bay of Pigs invasion pushed Cuba and the Soviet Union into having a stronger relationship; Cuba received security and the Soviet Union was able to make itself more secure by placing short-range missiles in Cuba to reduce its missile gap. The United States in their relentless efforts to eliminate Castro, on the basis of James Monroe's principle that "extending the political system" of the Soviet Union into Cuba would affect the "peace and safety of the United States" shows that his principle could only work theoretically in the Nuclear Age because in trying to defend the policy, the United States and the Soviet Union came very close to a Nuclear war that would have created anything but peace and safety. The only thing that the Bay of Pigs invasion served to accomplish was to foster a closer relationship between the Cubans and the Soviets⁹⁵ and to strengthen Castro's unstable regime and instill nationalistic pride in his citizens.⁹⁶ It was a total flop and nightmare for America. As Fidel concludes that the problems exist between the United States and Cuba because of a conflict in values. He points this out emphatically by saying that "if Mr. Kennedy does not like socialism, well, [the Cubans] do not like imperialism! [The Cubans] do not like capitalism!"97 It would have been more of a success if the United States listened to reason, instead of principle and have just done nothing. Since the United States felt that Cuba was not a threat, they should have just accepted their government, like they have with other governments that are unjust to their people.

End Notes

¹ Heffner, Richard D., ed., A Documentary History of the United States (New York: Mentor, 1999), 96.

³ Madden, Paul, Fidel Castro (Vero Beach: Rourke Publications, 1993), 70, 101.

⁴ Persons, Albert C., Bay of Pigs: A Firsthand Account of the Mission by a U.S. Pilot in Support of the Cuban Invasion Force in 1961. (Jefferson: McFarland and Company, Inc., 1990), 17.

⁵ Higgins, Trumbull, The Perfect Failure (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1987), 40.

- ⁶ Ibid
- ⁷ Ibid
- ⁸ Ibid
- ⁹ Madden, 69.
- 10 Ibid
- ¹¹ Marx and Engels, The Communist Manifesto (New York: Bantam Books, 1992), 43.
- ¹² Castro and Fernandez, Playa Giron (New York: Pathfinder Press, 2001), 12.
- ¹³ Madden, 93.
- ¹⁴ Triay, Victor Andres, Bay of Pigs: An Oral History of Brigade 2506 (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001), 5.
- ¹⁵ Kornbluh, Peter, ed., Bay of Pigs Declassified: The Secret C.I.A. Report on the Invasion of Cuba (New York: The New Press, 1998), 110.
- ¹⁶ Higgins, 40.
- ¹⁷ Higgins, 58.
- ¹⁸ Higgins, 58.
- ¹⁹ Triay, 5.
- ²⁰ Persons, 116.
- ²¹ Higgins, 19.
- ²² Triay, 8.
- ²³ Higgins, 39.
- ²⁴ Persons, 116.
- ²⁵ Wyden, Peter, Bay of Pigs: The Untold Story (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979), 35.
- ²⁶ Ibid.
- ²⁷ Triay, 13.
- ²⁸ Kornbluh, 47-48.
- ²⁹ History Channel: Bay of Pigs Declassified (A&E Home Video, 2000).
- ³⁰ Castro, 15.
- ³¹ Ibid.
- ³² Persons, 17.
- ³³ Higgins, 54.
- ³⁴ Ibid.
- 35 Kornbluh, 123.
- ³⁶ Persons, 141-42.
- ³⁷ Kornbluh, 259, 53.
- ³⁸ Higgins, 83.
- ³⁹ Persons, 141.
- ⁴⁰ Kornbluh, 301.
- ⁴¹ Kornbluh, 50, 51.
- ⁴² Kornbluh, 301.
- ⁴³ Higgins, 103.
- 44 Kornbluh, 265.
- ⁴⁵ Castro, 91-92.
- ⁴⁶ Castro, 46-47
- ⁴⁷ Persons, 81.
- ⁴⁸ Higgins, 114-15.
- ⁴⁹ Castro, 47, 52.

² Ibid

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<sup>50</sup> Castro, 52.
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- ⁵⁴ History Channel.
- ⁵⁵ Higgins, 114-15.
- ⁵⁶ Kornbluh, 264.
- ⁵⁷ Kornbluh, 266.
- ⁵⁸ Persons, 123.
- ⁵⁹ Kornbluh, 178.
- ⁶⁰ Higgins, 115.
- ⁶¹ History Channel.
- ⁶² Higgins, 115.
- ⁶³ Kornbluh, 55.
- ⁶⁴ History Channel.
- ⁶⁵ Persons, 73.
- 66 Ibid.
- 67 Wyden, 221.
- ⁶⁸ Higgins, 83.
- ⁶⁹ Castro, 91.
- ⁷⁰ Kornbluh, 21, 49.
- ⁷¹ Kornbluh, 138.
- ⁷² Castro, 90.
- ⁷³ Castro, 91.
- ⁷⁴ Triay, 114.
- ⁷⁵ Triay, 115.
- ⁷⁶ Kornbluh, 329-30.
- ⁷⁷ Higgins, 149.
- ⁷⁸ Castro, 11.
- ⁷⁹ Kornbluh, 111.
- 80 Kornbluh, 3.
- 81 Kornbluh, 2.
- 82 Wyden, 8.
- 83 Bissell, Richard. Reflections of a Cold Warrior. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 191, 197.
- 84 Wyden, 7.
- 85 Persons, 146.
- ⁸⁶ Kornbluh, 51-52.
- 87 Kornbluh, 97.
- ⁸⁸ History Channel.
- 89 Kornbluh, 97.
- 90 Kornbluh, 53.
- ⁹¹ Higgins, 103.
- ⁹² Kornbluh, 179-80.
- ⁹³ Castro, 160-61.
- 94 Kornbluh, 4.
- 95 Kornbluh, 4.
- ⁹⁶ Madden, 79.
- ⁹⁷ Castro, 229.

⁵¹ Higgins, 130.

⁵² Higgins, 131.

⁵³ Persons, 128.

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