For 13 days in October of 1962, the world teetered on the brink of an __________ nuclear war when Cuba and the Soviet Union faced off with the USA. But how did events in Cuba lead to the escalation of existing ________ War tension? In 1959 Fidel Castro ________ power after the Cuban revolution. The new Cuban government began taking property owned by Americans in Cuba, nationalised its foreign banks and more worrying for America, ________ itself with the Soviet Union. In response, the USA imposed a trade ________ against Cuba. In January 1961, the USA broke off relations with Cuba entirely before secretly supporting the ________ Brigade’s ________ invasion at the Bay of ________. Elsewhere, in 1962 American Jupiter (nuclear) missiles placed in Turkey, within range of the Soviet Union, were made operational. US Senator Ken Keating warned that the ________ were building missile sites in Cuba and urged Kennedy to take action. Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko warned in a _____ speech that an American attack on Cuba would lead to war with the Soviet Union. Soon after, an American _____ spy plane flew over Cuba and took photographs proving the __________ of Soviet missile construction in Cuba.

Text edited from www.cbc.ca.

1: What was the Cold War‘?
______________________________________________________________________________

2: Why did Fidel Castro align with the Soviet Union?
______________________________________________________________________________

3: Who were the Cuban Brigade?
______________________________________________________________________________

4: Why was the USA so concerned about Soviet missiles in Cuba?
______________________________________________________________________________

5: What was the likely outcome of an American attack on Cuba?
______________________________________________________________________________
Fifty years ago, shortly before midnight on 16 April 1961, a group of some 1,500 Cuban exiles trained and financed by the CIA launched an ill-fated invasion of Cuba from the sea in the Bay of Pigs. The plan was to overthrow Fidel Castro and his revolution. Instead, it turned into a humiliating defeat which pushed Cuba firmly into the arms of the Soviet Union and has soured US-Cuban relations to this day. 

The US hatched a plan to topple Castro. In 1961, 1,500 Cuban exiles, trained and financed by the CIA, launched an invasion in the Bay of Pigs. It was an unmitigated disaster. The invaders had hoped to gain local support for their cause but it didn’t materialise. Castro took personal charge of the defensive operation and within three days the battle was won. More than 100 of the invaders died in the attack and 1,189 were taken prisoner. Realising the US was now his sworn enemy, Castro forged even closer ties with the Soviet Union. He was determined to stay in power and safeguard the revolution – in May he abolished multiparty elections.

The USA completely underestimated the degree of support for Fidel Castro’s revolution inside Cuba and the Bay of Pigs invasion was the first great defeat of Yankee Imperialism in the Latin America. It was supposed to rid the hemisphere of a potential Soviet base, but it pushed Fidel Castro into the waiting arms of the Soviet Union. It was meant to undermine his revolution but it truly helped him to consolidate it. The Bay of Pigs as a perfect failure for the US, which the rest of the world quickly realised was behind the operation.

‘Oh, I’d say we were a mile and a half, to a half mile from shore. Yeah, when they went onto the beach we were that close. I assumed that we were in support of them. As far as anyone knows, it was the Cubans going ashore. Who else would it be? Anyway you could see artillery hitting the beach. Gray clouds would go up. And the Cubans were running all over the place trying to get up the beach. Their equipment was all on the beach and got shot up. And that transport ship they had out there got hit with an artillery round. There was a big black puff of smoke. A lot of their equipment was on there. I knew it was on there because I was up on the bridge and I heard the officers talking. And our captain said, they won’t be able to get their heavy equipment off.

See, I could eaves-drop on all this, because that was my station, up there in officers’ country. And he was talking to his officers and saying they wouldn’t be able to get their heavy equipment off that ship now, whatever their heavy equipment was. So then I thought, “Well, they’re getting the shit shot out of ‘em, so now the task force will come in and support them.” And they didn’t. We made two or three passes up and down the beach. One time was real close. You could see them lying on the beach, and I saw one artillery round come, and I don’t know, maybe it’s my imagination. It wasn’t as dramatic as you see in the movies, because we were pretty far away from it. But I saw some of them were running in the water, aiming to swim back to their boat maybe. But most of them went up into the hills and you couldn’t see than anymore’.

Bill Bader : US NAVY Signalman.
The Cuban Missile Crisis

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