

**La crise de Cuba : documents américains**

**34.**

**Washington, October 20, 1962, 2:30-5:10 p.m.**

**PARTICIPANTS**

The President  
Attorney General  
Robert F. Kennedy

*CIA*

John A. McCone, Director  
Mr. Ray Cline  
Mr. Arthur Lundahl  
Mr. Chamberlain

*Defense*

Robert S. McNamara, Secretary  
Roswell Gilpatric, Deputy Secretary  
Paul Nitze, Assistant Secretary (ISA)

*JCS*

General Maxwell D. Taylor, USA, Chairman

*OEP*

Edward A. McDermott, Director

*State*

Dean Rusk, Secretary  
George Ball, Under Secretary  
U. Alexis Johnson, Deputy Under Secretary for Political Affairs  
Adlai Stevenson, U.S. Ambassador to the UN  
Edwin Martin, Assistant Secretary, Inter-American Affairs  
Llewellyn E. Thompson, Ambassador-at-Large

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*Treasury*

Douglas Dillon, Secretary

*White House*

McGeorge Bundy, Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs

Theodore Sorensen, Special Counsel

Kenneth O'Donnell, Special Assistant to the President

Bromley Smith, Executive Secretary, National Security Council

**Intelligence Briefing**

The first twenty minutes were spent in the presentation and discussion of photographic intelligence establishing the presence in Cuba of Soviet intermediate-range and medium-range missiles, mobile missile launchers and missile sites.

Mr. Ray Cline of the Central Intelligence Agency summarized the report of the Guided Missile and Astronautics Intelligence Committee, the Joint Atomic Energy Intelligence Committee, and the National Photographic Interpretation Center, dated October 19, 1962 (SC 09538-62).<sup>(1)</sup> Mr. Arthur Lundahl of CIA described the various missile sites and launching pads, displaying enlarged pictures identical to those in the Committee report.

In response to the President's question, Mr. Cline stated that there were no U-2 photographic reconnaissance missions over Cuba from August 29th to October 14th. The gap in photographic coverage was in part due to bad weather and in part to a desire to avoid activating the SAM Air Defense installations which the Russians were hurriedly installing in Cuba during this period. Since October 14th, nine high altitude missions have been flown. Information from these missions is not fully processed, but will be available for presentation by Monday.

In summary, the Council was informed that sixteen SS-4 missiles, with a range of 1020 nautical miles were now operational in Cuba and could be fired approximately eighteen hours after a decision to fire was taken. The bearing of these launchers was 315 degrees, i.e. toward the central area of the United States.

The President summarized the discussion of the intelligence material as follows. There is something to destroy in Cuba now and, if it is destroyed, a strategic missile capability would

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be difficult to restore. (Specific details of the briefing are contained in the attached Committee report.)(2)

#### Blockage Track

Secretary McNamara explained to the President that there were differences among his advisers which had resulted in the drafting of alternative courses of action. He added that the military planners are at work on measures to carry out all recommended courses of action in order that, following a Presidential decision, fast action could be taken.

Secretary McNamara described his view as the "blockade route." This route is aimed at preventing any addition to the strategic missiles already deployed to Cuba and eventually to eliminate these missiles. He said to do this we should institute a blockade of Cuba and be prepared to take armed action in specified instances.

(The President was handed a copy of Ted Sorensen's "blockade route" draft of a Presidential message, which he read.)(3)

Secretary McNamara concluded by explaining that following the blockade, the United States would negotiate for the removal of the strategic missiles from Cuba. He said we would have to be prepared to accept the withdrawal of United States strategic missiles from Turkey and Italy and possibly agreement to limit our use of Guantanamo to a specified limited time. He added that we could obtain the removal of the missiles from Cuba only if we were prepared to offer something in return during negotiations. He opposed as too risky the suggestion that we should issue an ultimatum to the effect that we would order an air attack on Cuba if the missiles were not removed. He said he was prepared to tell Khrushchev we consider the missiles in Cuba as Soviet missiles and that if they were used against us, we would retaliate by launching missiles against the USSR.

Secretary McNamara pointed out that SNIE 11-19-62, dated October 20, 1962,(4) estimates that the Russians will not use force to push their ships through our blockade. He cited Ambassador Bohlen's view that the USSR would not take military action, but would limit its reaction to political measures in the United Nations.

Secretary McNamara listed the disadvantages of the blockade route as follows:

1. It would take a long time to achieve the objective of eliminating strategic missiles from Cuba.

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2. It would result in serious political trouble in the United States.
3. The world position of the United States might appear to be weakening.

The advantages which Secretary McNamara cited are:

1. It would cause us the least trouble with our allies.
2. It avoids any surprise air attack on Cuba, which is contrary to our tradition.
3. It is the only military course of action compatible with our position as a leader of the free world.
4. It avoids a sudden military move which might provoke a response from the USSR which could result in escalating actions leading to general war.

The President pointed out that during a blockade, more missiles would become operational, and upon the completion of sites and launching pads, the threat would increase. He asked General Taylor how many missiles we could destroy by air action on Monday.

General Taylor reported that the Joint Chiefs of Staff favor an air strike on Tuesday when United States forces could be in a state of readiness. He said he did not share Secretary McNamara's fear that if we used nuclear weapons in Cuba, nuclear weapons would be used against us.

Secretary Rusk asked General Taylor whether we dared to attack operational strategic missile sites in Cuba.

General Taylor responded that the risk of these missiles being used against us was less than if we permitted the missiles to remain there.

The President pointed out that on the basis of the intelligence estimate there would be some fifty strategic missiles operational in mid-December, if we went the blockade route and took no action to destroy the sites being developed.

General Taylor said that the principal argument he wished to make was that now was the time to act because this would be the last chance we would have to destroy these missiles. If we did not act now, the missiles would be camouflaged in such a way as to make

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it impossible for us to find them. Therefore, if they were not destroyed, we would have to live with them with all the consequent problems for the defense of the United States.

The President agreed that the missile threat became worse each day, adding that we might wish, looking back, that we had done earlier what we are now preparing to do.

Secretary Rusk said that a blockade would seriously affect the Cuban missile capability in that the Soviets would be unable to deploy to Cuba any missiles in addition to those now there.

Under Secretary Ball said that if an effective blockade was established, it was possible that our photographic intelligence would reveal that there were no nuclear warheads in Cuba; hence, none of the missiles now there could be made operational.

General Taylor indicated his doubt that it would be possible to prevent the Russians from deploying warheads to Cuba by means of a blockade because of the great difficulty of setting up an effective air blockade.

Secretary McNamara stated that if we knew that a plane was flying nuclear warheads to Cuba, we should immediately shoot it down. Parenthetically, he pointed out there are now 6000 to 8000 Soviet personnel in Cuba.

The President asked whether the institution of a blockade would appear to the free world as a strong response to the Soviet action. He is particularly concerned about whether the Latin American countries would think that the blockade was an appropriate response to the Soviet challenge.

The Attorney General returned to the point made by General Taylor, i.e. that now is the last chance we will have to destroy Castro and the Soviet missiles deployed in Cuba.

Mr. Sorensen said he did not agree with the Attorney General or with General Taylor that this was our last chance. He said a missile buildup would end if, as everyone seemed to agree, the Russians would not use force to penetrate the United States blockade.

#### Air Strike Route

Mr. Bundy handed to the President the "air strike alternative,"<sup>(5)</sup> which the President read. It was also referred to as the Bundy plan.

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The Attorney General told the President that this plan was supported by Mr. Bundy, General Taylor, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and with minor variations, by Secretary Dillon and Director McCone.

General Taylor emphasized the opportunity available now to take out not only all the missiles, but all the Soviet medium bombers (IL-28) which were neatly lined up in the open on airbases in Cuba.

Mr. McNamara cautioned that an air strike would not destroy all the missiles and launchers in Cuba, and, at best, we could knock out two-thirds of these missiles. Those missiles not destroyed could be fired from mobile launchers not destroyed. General Taylor said he was unable to explain why the IL-28 medium bombers had been left completely exposed on two airfields. The only way to explain this, he concluded, was on the ground that the Cubans and the Russians did not anticipate United States air strike.

Secretary Rusk said he hesitated to ask the question but he wondered whether these planes were decoys. He also wondered whether the Russians were trying to entice us into a trap. Secretary McNamara stated his strong doubt that these planes were decoys. Director McCone added that the Russians would not have sent one hundred shiploads of equipment to Cuba solely to play a "trick". General Taylor returned to the point he had made earlier, namely, that if we do not destroy the missiles and the bombers, we will have to change our entire military way of dealing with external threats.

The President raised the question of advance warning prior to military action--whether we should give a minimum of two hours notice of an air strike to permit Soviet personnel to leave the area to be attacked.

General Taylor said that the military would be prepared to live with a twenty-four hour advance notice or grace period if such advance notice was worthwhile politically. The President expressed his doubt that any notice beyond seven hours had any political value.

There was a brief discussion of the usefulness of sending a draft message to Castro, and a copy of such message was circulated.[\(6\)](#)

The President stated flatly that the Soviet planes in Cuba did not concern him particularly. He said we must be prepared to live with the Soviet threat as represented by Soviet bombers. However, the existence of strategic missiles in Cuba had an entirely different impact throughout Latin America. In his view the existence of fifty planes in Cuba

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did not affect the balance of power, but the missiles already in Cuba were an entirely different matter.

The Attorney General said that in his opinion a combination of the blockade route and the air strike route was very attractive to him. He felt we should first institute the blockade. In the event that the Soviets continued to build up the missile capability in Cuba, then we should inform the Russians that we would destroy the missiles, the launchers, and the missile sites. He said he favored a short wait during which time the Russians could react to the blockade. If the Russians did not halt the development of the missile capability, then we would proceed to make an air strike. The advantage of proceeding in this way, he added, was that we would get away from the Pearl Harbor surprise attack aspect of the air strike route.

Mr. Bundy pointed out that there was a risk that we would act in such a way as to get Khrushchev to commit himself fully to the support of Castro.

Secretary Rusk doubted that a delay of twenty-four hours in initiating an air strike was of any value. He said he now favored proceeding on the blockade track.

Secretary Dillon mentioned seventy-two hours as the time between instituting the blockade and initiating an air strike in the event we receive no response to our initial action.

Director McCone stated his opposition to an air strike, but admitted that in his view a blockade was not enough. He argued that we should institute the blockade and tell the Russians that if the missiles were not dismantled within seventy-two hours, the United States would destroy the missiles by air attack. He called attention to the risk involved in a long drawn-out period during which the Cubans could, at will, launch the missiles against the United States. Secretary Dillon said that the existence of strategic missiles in Cuba was, in his opinion, not negotiable. He believed that any effort to negotiate the removal of the missiles would involve a price so high that the United States could not accept it. If the missiles are not removed or eliminated, he continued, the United States will lose all of its friends in Latin America, who will become convinced that our fear is such that we cannot act. He admitted that the limited use of force involved in a blockade would make the military task much harder and would involve the great danger of the launching of these missiles by the Cubans.

Deputy Secretary Gilpatric saw the choice as involving the use of limited force or of unlimited force. He was prepared to face the prospect of an air strike against Cuba later, but he opposed the initial use of all-out military force such as a surprise air attack. He defined a

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blockade as being the application of the limited use of force and doubted that such limited use could be combined with an air strike.

General Taylor argued that a blockade would not solve our problem or end the Cuban missile threat. He said that eventually we would have to use military force and, if we waited, the use of military force would be much more costly.

Secretary McNamara noted that the air strike planned by the Joint Chiefs involved 800 sorties. Such a strike would result in several thousand Russians being killed, chaos in Cuba, and efforts to overthrow the Castro government. In his view the

probability was high that an air strike would lead inevitably to an invasion. He doubted that the Soviets would take an air strike on Cuba without resorting to a very major response. In such an event, the United States would lose control of the situation which could escalate to general war.

The President agreed that a United States air strike would lead to a major Soviet response, such as blockading Berlin. He agreed that at an appropriate time we would have to acknowledge that we were willing to take strategic missiles out of Turkey and Italy if this issue was raised by the Russians. He felt that implementation of a blockade would also result in Soviet reprisals, possibly the blockade of Berlin. If we instituted a blockade on Sunday, then by Monday or Tuesday we would know whether the missile development had ceased or whether it was continuing. Thus, we would be in a better position to know what move to make next.

Secretary Dillon called attention to the fact that even if the Russians agreed to dismantle the missiles now in Cuba, continuing inspection would be required to ensure that the missiles were not again made ready.

The President said that if it was decided to go the Bundy route, he would favor an air strike which would destroy only missiles. He repeated this view that we would have to live with the threat arising out of the stationing in Cuba of Soviet bombers.

Secretary Rusk referred to an air strike as chapter two. He did not think we should initiate such a strike because of the risk of escalating actions leading to general war. He doubted that we should act without consultation of our allies. He said a sudden air strike had no support in the law or morality, and, therefore, must be ruled out. Reading from notes, he

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urged that we start the blockade and only go on to an air attack when we knew the reaction of the Russians and of our allies.

At this point Director McCone acknowledged that we did not know positively that nuclear warheads for the missiles deployed had actually arrived in Cuba. Although we had evidence of the construction of storage places for nuclear weapons, such weapons may not yet have been sent to Cuba.

The President asked what we would say to those whose reaction to our instituting a blockade now would be to ask why we had not blockaded last July.

Both Mr. Sorensen and Mr. Ball made the point that we did not institute a blockade in July because we did not then know of the existence of the strategic missiles in Cuba.

Secretary Rusk suggested that our objective was an immediate freeze of the strategic missile capability in Cuba to be inspected by United Nations observation teams stationed at the missile sites. He referred to our bases in Turkey, Spain and Greece as being involved in any negotiation covering foreign bases. He said a United Nations group might be sent to Cuba to reassure those who might fear that the United States was planning an invasion.

Ambassador Stevenson stated his flat opposition to a surprise air strike, which he felt would ultimately lead to a United States invasion of Cuba. He supported the institution of the blockade and predicted that such action would reduce the chance of Soviet retaliation of a nature which would inevitably escalate. In his view our aim is to end the existing missile threat in Cuba without casualties and without escalation. He urged that we offer the Russians a settlement involving the withdrawal of our missiles from Turkey and our evacuation of Guantanamo base.

The President sharply rejected the thought of surrendering our base at Guantanamo in the present situation. He felt that such action would convey to the world that we had been frightened into abandoning our position. He was not opposed to discussing withdrawal of our missiles from Turkey and Greece, but he was firm in saying we should only make such a proposal in the future.

The Attorney General thought we should convey our firm intentions to the Russians clearly and suggested that we might tell the Russians that we were turning over nuclear weapons and missiles to the West Germans.

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Ambassador Thompson stated his view that our first action should be the institution of a blockade. Following this, he thought we should launch an air strike to destroy the missiles and sites, after giving sufficient warning so that Russian nationals could leave the area to be attacked.

The President said he was ready to go ahead with the blockade and to take actions necessary to put us in a position to undertake an air strike on the missiles and missile sites by Monday or Tuesday.

General Taylor summarized the military actions already under way, including the quiet reinforcement of Guantanamo by infiltrating marines and the positioning of ships to take out United States dependents from Guantanamo on extremely short notice.

The Attorney General said we could implement a blockade very quickly and prepare for an air strike to be launched later if we so decided.

The President said he was prepared to authorize the military to take those preparatory actions which they would have to take in anticipation of the military invasion of Cuba. He suggested that we inform the Turks and the Italians that they should not fire the strategic missiles they have even if attacked. The warheads for missiles in Turkey and Italy could be dismantled. He agreed that we should move to institute a blockade as quickly as we possibly can.

In response to a question about further photographic surveillance of Cuba, Secretary McNamara recommended, and the President agreed, that no low level photographic reconnaissance should be undertaken now because we have decided to institute a blockade.

Secretary Rusk recommended that a blockade not be instituted before Monday in order to provide time required to consult our allies.

Mr. Bundy said the pressure from the press was becoming intense and suggested that one way of dealing with it was to announce shortly that we had obtained photographic evidence of the existence of strategic missiles in Cuba. This announcement would hold the press until the President made his television speech.

The President acknowledged that the domestic political heat following his television appearance would be terrific. He said he had opposed an invasion of Cuba but that now we were confronted with the possibility that by December there would be fifty strategic missiles

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deployed there. In explanation as to why we have not acted sooner to deal with the threat from Cuba, he pointed out that only now do we have the kind of evidence which we can make available to our allies in order to convince them of the necessity of acting. Only now do we have a way of avoiding a split with our allies.

It is possible that we may have to make an early strike with or without warning next week. He stressed again the difference between the conventional military buildup in Cuba and the psychological impact throughout the world of the Russian deployment of strategic missiles to Cuba. General Taylor repeated his recommendation that any air strike in Cuba included attacks on the MIGs and medium bombers.

The President repeated his view that our world position would be much better if we attack only the missiles. He directed that air strike plans include only missiles and missile sites, preparations to be ready three days from now.

Under Secretary Ball expressed his view that a blockade should include all shipments of POL to Cuba. Secretary Rusk thought that POL should not now be included because such a decision would break down the distinction which we want to make between elimination of strategic missiles and the downfall of the Castro government. Secretary Rusk repeated his view that our objective is to destroy the offensive capability of the missiles in Cuba, not, at this time, seeking to overthrow Castro!

The President acknowledged that the issue was whether POL should be included from the beginning or added at a later time. He preferred to delay possibly as long as a week.

Secretary Rusk called attention to the problem involved in referring to our action as a blockade. He preferred the use of the word "quarantine".

Parenthetically, the President asked Secretary Rusk to reconsider present policy of refusing to give nuclear weapons assistance to France. He expressed the view that in light of present circumstances a refusal to help the French was not worthwhile. He thought that in the days ahead we might be able to gain the needed support of France if we stopped refusing to help them with their nuclear weapons project.

There followed a discussion of several sentences in the "blockade route" draft of the President's speech. It was agreed that the President should define our objective in terms of halting "offensive missile preparations in Cuba". Reference to economic pressures on Cuba would not be made in this context.

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The President made clear that in the United Nations we should emphasize the subterranean nature of the missile buildup in Cuba. Only if we were asked would we respond that we were prepared to talk about the withdrawal of missiles from Italy and Turkey. In such an eventuality, the President pointed out that we would have to make clear to the Italians and the Turks that withdrawing strategic missiles was not a retreat and that we would be prepared to replace these missiles by providing a more effective deterrent, such as the assignment of Polaris submarines. The President asked Mr. Nitze to study the problems arising out of the withdrawal of missiles from Italy and Turkey, with particular reference to complications which would arise in NATO. The President made clear that our emphasis should be on the missile threat from Cuba.

Ambassador Stevenson reiterated his belief that we must be more forthcoming about giving up our missile bases in Turkey and Italy. He stated again his belief that the present situation required that we offer to give up such bases in order to induce the Russians to remove the strategic missiles from Cuba.

Mr. Nitze flatly opposed making any such offer, but said he would not object to discussing this question in the event that negotiations developed from our institution of a blockade.

The President concluded the meeting by stating that we should be ready to meet criticism of our deployment of missiles abroad but we should not initiate negotiations with a base withdrawal proposal.<sup>(7)</sup>

1 Apparent reference to the report of 8 p.m., October 19; see Document 33. [Back](#)

2 Not found attached. [Back](#)

3 Not found; however, drafts of three unattributed papers for blockade scenarios, all dated October 20, are in the Kennedy Library, National Security Files, NSC Meetings. One presented a 5-day scenario with anticipated Soviet, allied, and Cuban reaction; the second outlined nine courses of action in the 24 hours before a blockade was instituted; and the third, with "Third Draft" typed on it, offered 23 steps that had to be taken before the A hour. None of these papers, however, contained a draft Presidential message. [Back](#)

4 See footnote 3, Document 32. [Back](#)

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5 A copy of this 3-page scenario, which had paragraphs on the military program, schedule of public statements, notice to Khrushchev and Castro--Alternative 1, notice to Khrushchev and Castro--Alternative 2, and notice to Friends, is in the Washington National Records Center, RG 330, OASD(C) A Files: FRC 71 A 2896, Nitze Files: Black Book Cuba, and in the Kennedy Library, Sorensen Papers, Classified Subject Files, Cuba. [Back](#)

6 Not found. [Back](#)

7 The NSC Record of Action No. 2457 for this meeting reads:  
"Soviet Strategic Missiles in Cuba

"a. Noted a briefing by the Director of Central Intelligence, supported by photographic intelligence, establishing the presence in Cuba of Soviet strategic missiles, including mobile launchers and missile sites under construction.

"b. Discussed alternative courses of action aimed at removing the strategic missiles from Cuba." (Kennedy Library, National Security Files, Meetings and Memoranda Series, NSC Meetings) [Back](#)

Source: Kennedy Library, National Security Files, Meetings and Memoranda Series, NSC Meetings. Top Secret. No drafting information appears on the source text. The meeting was held in the Oval Room. For the Attorney General's account of this meeting, see *Thirteen Days*, pp. 48-50.

## 36.

### Washington, October 21, 1962.

1. The meeting was held in the Oval Room at the White House and lasted from 11:30 a.m. to approximately 12:30 p.m. In attendance were the Attorney General, General Taylor, General Sweeney and the Secretary of Defense.

2. The Secretary of Defense stated that following the start of an air attack, the initial units of the landing force could invade Cuba within 7 days. The movement of troops in preparation for such an invasion will start at the time of the President's speech. No mobilization of Reserve forces is required for such an invasion until the start of the air strike.

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General LeMay had stated that the transport aircraft, from Reserve and Guard units, which would be required for participation in such an invasion can be fully operational within 24 to 48 hours after the call to active duty.

3. The Secretary of Defense reported that, based on information which became available during the night, it now appears that there is equipment in Cuba for approximately 40 MRBM or IRBM launchers. (Mr. McCone, who joined the group 15 or 20 minutes after the start of the discussion, confirmed this report.) The location of the sites for 36 of these launchers is known. 32 of the 36 known sites appear to have sufficient equipment on them to be included in any air strike directed against Cuba's missile capability.

4. We believe that 40 launchers would normally be equipped with 80 missiles. John McCone reported yesterday that a Soviet ship believed to be the vessel in which the Soviets have been sending missiles to Cuba has made a sufficient number of trips to that island within recent weeks to offload approximately 48 missiles. Therefore, we assume there are approximately that number on the Island today, although we have only located approximately 30 of these.

5. General Sweeney outlined the following plan of air attack, the object of which would be the destruction of the known Cuban missile capability.

a. The 5 surface-to-air missile installations in the vicinity of the known missile sites would each be attacked by approximately 8 aircraft; the 3 MIG airfields defending the missile sites would be covered by 12 U.S. aircraft per field. In total, the defense suppression operations, including the necessary replacement aircraft, would require approximately 100 sorties.

b. Each of the launchers at the 8 or 9 known sites (a total of approximately 32 to 36 launchers) would be attacked by 6 aircraft. For the purpose, a total of approximately 250 sorties would be flown.

c. The U.S. aircraft covering the 3 MIG airfields would attack the MIG's if they became airborne. General Sweeney strongly recommended attacks on each of the airfields to destroy the MIG aircraft.

6. General Sweeney stated that he was certain the air strike would be "successful"; however, even under optimum conditions, it was not likely that all of the known missiles would be destroyed. (As noted in 4 above, the known missiles are probably no more than 60% of the total missiles on the Island.) General Taylor stated, "The best we can offer you is

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to destroy 90% of the known missiles." General Taylor, General Sweeney and the Secretary of Defense all strongly emphasized that in their opinion the initial air strike must be followed by strikes on subsequent days and that these in turn would lead inevitably to an invasion.

7. CIA representatives, who joined the discussion at this point, stated that it is probable the missiles which are operational (it is estimated there are now between 8 and 12 operational missiles on the Island) can hold indefinitely a capability for firing with from 2-1/2 to 4 hours' notice. Included in the notice period is a countdown requiring 20 to 40 minutes. In relation to the countdown period, the first wave of our attacking aircraft would give 10 minutes of warning; the second wave, 40 minutes of warning; and the third wave a proportionately greater warning.

8. As noted above, General Sweeney strongly recommended that any air strike include attacks on the MIG aircraft and, in addition, the IL28s. To accomplish the destruction of these aircraft, the total number of sorties of such an air strike should be increased to 500. The President agreed that if an air strike is ordered, it should probably include in its objective the destruction of the MIG aircraft and the IL28s.

9. The President directed that we be prepared to carry out the air strike Monday<sup>(1)</sup> morning or any time thereafter during the remainder of the week. The President recognized that the Secretary of Defense was opposed to the air strike Monday morning, and that General Sweeney favored it. He asked the Attorney General and Mr. McCone for their opinions:

a. The Attorney General stated he was opposed to such a strike because:

(1) "It would be a Pearl Harbor type of attack."

(2) It would lead to unpredictable military responses by the Soviet Union which could be so serious as to lead to general nuclear war.

He stated we should start with the initiation of the blockade and thereafter "play for the breaks."

b. Mr. McCone agreed with the Attorney General, but emphasized he believed we should be prepared for an air strike and thereafter an invasion.

RSMc<sup>(2)</sup>

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1 October 22. [Back](#)

2 McNamara's initials appear in an unidentified hand indicating he signed the original.

[Back](#)

Source: Washington National Records Center, RG 330, OASD (C) A Files: FRC 71 A 2896, Misc. Papers Regarding Cuba. Top Secret. For McCone's record of this meeting, mistakenly noted as occurring at 10 a.m., see the Supplement. (Central Intelligence Agency, DCI/McCone Files, Job 80-B01285A, Meetings with the President) Also reproduced in CIA Documents on the Cuban Missile Crisis, 1962, pp. 241-242.

**44.**

**Washington, October 22, 1962.**

Dear Mr. Chairman: A copy of the statement I am making tonight concerning developments in Cuba and the reaction of my Government thereto has been handed to your Ambassador in Washington. [\(1\)](#) In view of the gravity of the developments to which I refer, I want you to know immediately and accurately the position of my Government in this matter.

In our discussions and exchanges on Berlin and other international questions, the one thing that has most concerned me has been the possibility that your Government would not correctly understand the will and determination of the United States in any given situation, since I have not assumed that you or any other sane man would, in this nuclear age, deliberately plunge the world into war which it is crystal clear no country could win and which could only result in catastrophic consequences to the whole world, including the aggressor.

At our meeting in Vienna and subsequently, I expressed our readiness and desire to find, through peaceful negotiation, a solution to any and all problems that divide us. At the same time, I made clear that in view of the objectives of the ideology to which you adhere, the United States could not tolerate any action on your part which in a major way disturbed the existing over-all balance of power in the world. I stated that an attempt to force abandonment of our responsibilities and commitments in Berlin would constitute such an action and that the United States would resist with all the power at its command.

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It was in order to avoid any incorrect assessment on the part of your Government with respect to Cuba that I publicly stated that if certain developments in Cuba took place, the United States would do whatever must be done to protect its own security and that of its allies.

Moreover, the Congress adopted a resolution expressing its support of this declared policy.<sup>(2)</sup> Despite this, the rapid development of long-range missile bases and other offensive weapons systems in Cuba has proceeded. I must tell you that the United States is determined that this threat to the security of this hemisphere be removed. At the same time, I wish to point out that the action we are taking is the minimum necessary to remove the threat to the security of the nations of this hemisphere. The fact of this minimum response should not be taken as a basis, however, for any misjudgment on your part.

I hope that your Government will refrain from any action which would widen or deepen this already grave crisis and that we can agree to resume the path of peaceful negotiation.

Sincerely,

JFK<sup>(3)</sup>

1 See footnote 4, Document 43; a 3-paragraph memorandum of Rusk's conversation with Dobrynin at 6 p.m., during which the Secretary of State gave the Soviet Ambassador copies of the statement and this message, is in Department of State, Central Files, 611.61/10-2262. [Back](#)

2 For text of this resolution, October 3, see American Foreign Policy: Current Documents, 1962, pp. 389-390. [Back](#)

3 Kennedy's initials appear in an unidentified hand presumably indicating he signed the original. [Back](#)

Source: Department of State, Presidential Correspondence: Lot 77 D 163. No classification marking. At 7:41 p.m. on October 21 the Department of State had sent Ambassador Kohler the first draft of this message. (Telegram 961 to Moscow; Department of State, Presidential Correspondence: Lot 77 D 163) Subsequent changes and additions resulted in only the second and final paragraphs remaining as originally drafted. The

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message was delivered to the Foreign Ministry at about 6 p.m. Washington time. Also printed in Department of State Bulletin, November 19, 1973, pp. 635-636.

**53.**

**Washington, October 24, 1962.**

I met with Ambassador Dobrynin last evening on the third floor of the Russian Embassy and as you suggested made the following points:[\(1\)](#)

I told him first that I was there on my own and not on the instructions of the President. I said that I wanted to give him some background on the decision of the United States Government and wanted him to know that the duplicity of the Russians had been a major contributing factor. When I had met with him some six weeks before, I said, he had told me that the Russians had not placed any long-range missiles in Cuba and had no intention to do so in the future. He interrupted at that point and confirmed this statement and said he specifically told me they would not put missiles in Cuba which would be able to reach the continental United States.

I said based on that statement which I had related to the President plus independent intelligence information at that time, the President had gone to the American people and assured them that the weapons being furnished by the Communists to Cuba were defensive and that it was not necessary for the United States to blockade or take any military action. I pointed out that this assurance of Dobrynin to me had been confirmed by the TASS statement and then finally, in substance, by Gromyko when he visited the President on Thursday.[\(2\)](#) I said that based on these assurances the President had taken a different and far less belligerent position than people like Senators Keating and Capehart, and he had assured the American people that there was nothing to be concerned about.

I pointed out, in addition, that the President felt he had a very helpful personal relationship with Mr. Khrushchev. Obviously, they did not agree on many issues, but he did feel that there was a mutual trust and confidence between them on which he could rely. As an example of this statement I related the time that Mr. Khrushchev requested the President to withdraw the troops from Thailand and that step was taken within 24 hours.

I said that with the background of this relationship, plus the specific assurances that had been given to us, and then the statement of Dobrynin from Khrushchev to Ted Sorensen and to me that no incident would occur before the American elections were completed, we felt

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the action by Khrushchev and the Russians at this time was hypocritical, misleading and false. I said this should be clearly understood by them as it was by us.

Dobrynin's only answer was that he had told me no missiles were in Cuba but that Khrushchev had also given similar assurances through TASS and as far as he (Dobrynin) knew, there were still no missiles in Cuba.

Dobrynin in the course of the conversation made several other points. The one he stressed was why the President did not tell Gromyko the facts on Thursday. He said this was something they could not understand and that if we had the information at the time why didn't we tell Gromyko.

I answered this by making two points:

Number one, there wasn't anything the President could tell Gromyko that Gromyko didn't know already and after all, why didn't Gromyko tell the President this instead of, in fact, denying it. I said in addition the President was so shocked at Gromyko's presentation and his failure to recite these facts that he felt that any effort to have an intelligent and honest conversation would not be profitable.

Dobrynin went on to say that from his conversations with Gromyko he doesn't believe Gromyko thought there were any missiles in Cuba. He said he was going to contact his government to find out about this matter.

I expressed surprise that after all that had appeared in the papers, and the President's speech, that he had not had a communication on that question already.

Dobrynin seemed extremely concerned. When I left I asked him if ships were going to go through to Cuba. He replied that was their instructions last month and he assumed they had the same instructions at the present time. He also made the point that although we might have pictures, all we really knew about were the sites and not missiles and that there was a lot of difference between sites and the actual missile itself. I said I did not have to argue the point--there were missiles in Cuba--we knew that they were there and that I hoped he would inform himself also.

I left around 10:15 p.m. and went to the White House and gave a verbal report to the President.

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1 The meeting took place at 9:30 p.m., October 23. [Back](#)

2 October 18; see Document 29. [Back](#)

Source: Kennedy Library, President's Office Files, Cuba, Security. Top Secret. A copy was sent to Rusk.

## 61.

### **Moscow, October 24, 1962.**

Dear Mr. President: I have received your letter of October 23, [\(1\)](#) have studied it, and am answering you.

Just imagine, Mr. President, that we had presented you with the conditions of an ultimatum which you have presented us by your action. How would you have reacted to this? I think that you would have been indignant at such a step on our part. And this would have been understandable to us.

In presenting us with these conditions, you, Mr. President, have flung a challenge at us. Who asked you to do this? By what right did you do this? Our ties with the Republic of Cuba, like our relations with other states, regardless of what kind of states they may be, concern only the two countries between which these relations exist. And if we now speak of the quarantine to which your letter refers, a quarantine may be established, according to accepted international practice, only by agreement of states between themselves, and not by some third party. Quarantines exist, for example, on agricultural goods and products. But in this case the question is in no way one of quarantine, but rather of far more serious things, and you yourself understand this.

You, Mr. President, are not declaring a quarantine, but rather are setting forth an ultimatum and threatening that if we do not give in to your demands you will use force. Consider what you are saying! And you want to persuade me to agree to this! What would it mean to agree to these demands? It would mean guiding oneself in one's relations with

other countries not by reason, but by submitting to arbitrariness. You are no longer appealing to reason, but wish to intimidate us.

No, Mr. President, I cannot agree to this, and I think that in your own heart you recognize that I am correct. I am convinced that in my place you would act the same way.

Reference to the decision of the Organization of American States cannot in any way substantiate the demands now advanced by the United States. This Organization has absolutely no authority or basis for adopting decisions such as the one you speak of in your letter. Therefore, we do not recognize these decisions. International law exists and universally recognized norms of conduct exist. We firmly adhere to the principles of international law and observe strictly the norms which regulate navigation on the high seas, in international waters. We observe these norms and enjoy the rights recognized by all states.

You wish to compel us to renounce the rights that every sovereign state enjoys, you are trying to legislate in questions of international law, and you are violating the universally accepted norms of that law. And you are doing all this not only out of hatred for the Cuban people and its government, but also because of considerations of the election campaign in the United States. What morality, what law can justify such an approach by the American Government to international affairs? No such morality or law can be found, because the actions of the United States with regard to Cuba constitute outright banditry or, if you like, the folly of degenerate imperialism. Unfortunately, such folly can bring grave suffering to the peoples of all countries, and to no lesser degree to the American people themselves, since the United States has completely lost its former isolation with the advent of modern types of armament.

Therefore, Mr. President, if you coolly weigh the situation which has developed, not giving way to passions, you will understand that the Soviet Union cannot fail to reject the arbitrary demands of the United States. When you confront us with such conditions, try to put yourself in our place and consider how the United States would react to these conditions. I do not doubt that if someone attempted to dictate similar conditions to you--the United States--you would reject such an attempt. And we also say--no.

The Soviet Government considers that the violation of the freedom to use international waters and international air space is an act of aggression which pushes mankind toward the abyss of a world nuclear-missile war. Therefore, the Soviet Government cannot instruct the

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captains of Soviet vessels bound for Cuba to observe the orders of American naval forces blockading that Island. Our instructions to Soviet mariners are to observe strictly the universally accepted norms of navigation in international waters and not to retreat one step from them. And if the American side violates these rules, it must realize what responsibility will rest upon it in that case. Naturally we will not simply be bystanders with regard to piratical acts by American ships on the high seas. We will then be forced on our part to take the measures we consider necessary and adequate in order to protect our rights. We have everything necessary to do so.

Respectfully,  
N. Khrushchev(2)

1 See Document 52. [Back](#)

2 Printed from a copy that indicates Khrushchev signed the original. [Back](#)

Source: Kennedy Library, President's Office Files, Cuba. A copy of this letter, transmitted in telegram 1070 from Moscow, October 24, arrived in the Department of State at 9:24 p.m. (Department of State, Presidential Correspondence: Lot 66 D 304)

**63.**

**Washington, October 24, 1962, 10:30 p.m.**

Ball--The letter from Khrushchev(1) is garbled, and I am trying to fill it in. As far as shipping goes, it is pretty repetitious. The significant part is the last paragraph. It says: Ball reads last paragraph. It simply says that the OAS has no authority in these matters; that one has to abide by international law; we are committing an act of piracy; if you were in his place you would take the same view. The significant part is the part I read to you. I don't think we have any option but to go ahead and test this thing out, in the morning, but at least this is the notice he has given to us.

Pres.--Do you want to call up Bob McNamara because we have got the tanker we talked about stopping.

Ball--I'll talk to Bob about it and I will also get hold of Dean and maybe we had better get back to you.(2)

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Pres.--I will be around.

Ball--The second thing is this. U Thant has just gotten through speaking, and I am waiting for a call from Stevenson. Stevenson is kicking like a steer about reply tonight, but I think we have to reply tonight.

Pres.--He doesn't want to reply tonight?

Ball--He is concerned primarily about the conditions which we put in that proposed reply because he feels that those are in effect conditions to talking rather than the kind of conditions that might emerge out of talk. My own feeling is that we have got to be quite specific about them, otherwise we will get ourselves in a hopeless harass, and I don't think we can afford to do it at this point.

Pres.--How does he want us to change it?

Ball--I think he would like to suggest some concessions we are prepared to make. I am waiting for a call from him. If it is agreeable to you, I am going to take a very firm line that we have to get this thing back to U Thant tonight even though it isn't published because I think we ought to be very prompt in getting some reply back before the Soviet Union comes in with an acceptance of the U Thant proposal. I may not be able to hold the line with him and he may insist on talking with you. I think we have got to go ahead.

Pres.--They are obviously not going to stop. He is stopping the ones he doesn't want us to have. I suppose we will have to stop these. The press will give the impression that we are easing the situation.

Ball--That is inevitable. I have told them that there was no decision not to stop tankers, but only the fact that the initial version does not include POL. They are confused on this. I think we have worked it out so that story will be all right.

Pres.--I think the impression tonight seems to be that the Russians are giving way, which is not quite accurate. They want to believe that it is giving way. I think that, after you talk to McNamara and the Sec., they ought to have either State and Defense put out the indication that Russian ships are approaching.

Ball--I'll do that. Maybe I can persuade Adlai, if not he may insist on talking to you. In the meantime, I will get hold of Bob and Dean, and we may have to get back to you.

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1 Document 61. [Back](#)

2 A memorandum of Ball's telephone conversation with McNamara at 10:40 p.m. is in the Supplement. (Department of State, Ball Papers: Lot 74 D 272, Telcons--Cuba) [Back](#)

Source: Department of State, Ball Papers: Lot 74 D 272, Telcons--Cuba. No classification marking.

**90.**

**Washington, October 27, 1962, 10 a.m.**

Director McCone highlighted the intelligence information contained in the first two pages of the attached CIA Cuba Crisis Memorandum.[\(1\)](#)

Secretary McNamara reported on the positions of Soviet Bloc ships moving toward Cuba. He said we do not know yet whether any such ships will enter the interception area. He recommended that we be prepared to board the *Graznyy*, which is now out about 600 miles. We would put ships alongside her and follow along for about 200 miles. If we asked her to stop and she did, we would inspect the cargo for contraband and release her if, as expected, she had no prohibited material aboard. If she refuses to stop, we would stop her by force and sink her if the cargo included prohibited material.

Under Secretary Ball pointed out that the Soviets did not know the extent of our quarantine zone.

The President agreed that we should ask U Thant to tell the Russians in New York where we are drawing the quarantine line. The Russians would then be in a position to decide whether to turn back their tanker or allow her to enter the quarantine zone sometime later today.

Secretary McNamara recommended, and the President approved, two daylight reconnaissance missions, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. Secretary McNamara also recommended that a night reconnaissance mission be flown--Secretary Rusk recommended against a night flight. The President instructed the Defense Department to place the night reconnaissance planes on the alert and to prepare a public announcement of

the mission in order that a final decision to be taken this afternoon could be promptly implemented.

The discussion then turned to the question of U.S. missiles in Turkey. Mr. Nitze said it would be an anathema to the Turks to pull the missiles out. He feared the next Soviet step would be a demand for the denuclearization of the entire NATO area. He urged us to focus attention on Cuba rather than on U.S. bases in other countries.

Under Secretary Ball reported that the Turks would be very difficult about withdrawal of their strategic missiles, but the Italians would be easier to persuade if we chose to withdraw Jupiters from Italy.

At this point in the meeting the partial text of a Soviet public statement was read by the President as it was received in the room.<sup>(2)</sup> The President commented that the statement was a very tough position and varied considerably from the tone of Khrushchev's personal letter to the President received last night.<sup>(3)</sup> The President felt that the Soviet position would get wide support and said we should consider making public the Khrushchev private letter.

Secretary Rusk returned to the question of U.S. missiles in Turkey and pointed out that this subject must be kept separate from Soviet missiles in Cuba. The Turkish missile problem should be dealt with in the context of NATO vs. Warsaw Pact.

Mr. Bundy said we could not accept the Soviet proposal on Turkish missiles because the Soviet missiles were not out of Cuba.

The President recalled that he had asked that consideration be given to the withdrawal of U.S. missiles from Turkey some days previously.

Under Secretary Ball replied that the Department had decided it could not raise this question with the Turks at this time for fear of a disastrous Turkish reaction. He said the question had been raised with Finletter in Paris and study was being given to whether any method could be worked out to reassure the Turks if we were going to offer to withdraw the Jupiter missiles.

Mr. Bundy said we cannot get into the position of appearing to sell out an ally, i.e. Turkey, to serve our own interests, i.e. getting the Soviet missiles out of Cuba.

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The President commented that the Russians had made the Turkish missile withdrawal proposal in the most difficult possible way. Now that their proposal is public, we have no chance to talk privately to the Turks about the missiles, which, for a long time, we have considered to be obsolete.

Secretary Dillon said that it was possible that the Russians had made their public statement as part of a stalling tactic to provide them with sufficient time for a full-fledged confrontation with us.

The President read a draft statement telephoned from New York by Ambassador Stevenson commenting on the Soviet statement.<sup>(4)</sup> Ambassador Stevenson argued for releasing his statement in an effort to keep the "peace offensive" from going to the Soviets.

The President left the meeting at this point with Mr. Sorensen. There ensued a discussion of how to handle the discrepancy between the Khrushchev private letter and the Russian offer made public in the Soviet statement. A suggestion was made that the Russian proposals contained in the private Khrushchev letter be made public.

The President returned to the meeting. He said we must ensure that the construction work on the missile sites in Cuba be stopped at once. He suggested that we talk to the Turks about the missiles, pointing out to them the great peril facing them during the next week. He acknowledged that the Turks were now in no position to make a statement to the effect that they would ask that the Jupiters be withdrawn.

Secretary Rusk suggested that we tell the Turks they must say that the Jupiter problem is a NATO problem and is not associated with the Cuban missile problem.

Secretary McNamara called attention to the fact that the missiles belonged to Turkey and that only the nuclear warheads are under our total control.

The President returned to a discussion of where we now find ourselves, i.e. we now have Soviet public proposals and Khrushchev's private proposals. What we must seek is an immediate cessation of the work on offensive missiles in Cuba. Once this work stopped we could talk to the Russians.

Mr. Bundy reiterated the view that the threat to us is Cuba. One explanation for the varying Soviet proposals is that the hard line Russians wanted to make public their preferred

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demands in order to make impossible progress toward the Khrushchev private offer which may have been drafted by those who are less hard-nosed.

The President noted that it appeared to him that the Russians were making various proposals so fast, one after the other, that they were creating a kind of shield behind which work on the missile sites in Cuba continued. He said we had a perfectly defensible position, i.e. work on the missile sites must stop. Secretary McNamara added the thought that these offensive weapons must be made inoperable.

Mr. Bundy suggested that we tell Khrushchev privately that the position in their public statement was impossible for us, but that the position Khrushchev took in his private letter was different and we were studying these proposals. In the meantime, however, time is running out.

The President interrupted to take a telephone call from Ambassador Stevenson in New York. He resumed the discussion by saying that Khrushchev obviously is attempting to limit our freedom of action in Cuba by introducing the question of the missile bases outside this hemisphere.

Mr. Bundy read a draft press statement and Mr. Gilpatric read a statement which he had prepared.<sup>(5)</sup>

Mr. Alexis Johnson reported that he had just been informed that the Turkish Government had issued a press statement saying that the Russian proposal with respect to Jupiters in Turkey was not conceivable.

(As the remainder of the Soviet public statement was received in the Cabinet Room, it appeared that the Russian base proposal involved not merely Turkey but all of NATO.)

Mr. Sorensen introduced a draft statement which was read by the group.<sup>(6)</sup>

Revisions were made in the Gilpatric draft, which was issued shortly thereafter in the form attached.<sup>(7)</sup> This statement emphasized the offensive weapons buildup in Cuba.

The Attorney General said that the statement might make people think that if the Russians stopped the missile buildup in Cuba, we would be willing to withdraw our missiles from Turkey. He desired that we make doubly clear that Turkish NATO missiles were one problem and that Cuba was an entirely separate problem.

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Mr. Gilpatric stated that it was crucial for us to stand on the position that we will not negotiate with the Russians while the Soviet missile threat is growing in Cuba.

The President recalled that over a year ago we wanted to get the Jupiter missiles out of Turkey because they had become obsolete and of little military value. If the missiles in Cuba added 50% to Soviet nuclear capability, then to trade these missiles for those in Turkey would be of great military value. But we are now in the position of risking war in Cuba and in Berlin over missiles in Turkey which are of little military value. From the political point of view, it would be hard to get support on an airstrike against Cuba because many would think that we would make a good trade if we offered to take the missiles out of Turkey in the event the Russians would agree to remove the missiles from Cuba. We are in a bad position if we appear to be attacking Cuba for the purpose of keeping useless missiles in Turkey. We cannot propose to withdraw the missiles from Turkey, but the Turks could offer to do so. The Turks must be informed of the great danger in which they will live during the next week and we have to face up to the possibility of some kind of a trade over missiles.

The President left the meeting to meet the State Governors who had been waiting for one-half hour to see him.

The discussion continued in the President's absence. It was not possible to say with certainty whether the Soviet public offer included all NATO bases or referred specifically to Turkey.

The Attorney General expressed his concern as to what our position would be if we talked to the Russians for sixty days and then the Cubans refused to permit UN inspectors to continue to ensure that missiles in Cuba were inoperable. The reply was that we could then decide to attack the bases by air.

There was discussion of a second statement to be put out but this proposal was later abandoned.

A draft message to Khrushchev, which had been prepared by Ambassador Thompson, was read and a final version was to be completed for the President's consideration later in the day.<sup>(8)</sup> The group agreed to meet at the State Department without the President at 2:30 PM and meet with the President again at 4:00 PM

(Note: At the meeting at the State Department, the Attorney General repeated his view that we should keep the focus on the missile bases. He preferred to let the Soviet tankers

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through the quarantine line in order to avoid a confrontation with the Soviets over one of their ships. He said if we attack a Soviet tanker, the balloon would go up. He urged that we buy time now in order to launch an air attack Monday or Tuesday.(9))

Secretary McNamara expressed his view that before we attack Cuba we must notify the Cubans.

Bromley Smith(10)

1 A summary of this memorandum, SC No. 08184/62, is reproduced in CIA Documents on the Cuban Missile Crisis, 1962, pp. 328-329. See the Supplement. [Back](#)

2 Document 91. [Back](#)

3 Document 84. [Back](#)

4 A copy of this statement is in the Kennedy Library, National Security Files, Countries Series, Cuba, General. [Back](#)

5 Neither of these drafts has been identified further. [Back](#)

6 Not found. [Back](#)

7 For text of the agreed statement, see American Foreign Policy: Current Documents, 1962, pp. 440-441. [Back](#)

8 The draft is not found; for the letter as eventually sent see Document 95. [Back](#)

9 October 29 or 30. [Back](#)

10 Printed from a copy that bears this typed signature. [Back](#)

Source: Kennedy Library, National Security Files, Meetings and Memoranda Series, Executive Committee, Vol. I, Meetings 6-10. Top Secret; Sensitive. A Record of Action of this meeting is in the Supplement. McCone's 2 pages of handwritten notes for the meeting are in the Central Intelligence Agency, DCI/McCone Files, Job 80-B01285A, Meetings with the President. They are also reproduced in CIA Documents on the Cuban Missile Crisis, 1962, pp. 331-332. Tape recording transcripts of this meeting are in the Kennedy Library, President's

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Office Files, Presidential Records, No. 41.1 and 41a.1. For two other accounts of this and other meetings on October 27, see Robert F. Kennedy, *Thirteen Days*, pp. 93 ff. and Theodore C. Sorensen, *Kennedy*, pp. 712-716.

**91.**

**Moscow, October 27, 1962.**

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT, I have studied with great satisfaction your reply to Mr. Thant<sup>(1)</sup> concerning measures that should be taken to avoid contact between our vessels and thereby avoid irreparable and fatal consequences. This reasonable step on your part strengthens my belief that you are showing concern for the preservation of peace, which I note with satisfaction.

I have already said that our people, our Government, and I personally, as Chairman of the Council of Ministers, are concerned solely with having our country develop and occupy a worthy place among all peoples of the world in economic competition, in the development of culture and the arts, and in raising the living standard of the people. This is the most noble and necessary field for competition, and both the victor and the vanquished will derive only benefit from it, because it means peace and an increase in the means by which man lives and finds enjoyment.

In your statement you expressed the opinion that the main aim was not simply to come to an agreement and take measures to prevent contact between our vessels and consequently a deepening of the crisis which could, as a result of such contacts, spark a military conflict, after which all negotiations would be superfluous because other forces and other laws would then come into play--the laws of war. I agree with you that this is only the first step. The main thing that must be done is to normalize and stabilize the state of peace among states and among peoples.

I understand your concern for the security of the United States, Mr. President, because this is the primary duty of a President. But we too are disturbed about these same questions; I bear these same obligations as Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the U.S.S.R. You have been alarmed by the fact that we have aided Cuba with weapons, in order to strengthen its defense capability--precisely defense capability--because whatever weapons it may possess, Cuba cannot be equated with you since the difference in magnitude is so great,

particularly in view of modern means of destruction. Our aim has been and is to help Cuba, and no one can dispute the humanity of our motives, which are oriented toward enabling Cuba to live peacefully and develop in the way its people desire.

You wish to ensure the security of your country, and this is understandable. But Cuba, too, wants the same thing; all countries want to maintain their security. But how are we, the Soviet Union, our Government, to assess your actions which are expressed in the fact that you have surrounded the Soviet Union with military bases; surrounded our allies with military bases; placed military bases literally around our country; and stationed your missile armaments there? This is no secret. Responsible American personages openly declare that it is so. Your missiles are located in Britain, are located in Italy, and are aimed against us. Your missiles are located in Turkey.

You are disturbed over Cuba. You say that this disturbs you because it is 90 miles by sea from the coast of the United States of America. But Turkey adjoins us; our sentries patrol back and forth and see each other. Do you consider, then, that you have the right to demand security for your own country and the removal of the weapons you call offensive, but do not accord the same right to us? You have placed destructive missile weapons, which you call offensive, in Turkey, literally next to us. How then can recognition of our equal military capacities be reconciled with such unequal relations between our great states? This is irreconcilable.

It is good, Mr. President, that you have agreed to have our representatives meet and begin talks, apparently through the mediation of U Thant, Acting Secretary General of the United Nations. Consequently, he to some degree has assumed the role of a mediator and we consider that he will be able to cope with this responsible mission, provided, of course, that each party drawn into this controversy displays good will.

I think it would be possible to end the controversy quickly and normalize the situation, and then the people could breathe more easily, considering that statesmen charged with responsibility are of sober mind and have an awareness of their responsibility combined with the ability to solve complex questions and not bring things to a military catastrophe.

I therefore make this proposal: We are willing to remove from Cuba the means which you regard as offensive. We are willing to carry this out and to make this pledge in the United Nations. Your representatives will make a declaration to the effect that the United States, for its part, considering the uneasiness and anxiety of the Soviet State, will remove its

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analogous means from Turkey. Let us reach agreement as to the period of time needed by you and by us to bring this about. And, after that, persons entrusted by the United Nations Security Council could inspect on the spot the fulfillment of the pledges made. Of course, the permission of the Governments of Cuba and of Turkey is necessary for the entry into those countries of these representatives and for the inspection of the fulfillment of the pledge made by each side. Of course it would be best if these representatives enjoyed the confidence of the Security Council, as well as yours and mine--both the United States and the Soviet Union--and also that of Turkey and Cuba. I do not think it would be difficult to select people who would enjoy the trust and respect of all parties concerned.

We, in making this pledge, in order to give satisfaction and hope of the peoples of Cuba and Turkey and to strengthen their confidence in their security, will make a statement within the framework of the Security Council to the effect that the Soviet Government gives a solemn promise to respect the inviolability of the borders and sovereignty of Turkey, not to interfere in its internal affairs, not to invade Turkey, not to make available our territory as a bridgehead for such an invasion, and that it would also restrain those who contemplate committing aggression against Turkey, either from the territory of the Soviet Union or from the territory of Turkey's other neighboring states.

The United States Government will make a similar statement within the framework of the Security Council regarding Cuba. It will declare that the United States will respect the inviolability of Cuba's borders and its sovereignty, will pledge not to interfere in its internal affairs, not to invade Cuba itself or make its territory available as a bridgehead for such an invasion, and will also restrain those who might contemplate committing aggression against Cuba, either from the territory of the United States or from the territory of Cuba's other neighboring states.

Of course, for this we would have to come to an agreement with you and specify a certain time limit. Let us agree to some period of time, but without unnecessary delay--say within two or three weeks, not longer than a month.

The means situated in Cuba, of which you speak and which disturb you, as you have stated, are in the hands of Soviet officers. Therefore, any accidental use of them to the detriment of the United States is excluded. These means are situated in Cuba at the request of the Cuban Government and are only for defense purposes. Therefore, if there is no invasion of Cuba, or attack on the Soviet Union or any of our other allies, then of course

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these means are not and will not be a threat to anyone. For they are not for purposes of attack.

If you are agreeable to my proposal, Mr. President, then we would send our representatives to New York, to the United Nations, and would give them comprehensive instructions in order that an agreement may be reached more quickly. If you also select your people and give them the corresponding instructions, then this question can be quickly resolved.

Why would I like to do this? Because the whole world is now apprehensive and expects sensible actions of us. The greatest joy for all peoples would be the announcement of our agreement and of the eradication of the controversy that has arisen. I attach great importance to this agreement in so far as it could serve as a good beginning and could in particular make it easier to reach agreement on banning nuclear weapons tests. The question of the tests could be solved in parallel fashion, without connecting one with the other, because these are different issues. However, it is important that agreement be reached on both these issues so as to present humanity with a fine gift, and also to gladden it with the news that agreement has been reached on the cessation of nuclear tests and that consequently the atmosphere will no longer be poisoned. Our position and yours on this issue are very close together.

All of this could possibly serve as a good impetus toward the finding of mutually acceptable agreements on other controversial issues on which you and I have been exchanging views. These views have so far not been resolved, but they are awaiting urgent solution, which would clear up the international atmosphere. We are prepared for this.

These are my proposals, Mr. President.

Respectfully yours,

N. Khrushchev<sup>(2)</sup>

1 See Document 59. [Back](#)

2 Printed from a copy that indicates Khrushchev signed the original. [Back](#)

Source: Department of State, Presidential Correspondence: Lot 66 D 204. No classification marking. Other copies of this letter are *ibid.*: Lot 77 D 163, and in the Kennedy Library, National Security Files, Countries Series, USSR, Khrushchev Correspondence. This "official translation" prepared by Language Services of the Department of State and an "informal translation" from the Embassy in Moscow are printed in Department of State Bulletin, November 19, 1962, pp. 646-649. A note on the source text indicates a copy was sent to Acting Secretary-General U Thant. Problems of Communism reports that this message was broadcast over Moscow radio at 5 p.m., the same time the Russian text was delivered to the Embassy.

93.

**New York, October 27, 1962, 2 p.m.**

**1494. Cuba. Stevenson, McCloy, Yost and Plimpton had conference with SYG alone at 11:45 this morning.**

1. We showed SYG Khrushchev's message of last night to the President, [\(1\)](#) pointing out that it contained no reference to Turkey. We also pointed out it in effect conceded existence in Cuba of complete nuclear missile capability. SYG had just seen Reuter despatch regarding Khrushchev's public statement regarding Turkey. [\(2\)](#)

2. We pointed out that effect of Khrushchev's Turkey proposal was that, as the result of his own clandestine nuclear intrusion into the Western Hemisphere, he gets a guarantee of Cuban integrity and the removal of the Turkey base, whereas all we get is removal of intrusion which he should not have made anyway.

3. We also pointed out that the Turkey base is not for the defense of Turkey but for the defense of Europe and is part of the whole NATO defensive structure. The removal of that base would upset the European balance of power.

4. We pointed out that these were informal observations and that we had no positive instructions from Washington.

5. We said the Turkish base might be a proper subject for discussion covering various aspects of the overall disarmament and European situations after the status quo had been restored, and that such restoration requires removal of weapons from Cuba.

6. Since all NATO partners involved in Turkey base any negotiations as to its removal would require a great deal of time whereas removal of nuclear weapons from Cuba was an immediate essential.

7. We said it seemed highly probable that the Cuban issue could be very promptly settled on the basis of Khrushchev's first letter, namely, on basis of immediate withdrawal of nuclear weapons as against US guarantee as to territorial integrity and political independence of Cuba, and we urged SYG to press for such immediate solution and for confining all discussions to Cuba and the exclusion of the Turkish base problem.

8. SYG said he would keep these points in mind, but that he did not wish to make any remarks on substance of the matter.

9. He said he hoped the President's reply to Khrushchev would be cooperative and conciliatory in tone, as the SYG does not want the American image tarnished by any public impression that Khrushchev is reasonable and the US not, and that the reply would evidence willingness to negotiate.

10. SYG mentioned the great concern all over world as to seriousness of situation. He said he had received 620 telegrams, most from US, as to his proposals, only 5 of which were negative.

11. SYG said he had urged both Castro and Zorin to have work on sites stopped immediately. Cuban Rep had said he would communicate SYG's request to his govt. Zorin had turned request aside asking how anyone could rely on US intelligence.

12. SYG also said that as to inspection of ship cargoes arriving in Cuba, Zorin had said this question should be addressed to Cuban authorities.

13. While we believe SYG would prefer to confine discussions to Cuba, we have little confidence he will take firm position with Sovs on this point since he shows every evidence of wanting to avoid being caught in middle.

Stevenson

95.

**Washington, October 27, 1962, 8:05 p.m.**

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**1015. Following message from President to Khrushchev should be delivered as soon as possible to highest available Soviet official. Text has been handed Soviet Embassy in Washington and has been released to press:**

"Dear Mr. Chairman:

I have read your letter of October 26<sup>(1)</sup> with great care and welcomed the statement of your desire to seek a prompt solution to the problem. The first thing that needs to be done, however, is for work to cease on offensive missile bases in Cuba and for all weapons systems in Cuba capable of offensive use to be rendered inoperable, under effective United Nations arrangements.

Assuming this is done promptly, I have given my representatives in New York instructions that will permit them to work out this week and--in cooperation with the Acting Secretary General and your representative--an arrangement for a permanent solution to the Cuban problem along the lines suggested in your letter of October 26. As I read your letter, the key elements of your proposals--which seem generally acceptable as I understand them--are as follows:

1. You would agree to remove these weapons systems from Cuba under appropriate United Nations observation and supervision; and undertake, with suitable safeguards, to halt the further introduction of such weapons systems into Cuba.

2. We, on our part, would agree--upon the establishment of adequate arrangements through the United Nations to ensure the carrying out and continuation of these commitments--(a) to remove promptly the quarantine measures now in effect and (b) to give assurances against an invasion of Cuba and I am confident that other nations of the Western Hemisphere would be prepared to do likewise.

If you will give your representative similar instructions, there is no reason why we should not be able to complete these arrangements and announce them to the world within a couple of days. The effect of such a settlement on easing world tensions would enable us to work toward a more general arrangement regarding "other armaments", as proposed in your second letter which you made public.<sup>(2)</sup> I would like to say again that the United States is very much interested in reducing tensions and halting the arms race; and if your letter signifies that you are prepared to discuss a detente affecting NATO and the Warsaw Pact, we are quite prepared to consider with our allies any useful proposals.

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But the first ingredient, let me emphasize, is the cessation of work on missile sites in Cuba and measures to render such weapons inoperable, under effective international guarantees. The continuation of this threat, or a prolonging of this discussion concerning Cuba by linking these problems to the broader questions of European and world security, would surely lead to an intensification of the Cuban crisis and a grave risk to the peace of the world. For this reason I hope we can quickly agree along the lines outlined in this letter and in your letter of October 26.

/s/ John F. Kennedy"

Rusk

1 Document 84. [Back](#)

2 Document 91. [Back](#)

Source: Department of State, Central Files, 737.56361/10-2762. Unclassified; Niact. Regarding the drafting of this message, see Robert F. Kennedy, *Thirteen Days*, p. 102, and Theodore C. Sorensen, *Kennedy*, p. 714. Also printed in *American Foreign Policy: Current Documents*, 1962, pp. 441-442.

**96.**

**Washington, October 30, 1962.**

At the request of Secretary Rusk, I telephoned Ambassador Dobrynin at approximately 7:15 p.m. on Saturday, October 27th. I asked him if he would come to the Justice Department at a quarter of eight.

We met in my office. I told him first that we understood that the work was continuing on the Soviet missile bases in Cuba. Further, I explained to him that in the last two hours we had found that our planes flying over Cuba had been fired upon and that one of our U-2's had been shot down and the pilot killed. I said these men were flying unarmed planes.

I told him that this was an extremely serious turn in events. We would have to make certain decisions within the next 12 or possibly 24 hours. There was a very little time left. If the Cubans were shooting at our planes, then we were going to shoot back. This could not

help but bring on further incidents and that he had better understand the full implications of this matter.

He raised the point that the argument the Cubans were making was that we were violating Cuban air space. I replied that if we had not been violating Cuban air space then we would still be believing what he and Khrushchev had said--that there were no long-range missiles in Cuba. In any case I said that this matter was far more serious than the air space over Cuba and involved peoples all over the world.

I said that he had better understand the situation and he had better communicate that understanding to Mr. Khrushchev. Mr. Khrushchev and he had misled us. The Soviet Union had secretly established missile bases in Cuba while at the same time proclaiming, privately and publicly, that this would never be done. I said those missile bases had to go and they had to go right away. We had to have a commitment by at least tomorrow that those bases would be removed. This was not an ultimatum, I said, but just a statement of fact. He should understand that if they did not remove those bases then we would remove them. His country might take retaliatory action but he should understand that before this was over, while there might be dead Americans there would also be dead Russians.

He asked me then what offer we were making. I said a letter had just been transmitted to the Soviet Embassy which stated in substance that the missile bases should be dismantled and all offensive weapons should be removed from Cuba.<sup>(1)</sup> In return, if Cuba and Castro and the Communists ended their subversive activities in other Central and Latin American countries, we would agree to keep peace in the Caribbean and not permit an invasion from American soil.

He then asked me about Khrushchev's other proposal dealing with the removal of the missiles from Turkey. I replied that there could be no quid pro quo--no deal of this kind could be made. This was a matter that had to be considered by NATO and that it was up to NATO to make the decision. I said it was completely impossible for NATO to take such a step under the present threatening position of the Soviet Union.<sup>(2)</sup>

Per your instructions I repeated that there could be no deal of any kind and that any steps toward easing tensions in other parts of the world largely depended on the Soviet Union and Mr. Khrushchev taking action in Cuba and taking it immediately.

I repeated to him that this matter could not wait and that he had better contact Mr. Khrushchev and have a commitment from him by the next day to withdraw the missile bases under United Nations supervision for otherwise, I said, there would be drastic consequences.

1 See Document 95. [Back](#)

2 The following typed sentence at the end of this paragraph was crossed out: "If some time elapsed--and per your instructions, I mentioned four or five months--I said I was sure that these matters could be resolved satisfactory." [Back](#)

Source: Kennedy Library, President's Office Files, Cuba Missile Crisis, Khrushchev Correspondence. Top Secret. Drafted by Kennedy. For McGeorge Bundy's recollections of the meeting with the President during the late afternoon of October 27, at which the decision was taken to send Robert Kennedy to talk with Dobrynin, see *Danger and Survival*, pp. 432-434.

**102.**

**Moscow, October 28, 1962.**

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT: I have received your message of October 27.<sup>(1)</sup> I express my satisfaction and thank you for the sense of proportion you have displayed and for realization of the responsibility which now devolves on you for the preservation of the peace of the world.

I regard with great understanding your concern and the concern of the United States people in connection with the fact that the weapons you describe as offensive are formidable weapons indeed. Both you and we understand what kind of weapons these are.

In order to eliminate as rapidly as possible the conflict which endangers the cause of peace, to give an assurance to all people who crave peace, and to reassure the American people, who, I am certain, also want peace, as do the people of the Soviet Union, the Soviet Government, in addition to earlier instructions on the discontinuation of further work on weapons construction sites, has given a new order to dismantle the arms which you described as offensive, and to crate and return them to the Soviet Union.

Mr. President, I should like to repeat what I had already written to you in my earlier messages--that the Soviet Government has given economic assistance to the Republic of Cuba, as well as arms, because Cuba and the Cuban people were constantly under the continuous threat of an invasion of Cuba.

A piratic vessel had shelled Havana. They say that this shelling was done by irresponsible Cuban emigres. Perhaps so, however, the question is from where did they shoot. It is a fact that these Cubans have no territory, they are fugitives from their country, and they have no means to conduct military operations.

This means that someone put into their hands these weapons for shelling Havana and for piracy in the Caribbean in Cuban territorial waters. It is impossible in our time not to notice a piratic ship, considering the concentration in the Caribbean of American ships from which everything can be seen and observed.

In these conditions, pirate ships freely roam around and shell Cuba and make piratic attacks on peaceful cargo ships. It is known that they even shelled a British cargo ship. In a word, Cuba was under the continuous threat of aggressive forces, which did not conceal their intention to invade its territory.

The Cuban people want to build their life in their own interests without external interference. This is their right, and they cannot be blamed for wanting to be masters of their own country and disposing of the fruits of their own labor.

The threat of invasion of Cuba and all other schemes for creating tension over Cuba are designed to strike the Cuban people with a sense of insecurity, intimidate them, and prevent them from peacefully building their new life.

Mr. President, I should like to say clearly once more that we could not remain indifferent to this. The Soviet Government decided to render assistance to Cuba with the means of defense against aggression--only with means for defense purposes. We have supplied the defense means which you describe as offensive means. We have supplied them to prevent an attack on Cuba--to prevent rash acts.

I regard with respect and trust the statement you made in your message of October 27, 1962, that there would be no attack, no invasion of Cuba, and not only on the part of the United States, but also on the part of other nations of the Western Hemisphere, as you said

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in your same message. Then the motives which induced us to render assistance of such a kind to Cuba disappear.

It is for this reason that we instructed our officers--these means as I had already informed you earlier are in the hands of the Soviet officers--to take appropriate measures to discontinue construction of the aforementioned facilities, to dismantle them, and to return them to the Soviet Union. As I had informed you in the letter of October 27,<sup>(2)</sup> we are prepared to reach agreement to enable United Nations Representatives to verify the dismantling of these means.

Thus in view of the assurances you have given and our instructions on dismantling, there is every condition for eliminating the present conflict.

I note with satisfaction that you have responded to the desire I expressed with regard to elimination of the aforementioned dangerous situation, as well as with regard to providing conditions for a more thoughtful appraisal of the international situation, fraught as it is with great dangers in our age of thermonuclear weapons, rocketry, spaceships, global rockets, and other deadly weapons. All people are interested in insuring peace.

Therefore, vested with trust and great responsibility, we must not allow the situation to become aggravated and must stamp out the centers where a dangerous situation fraught with grave consequences to the cause of peace has arisen. If we, together with you, and with the assistance of other people of good will, succeed in eliminating this tense atmosphere, we should also make certain that no other dangerous conflicts which could lead to a world nuclear catastrophe would arise.

In conclusion, I should like to say something about a detente between NATO and the Warsaw Treaty countries that you have mentioned. We have spoken about this long since and are prepared to continue to exchange views on this question with you and to find a reasonable solution.

We should like to continue the exchange of views on the prohibition of atomic and thermonuclear weapons, general disarmament, and other problems relating to the relaxation of international tension.

Although I trust your statement, Mr. President, there are irresponsible people who would like to invade Cuba now and thus touch off a war. If we do take practical steps and proclaim the dismantling and evacuation of the means in question from Cuba, in so doing

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we, at the same time, want the Cuban people to be certain that we are with them and are not absolving ourselves of responsibility for rendering assistance to the Cuban people.

We are confident that the people of all countries, like you, Mr. President, will understand me correctly. We are not threatening. We want nothing but peace. Our country is now on the upsurge.

Our people are enjoying the fruits of their peaceful labor. They have achieved tremendous successes since the October Revolution, and created the greatest material, spiritual, and cultural values. Our people are enjoying these values; they want to continue developing their achievements and insure their further development on the way of peace and social progress by their persistent labor.

I should like to remind you, Mr. President, that military reconnaissance planes have violated the borders of the Soviet Union. In connection with this there have been conflicts between us and notes exchanged. In 1960 we shot down your U-2 plane, whose reconnaissance flight over the USSR wrecked the summit meeting in Paris. At that time, you took a correct position and denounced that criminal act of the former U.S. Administration.

But during your term of office as President another violation of our border has occurred, by an American U-2 plane in the Sakhalin area. We wrote you about that violation on 30 August. At that time you replied that that violation had occurred as a result of poor weather, and gave assurances that this would not be repeated. We trusted your assurances, because the weather was indeed poor in that area at that time.

But had not your planes been ordered to fly about our territory, even poor weather could not have brought an American plane into our airspace. Hence, the conclusion that this is being done with the knowledge of the Pentagon, which tramples on international norms and violates the borders of other states.

A still more dangerous case occurred on 28 October, when one of your reconnaissance planes intruded over Soviet borders in the Chukotka Peninsula area in the north and flew over our territory. The question is, Mr. President: How should we regard this? What is this: A provocation? One of your planes violates our frontier during this anxious time we are both experiencing, when everything has been put into combat readiness. Is it not a fact that an intruding American plane could be easily taken for a nuclear bomber, which might push us to a fateful step? And all the more so since the U.S. Government and Pentagon long ago declared that you are maintaining a continuous nuclear bomber patrol.

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Therefore, you can imagine the responsibility you are assuming, especially now, when we are living through such anxious times.

I should like to express the following wish; it concerns the Cuban people. You do not have diplomatic relations. But through my officers in Cuba, I have reports that American planes are making flights over Cuba.

We are interested that there should be no war in the world, and that the Cuban people should live in peace. And besides, Mr. President, it is no secret that we have our people in Cuba. Under such a treaty with the Cuban Government we have sent there officers, instructors, mostly plain people: specialists, agronomists, zoo technicians, irrigators, land reclamation specialists, plain workers, tractor drivers, and others. We are concerned about them.

I should like you to consider, Mr. President, that violation of Cuban airspace by American planes could also lead to dangerous consequences. And if you do not want this to happen, it would be better if no cause is given for a dangerous situation to arise.

We must be careful now and refrain from any steps which would not be useful to the defense of the states involved in the conflict, which could only cause irritation and even serve as a provocation for a fateful step. Therefore, we must display sanity, reason, and refrain from such steps.

We value peace perhaps even more than other peoples because we went through a terrible war with Hitler. But our people will not falter in the face of any test. Our people trust their Government, and we assure our people and world public opinion that the Soviet Government will not allow itself to be provoked. But if the provocateurs unleash a war, they will not evade responsibility and the grave consequences a war would bring upon them. But we are confident that reason will triumph, that war will not be unleashed and peace and the security of the peoples will be insured.

In connection with the current negotiations between Acting Secretary General U Thant and representatives of the Soviet Union, the United States, and the Republic of Cuba, the Soviet Government has sent First Deputy Foreign Minister V.V. Kuznetsov to New York to help U Thant in his noble efforts aimed at eliminating the present dangerous situation.

Respectfully  
N. Khrushchev<sup>(3)</sup>

yours,

1 See Document 95. [Back](#)

2 Document 91. [Back](#)

3 Printed from a copy that indicates Khrushchev signed the original. [Back](#)

Source: Department of State, S/S Files: Lot 65 D 438, Miscellaneous. No classification marking. Other copies of this message are *ibid.*: Presidential Correspondence, Lot 66 D 204, and Lot 77 D 163, and in the Kennedy Library, National Security Files, Countries Series, USSR, Khrushchev Correspondence. The Russian-language text is in Department of State, Presidential Correspondence: Lot 66 D 204. Also printed in Documents on Disarmament, 1962, vol. II, pp. 995-999. This "informal translation" and an "official translation" prepared by the Department of State are printed in Department of State Bulletin, November 19, 1973, pp. 650-654. According to a footnote in the Bulletin this message was broadcast over Moscow radio at 5 p.m. and a copy delivered to the Embassy in Moscow at 5:10.

**111.**

**Washington, October 29, 1962, 6:30 p.m.**

Secretary Rusk reported on developments during the day in New York. The Soviet position on inspection, as stated by Kuznetsov, is that the Russians are willing to have the International Red Cross officials inspect all cargoes going to Cuba to ensure that no arms at all are taken to Cuba. The Red Cross officials could inspect cargoes at sea from non-U.S. ships or from the wharves in Cuban ports. The Russians would not permit on-site inspection until all Soviet missiles are removed. Kuznetsov hinted that the missile removal operation would take about a week. (See attached cable.)<sup>(1)</sup>

Secretary Rusk said that if there was to be no inspection on the ground, air reconnaissance became crucial. He indicated that the Russians might not object to our overflights. He said that U Thant had asked Stevenson how long we wanted the inspection to go on. Permanent inspection would be difficult, but inspection limited to a period of weeks would be easier. He said the Russians were prepared to accept UN inspectors in Cuba.

The President said he approved of the plan to have Red Cross officials inspect all ships from Bloc ports. He also agreed to suspend the quarantine for two days during the visit of the Acting Secretary General to Havana.

Secretary McNamara reported that a Soviet ship, listing its cargo as wheat, but carrying unidentified crates, was about 300 miles off Cuba. Admiral Anderson wanted to stop this ship, but it had been decided not to stop it.

General Taylor commented that what we are asking the Russians to do is to dismantle their missiles immediately. Mr. Bundy added that our request did not include dismantling the SAM sites.

The President returned to the question of air reconnaissance. He agreed that surveillance should be done in the least provocative way, but we must continue to maintain surveillance until a satisfactory UN system is in place. He said he thought we should tell Mr. McCloy in New York of our plans, but no public announcement should be made. He agreed that no reconnaissance flights would be flown tomorrow or Wednesday.<sup>(2)</sup> He asked that a study be prepared for him as to what we consider a satisfactory inspection system.

Secretary McNamara said that if we were to have no on-site inspection in Cuba, we must have high- and low-level reconnaissance.

The President asked whether it would be possible for us to obtain pictures of the outgoing Soviet ships. He asked Secretary Rusk to make clear to our officials in New York that we must continue aerial reconnaissance unless the UN takes over this task.

Secretary Rusk commented that the political situation, as it had developed during the day, appeared to support the belief that Khrushchev's deal is still on, but if pictures from today's reconnaissance mission reveal that the nose cones are on the missiles in Cuba, then we will face a most difficult decision.

Bromley Smith<sup>(3)</sup>

1 Document 112. [Back](#)

2 October 31. [Back](#)

3 Printed from a copy that bears this typed signature. [Back](#)

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Source: Kennedy Library, National Security Files, Meetings and Memoranda Series, Executive Committee, Vol. II, Meetings, 11-16. Top Secret; Sensitive. The Record of Action for this meeting (ibid.) is in the Supplement.

**120.**

**Moscow, October 30, 1962.**

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT, I want to convey to you confidentially some considerations which, if you agree with them, could serve, in my opinion, our common cause, that is, prompt elimination of the remnants of the dangerous crisis which you and we have in the main liquidated. This would help to finalize the settlement more quickly so that life would resume its normal pace.

First of all, I would like to express a wish that you already now remove the quarantine without waiting for the procedure for the inspection of ships on which an agreement has been reached to be put into effect. It would be very reasonable on your part. You yourself realize that the quarantine will in fact accomplish nothing since those ships that are now heading for Cuba naturally, after we have agreed on the removal of our missiles from Cuba, do not carry not only any offensive weapons, but, as I have already stated it publicly and informed you confidentially, any weapons at all. Immediate lift of the quarantine would be a good gesture. It would be appreciated both by us and world public opinion as a major step to speed up liquidation of the after effects of the crisis. For all practical purposes the quarantine is of no use to you, but being a manifestation of the crisis, it continues to poison relations among states, relations between you and us and Cuba and produces a depressing effect on world public which would like to see a complete relaxation. You would lose nothing but you would score a gain as far as public opinion is concerned.

On the other hand, immediate lift of the quarantine would give us an opportunity to use our ships that are approaching Cuba to take out the weapons which are being dismantled now and, I think, have been already dismantled. After the ships are unloaded the dismantled weapons could be loaded on them and shipped to the Soviet Union.

Naturally, after the elimination of the crisis it is impossible to continue the blockade and discrimination in trade and communications. All this must be done away with. But you, as we know, undertook measures and put pressure on your allies and other countries so that even flights of civilian passenger planes be not permitted. Do you really think that IL-28 carries any means of destruction? This is laughable.

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All this is being done not to ensure security, but as pinpricks and cannot but cause irritation and worsening of our relations. Why should it be done? Who needs it? It serves only the aggressive forces to strain nerves and thus to reach their goal which is to push the world into the abyss of thermonuclear war.

Therefore I believe, that you, Mr. President, will understand me correctly and will draw appropriate conclusions aimed at clearing the way for bettering the relations between our states.

Next question. I do not know what you will think about it but if you were prepared already now to proclaim the liquidation of your base in Guantanamo, this would be an act which would give world public opinion real satisfaction and would contribute to the easing of tension. I think that you yourself realize what significance the base in Guantanamo may have now after your statement that you do not pursue the aim of invading Cuba. Then the question arises: at whom this base is aimed, what purposes does it serve, from whom can it guard the approaches to America? I do not see forces that can threaten America from that direction. Therefore the base in Guantanamo is only a burden for your budget, and what is the main thing, it is a great burden of a moral nature for political leaders in the USA. And everybody realizes that the functions of the base in Guantanamo--and this is in fact the case--are aggressive, not defensive.

You know our position with regard to the bases. We are against military bases in general and that's why we liquidated those our bases that we had in Finland and China and we think that we acted rightly. That was an act that manifested our good intentions in ensuring peaceful coexistence. By that we did not diminish our defensive capability but raised our moral prestige among the peoples of all the world. The more true it is now when there are perfect means of war the range and destructive power of which are so great that no bases could in any degree replace them.

This would be a good preparation to an agreement between you and us on the liquidation of all military bases in general since military bases have lost now their importance. Those are not my words. I think, you yourself said and even stated it publicly that you want to reduce the number of your military bases. Of this spoke Bowles and others, and they spoke correctly.

Such your step would be highly appreciated by world public.

I would like also to tell you my following consideration.

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My colleagues and I consider that both sides have displayed restraint and wisdom in liquidating the military conflict which might have resulted in a world thermonuclear war. I take the liberty to think that you evidently held to a restraining position with regard to those forces which suffered from militaristic itching. And we take a notice of that. I don't know, perhaps I am wrong, but in this letter I am making the conclusion on the basis that in your country the situation is such that the decisive word rests with the President and if he took an extreme stand there would be no one to restrain him and war would be unleashed. But as this did not happen and we found a reasonable compromise having made mutual concessions to each other and on this basis eliminated the crisis which could explode in the catastrophe of a thermonuclear war, then, evidently, your role here was restraining. We so believe, and we note and appreciate it.

Our systems are different and my role was simpler than yours because there were no people around me who wanted to unleash war. My efforts aimed at eliminating the conflict were supported by both our military men and my colleagues in the leadership of the party and government.

Mr. President, we have now conditions ripe for finalizing the agreement on signing a treaty on cessation of tests of thermonuclear weapons. We fully agree with regard to three types of tests or, so to say, tests in three environments. This is banning of test in atmosphere, in outer space and under water. In this respect we are of the same opinion and we are ready to sign an agreement.

But there are still some differences with regard to underground explosions. Therefore it would be good if you gave instructions to find a compromise in the decision on the underground test ban, but without inspection. We shall not accept inspection, this I say to you unequivocally and frankly. Of course, if one aims at delaying or torpedoing an agreement then there is sense in insisting on the inspection of underground explosions.

We do not carry on underground tests, we did it but once and we are not going to do it anymore. Maybe such a necessity will arise sometime in future, but in any case I do not envisage it.

It would be very useful to agree on ending tests after such strain when people lived through great anxiety. It would be a great reward for the nervous strain suffered by the peoples of all countries. I think that your people felt as much anxiety as all other peoples expecting that thermonuclear war would break out any moment. And we were very close to

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such war indeed. That is why it would be good to give satisfaction to the public opinion. This would contribute to easing the tension.

We appreciate it very much that you took the initiative and in such a moment of crisis stated your readiness to conduct negotiations with the purpose of signing a non-aggression treaty between the two military blocs. We responded and supported it. We are prepared to come to an agreement on this question confidentially or through diplomatic channels and then make it public and start negotiations. This also would contribute to lessening tension. The world public would learn with satisfaction that in the moment of crisis not only declarative statements were made but certain commitments with signatures affixed were taken as well.

But the best thing to do would be--I do not know how you will look upon it--to disband all military blocs. We are not coming up with this now though we spoke of this before; however we believe now too that this would be most reasonable. But if you and your allies are not ready yet for that we are not pressing. However I must say that in the interests of the same elimination of tension this would be greatly useful.

We have eliminated a serious crisis. But in order to foresee and forestall appearance of a new crisis in future which might be impossible to cope with everything in our relations capable of generating a new crisis should be erased now. It would seem that now when we possess thermonuclear weapons, rocket weapons, submarine fleet and other means the situation obliges all states, every state to adhere to such norms of conduct which would not generate conflicts, to say nothing of wars. From our point of view, this is quite obtainable. This would be a big step forward at a time when we in effect have not yet disarmed. I think that this would be not a loss but a gain for the supporters of peaceful coexistence, a mutual benefit which the peoples of the U.S. and other countries participating in military blocs would enjoy. It can also be said with confidence that this would be highly appreciated by all peoples and would give great reassurance and satisfaction to people interested in securing peace. More efforts should be made already now to solve the problem of disarmament. To do it with regard not to one stage but to a real solution of the whole problem.

In our proposals on general and complete disarmament which we have made we have taken into consideration your wishes as well. Our recent proposals on this point were expressed by the USSR Foreign Minister A.A. Gromyko at the XVII session of the U.N. General Assembly. In those proposals of ours adjustments were made to take into account your wishes. What we considered to be reasonable we took into consideration.

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And of course, Mr. President, I am again reminding you of the necessity to solve the German question because next crisis, possibly of no lesser danger, can be caused by the German question. And the main thing is that that crisis will be foolish as all crises are.

There was war, two German states emerged, or actually three states, which are in existence since the end of World War II. Specific relations among them have already developed. But these relations--economic and political--exist because the German Democratic Republic regulates traffic through its territory on the basis of some substitutes for treaties though in reality, in daily life, in practice such treaties are already operative.

Besides, we and you, our Foreign Minister and your Secretary of State, have agreed on all questions. And the only question which remains unsolved is that of the presence of troops in West Berlin and in effect not even of the troops but under what flag those troops will be and of what states, naturally within certain period of time.

Could not we both understand it? And who needs that the present unsolved situation continue? Not you and not your people. This is not in our or your interests, and not in the interests of our or your allies. This is only--and I repeat again--in the interests of revanchist forces who do not want to recognize the borders and conditions emerged as a result of the defeat of the Hitlerite Germany. Only they benefit from that. Nobody else.

Who expresses such policy now--Adenauer or somebody else--that is of no particular importance to me or to you. But if one takes a realistic view, if you, Mr. President, analyze the situation then you in your heart will undoubtedly agree with me. What you say publicly is another matter. But that comes not from how you personally understand the situation but, so to say, from political expedience, from desire "not to offend" your ally. However it would be better to be guided by a desire not to offend the public opinion and to give satisfaction to it, to give satisfaction to all peoples, the American people included--to eliminate the hotbed of international tension in the center of Europe. And we would be able to eliminate it. If you and we come to an agreement on this question--and we do want it--this would be a great joy for all peoples because this would mean consolidation of peace.

There would remain many unsettled matters in the world but the main thing after that--and I would like to tell you about it--is the question of China. It is anomalous that China is not having her seat in the U.N. Similar anomalies already existed in history and were overwhelmed by life. When the Revolution broke out and won in America the Russian Emperor showed stubbornness and did not recognize America for 26 years. But America did

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not cease to exist because of that. So, that was a foolish policy. The United States answered with the same lack of cleverness. But that happened, however, in different times. Therefore the U.S. acted unreasonably for roughly half that time: the Russian Emperor--for 26 years, you--for 16 years. But then the U.S. realized that it was unwise, and your great President Roosevelt took the courage and responsibility and displayed wisdom.

You would greatly raise your prestige, personal and that of your country, in the eyes of the peoples if you take an attitude facilitating China taking its lawful seat in the U.N. This is possible only if it is understood that there cannot be two Chinas. No state which respects itself can agree to a part of its territory, a part of its population being cut off, it applies even more strongly to a great power. This is an internal question of China and let the Chinese decide it among themselves. When China participated in the creation of the U.N. and when it was made a permanent member of the Security Council, then it was one China. And that one China exists now. If China occupies again its lawful seat in the U.N., if you understand the necessity of it--and I think that you do understand it--then it would be good, it would be a great contribution to the cause of peace.

It is impossible to come to an agreement on disarmament without China. There are countries with population of half a million and even less which are members of the U.N. and have voice in this international organization. Iceland, for instance, has the population of 180 thousand people. China has 650 million people and does not have such voice. We have respect for the people of Iceland and their will as well as for all peoples. But from the point of view of ensuring peace--even if there seems to be a contradiction here--the contribution of a given people and that of another people, the real contribution to the cause of ensuring peace may be different.

Therefore it would be proper to solve the question of the restoration of China's rights in the U.N.; the peoples are waiting for it. And this will happen, it is only a matter of time. Therefore in order not to prolong this time, if you understood now the necessity for such a step, then, it would in effect be possible to solve this problem at the present session of General Assembly. What satisfaction it would give to the world public opinion, you would see from the expression of feelings of all peoples because it would be a real step, indeed, towards stabilization and strengthening of peace all over the world.

We, the Soviet people and the peoples of Asian and European countries saw war. War often rolled through our territory. America participated in the two wars but it suffered very

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small losses in those wars. While huge profits were accumulated as a result of the wars. Of course, it was monopolists who benefited but wo

rkers, working people got something out of it, too. War did not touch the soil of the United States. The American people did not experience destruction, sufferings, they only received notifications about deaths of their kin. Now during this crisis war was knocking at the gates of America.

These, in effect, are my considerations after the crisis situation. I want to tell you that in this crisis, as our saying goes, there is no evil without good. Evil has brought some good. The good is that now people have felt more tangibly the breathing of the burning flames of thermonuclear war and have a more clear realization of the threat looming over them if arms race is not stopped. And I would say that what has just happened will serve especially good the American people.

Mr. President, I believe that you as a military man, and your military people understand that we were not preparing for war when we delivered means of defense to Cuba. Those means were not meant against the U.S., but were the means to ensure the security of Cuba. Do you really think that we are so narrow-minded in our understanding of military matters that in preparing for war against the U.S. we picked up Cuba as a bridgehead for such a war? And the means there--a certain number of missiles. This is foolish. For Cuba is no good as a bridgehead for a big war and it cannot be used for those purposes and, of course, nobody ever contemplated that. Those were the means for deterring aggressor, to use the language of the late Dulles.

It is our opinion that the crisis has been eliminated on the compromise basis through reciprocal concessions. We are satisfied with it. We also appreciate your cooperation in the elimination of the crisis and your understanding of the necessity for reciprocal concessions and compromise so that the conflict be prevented from going beyond the limits that might really break into a thermonuclear war. All the peoples of the world, the peoples of the United States and the Soviet Union as well as the peoples of all other countries, are interested in eliminating this conflict. In particular, I think, it will be highly appreciated by the people of Cuba who have now been assured that their borders will be respected and there will be no threat of invasion of their land on the part of stronger states. In other words, the Cuban people will have the long-awaited opportunity to enjoy the benefits of their labor and they will have the guarantee of their independence on the basis of the U.N. Charter, which

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provides for non-interference into internal affairs of other states and respect for sovereignty and integrity of states.

These are the considerations, Mr. President, which I wanted to express to you. I understand that I listed a great number of questions. Therefore, if we started after breakfast we would not have finished solving them before dinner. It would require more time but they have to be solved. They face the world. And the more we delay the solution of these questions, the more of unknown will appear which can prove to be fatal in a future crisis. Therefore, the sooner we clear away the roadblock, the windfallen wood, which has piled up in the international relations, and make clear the roads to correct mutual understanding the better it would be.

Mr. President, you lived through this crisis yourself. For us too, it presented the Rubicon: whether to agree to a compromise, whether to make concessions. Indeed, from the point of view of the legal standards your claims had no grounds whatsoever. Therefore there was a great trial and there were hesitations. We still believed, however, that you might have difficulties too since how could it be that you could not know that the unjustified demands of the USA exposed the world to the hazards of catastrophe. However, we decided to make a compromise proposal which would suit both you and us. We received your assurances that you would not invade Cuba and would not permit others to do it and on this condition we withdraw the weapons which you called offensive. As a result, there has been practically achieved the purpose which had been intended to be achieved through the shipments of means of defense. Now this question is solved on these compromise and reciprocal concessions.

And we consider it to be reasonable. Having eliminated this crisis we gave each other mutual satisfaction: you promised not to attack and not to permit attack against Cuba on the part of others, and we moved forward to make the USA feel confident that we do not contemplate anything bad against it and that there is no threat against the USA on our part. You certainly possess means of destruction. But you know that we also have these means and they are of a different nature than those that were in Cuba. Those were trifles there. Our means were brought to the state of combat readiness, they were of a more serious nature and they were pointed at the USA and your allies.

To our mutual satisfaction we maybe even sacrificed self-esteem. Apparently, there will be such scribblers who will engage in hair-splitting over our agreement, will be digging as to who made greater concessions to whom. As for me, I would say that we both made a

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concession to reason and found a reasonable solution which enabled us to ensure peace for all including those who will be trying to dig up something.

Such is our understanding of this whole question.

I would like to sum up the above said and express in conclusion the following considerations on the questions touched upon in this letter.

I think it would be possible to pick up from the questions listed by me those which are more ripe and which should, perhaps, be prepared for taking decisions on them. Then it would be possible to meet, maybe, at the U.N. or maybe at a specially arranged meeting. I repeat, I have in mind a meeting in case questions are prepared for taking decisions on them so that the appropriate agreements could be signed during the meeting. It would be a good gift for the peoples of the whole world.

We have a different understanding of the mentioned questions. Therefore I would like to know your considerations as to whether you believe that some or other of the questions raised by me are ripe for decision. If you do not consider them ripe, then there should be no meeting because a meeting in such conditions would not only fail to justify hopes of the peoples, but would distress them.[\(1\)](#)

Sincerely,

N. Khrushchev[\(2\)](#)

1 On October 29 Dobrynin had given Robert Kennedy a different unsigned letter from Khrushchev to the President which spelled out the basis for agreement on Cuba. The Attorney General studied the letter over night before asking Dobrynin to come to his office on October 30 and take it back because it involved a quid pro quo. For an account of this incident, see Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *Robert Kennedy and His Times*, p. 546. No record of the October 30 meeting has been found. For text of the letter, see *Foreign Relations, 1961-1963*, vol. VI, Document 70. [Back](#)

2 Printed from a copy that bears this typed signature. [Back](#)

Source: Kennedy Library, National Security Files, Countries Series, USSR, Khrushchev Correspondence. The source text bears no classification or indication who made the translation.

**121.**

**Moscow, October 31, 1962, 2 p.m.**

1149. Policy. Gromyko initiative on Cuba yesterday (Embtel 1139)([1](#)) appears corroborate estimate of Soviet intentions salvage as much as possible of their position in Cuba. In this respect seems to us to reflect same kind of internal pushing and hauling which must have taken place between despatch Khrushchev private letter October 26 and published letter October 27.([2](#))

Western colleagues incline to view "heads must roll" as result set-back, though neither they nor we are able to identify source of any differences in leadership.

In any event, we believe Khrushchev personally convinced situation was critically dangerous and had to be liquidated. (We are struck by parallel between danger to USSR in which Cuban gamble eventuated and Khrushchev's accusations against Stalin in "secret speech" for having permitted Soviet Union come up to threshold World War II grossly unprepared, both militarily and psychologically.)

On balance we consider selection of Kuznetsov for New York and decision to despatch Mikoyan to Cuba encouraging factors. Seems to us of some importance they chose to send Mikoyan via New York for consultation with Kuznetsov rather than direct, as they could have done (Embtel 1145).(a href="#">3)

Factors producing dramatic decision withdraw included not only striking display US determination and unity Western alliances when chips are down, but distaste Soviet populace for Cuban adventures. Sense of relief here following publication exchanges of letters unmistakable.

Kohler

1 Document 115. [Back](#)

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2 See Documents 84 and 91. [Back](#)

3 Dated October 31. (Department of State, Central Files, 033.6111/10-3162) [Back](#)

Source: Department of State, Central Files, 761.00/10-3162. Secret; Niact; Limit Distribution. Received in the Department of State at 7:20 a.m. The source text notes that a copy of the telegram was passed to the White House on October 31.

### 137.

On November 3, 1962, John Scali of the American Broadcasting Corporation met with Alexander S. Fomin, Counselor of the Soviet Embassy in Washington and reputedly head of Soviet intelligence in Washington. Fomin made five points to Scali. First, the United States must be patient with Soviet efforts to moderate Castro; second, the Soviet Union required reciprocal concessions; third, as Castro was adamantly opposed to inspection, the United States and Soviet Union should resolve the issue themselves, by inspection of Soviet ships at sea in international waters; fourth, the Soviet Union could not withdraw its surface-to-air missiles from Cuba for fear of leaving Castro defenseless; and fifth, the Soviet Union planned to leave some technicians in Cuba to train Cubans in the operation of defensive weapons.

Although original records of certain other Scali-Fomin conversations have been found, none for November 3 has been discovered. Pierre Salinger paraphrases and quotes from Scali's report of this meeting in *With Kennedy*, pages 279-280. Salinger notes that Scali's reports were regularly transmitted to members of the Executive Committee and that President Kennedy jokingly suggested that Scali should attend the sessions.

### 144.

#### **Washington, November 5, 1962.**

Dobrynin asked earlier this morning if I could see him and I made arrangements to have him come to the office at 12 o'clock Noon.

He delivered another letter from Mr. Khrushchev.<sup>(1)</sup> I read it and found that it concerned our list of offensive weapons that Stevenson had submitted.

I explained to Dobrynin that from the first it had been made clear by the Soviet Union that they would get rid of any weapons which we considered offensive and certainly it was very clear that the bombers, the IL 28's, had to go. Dobrynin replied that he was not familiar with that position and also did not know what was on the list that Khrushchev mentioned in his letter. I told him I would get a copy of it; that it was basically the same list of weapons that had been listed in the President's Quarantine Proclamation. He replied he would obtain a copy from Kuznetsov.

During the middle of the conversation the President called and said that he had just received some preliminary information which indicated that several of our planes over Cuba had been fired upon. In ending my conversation with Dobrynin, therefore, I stressed the fact that any arrangements that were made were dependent upon there not being any incidents in the air above Cuba.

**145.**

**Moscow, undated.**

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT, I have just received information from Mr. V. Kuznetsov, our representative at the negotiations in New York for liquidation of the tense situation around Cuba, that Mr. Stevenson handed him a list of weapons which your side calls offensive.<sup>(1)</sup> I have studied the list and, I must confess, the approach of the American side to this matter has seriously worried me. In such a move, I will say frankly, I see a wish to complicate the situation, because it is impossible indeed to place into the category of "offensive" weapons such types of weapons which have always been referred to as defensive weapons even by a man uneducated militarily--by a common soldier, not to say of an officer.

It is hard for us to understand what aim is being pursued by the introduction of that list, by setting forth such a demand--in any case it must be some other aim, but not a desire for a speediest clearing of the atmosphere. And it is being done at a moment when we have already agreed with you on the main questions and when we on our part have already fulfilled what we agreed upon--have dismantled rocket weapons, are loading them now on ships and these weapons will be soon shipped from Cuba. That is why I feel greatly concerned with the advancing of such demand by the American side, concerned with its possible consequences, if necessary reasonableness is not displayed.

The demand which has been set forth is evidently pursuing, as I have already said, some other aims and that--I would wish, Mr. President, that you understand me correctly--can

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lead not to the betterment of our relations but, on the contrary, to their new aggravation. We should understand the position each side is in and take it into consideration but not overburden, not complicate our relations, especially at such an important moment when measures are being taken to eliminate the acute tension and bring these relations to a normal state.

That is why I would ask you, Mr. President, to meet our anxiety with understanding, to take measures on your side in order not to complicate the situation and to give your representatives a directive to eliminate the existing tension on the basis upon which both of us have agreed by having exchanged public messages. You spoke to the effect that missiles which you called offensive should be removed from Cuba. We agreed to that. You in your turn gave assurances that the so-called "quarantine" would be promptly removed and that no invasion of Cuba would be made, not only by the U.S. but by other countries of the Western hemisphere either.

Let us then bring the achieved understanding to a completion, so that we could consider that each side has fulfilled its pledges and the question has been settled. If, however, additional demands are made, then that means only one thing--the danger that the difficulties on the way to eliminating tension created around Cuba will not be removed. But that may raise then new consequences.

I think that you will understand me correctly. For you and I will evidently have to deal not only with elimination of the remnants of the present tension--there lies ahead for you and me a great, serious talk on other questions. Why then start now complicating the situation by minor things. May be there exist some considerations, but they are beyond our comprehension. As for us, we view the introduction of additional demands as a wish to bring our relations back again into a heated state in which they were but several days ago.

Sincerely,  
N. Khrushchev<sup>(2)</sup>

1 See footnote 3, Document 133. [Back](#)

2 Printed from a copy that bears this typed signature. [Back](#)

Source: Kennedy Library, National Security Files, Countries Series, USSR, Khrushchev Correspondence (Cuba), Vol. I-C, 11/3/62-11/16/62. No classification marking. According to

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Problems of Communism the Russian text was transmitted by the Soviet Foreign Ministry to the Soviet Embassy in Washington on November 4. A note on the source text indicates it was received on November 5. Other copies are in Department of State, Presidential Correspondence: Lot 77 D 163, and *ibid.*: Lot 66 D 204.

**USING KGB DOCUMENTS:  
THE SCALI-FEKLISOV CHANNEL  
IN THE CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS  
by Alexander Fursenko  
and Timothy Naftali**

From the time that former State Department official Roger Hilsman revealed in 1964 that ABC News television correspondent John Scali had served as an intermediary between the U.S. and Soviet governments at the height of the Cuban Missile Crisis, scholars have had to consider the role that Scali and his contact, Aleksandr Feklisov (alias Fomin), played in the resolution of the conflict.<sup>1</sup> Until 1989, it was generally assumed that the Kremlin had used Feklisov, a KGB officer based at the Soviet Embassy in Washington, to float a trial balloon at the most dangerous moment of the Cuban Missile Crisis because meaningful communication between the two governments had ground to a halt. But at a conference of scholars and former officials in Moscow in January 1989, Feklisov argued that Western historians had gotten his role in the crisis all wrong. The Kremlin, he said, had not injected him into negotiations. The famous proposal for ending the crisis, which Robert Kennedy later recalled as having made his brother “for the first time hopeful that our efforts might possibly be successful,” had not come from him, but rather had come out of the blue from Scali. Scali, who was also present in Moscow, vigorously disputed Feklisov’s account. <sup>2</sup> Feklisov’s surprising assertion<sup>3</sup> and Scali’s immediate rejection of this revisionist history posed three questions for students of the crisis: a) Did the Soviet government use the KGB to find a way out of the crisis on 26 October 1962? b) Did Feklisov act on his own or did Scali suggest a settlement for his own government to consider? c) What effect, if any, did the Scali- Feklisov meetings have on the endgame of the Cuban Missile Crisis? Materials consulted in the archives of the SVR (Foreign Intelligence Service, the new name for the First Chief Directorate of the KGB), resolve some, though not all, of these questions. Documents on the Scali- Feklisov meetings have been opened as part of a multi-book project on the history of the superpower intelligence services sponsored by Crown Publishers, Inc.<sup>4</sup> To understand better what can be learned from these documents, it is helpful to revisit the standard account of the role of the Scali- Feklisov channel in the resolution of the Cuban Missile Crisis. According to the traditional version, Scali received a call at his Washington office from Feklisov on Friday, October 26. Scali had been meeting off and on with this Soviet Embassy official for over a year. From the FBI, which Scali had alerted from the outset about his meetings with Feklisov, the journalist learned that this man was no ordinary diplomat. Aleksandr Feklisov (“Fomin”) was the KGB Resident, or chief of station, in Washington. On this particular Friday, with the likelihood of US military action against Cuba seemingly mounting, Feklisov asked for an urgent meeting with Scali. Scali suggested the Occidental Restaurant near the Willard Hotel. The lunch was set for 1:30 p.m. “When I arrived he was already sitting at the table as usual, facing the door. He seemed tired, haggard and alarmed in contrast to the usual calm, low-key appearance that he presented.” Thus Scali described in a 1964 television broadcast how this meeting opened. Scali said that Feklisov feared that

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war would begin soon, and was so concerned that he volunteered a way out of the stalemate.<sup>5</sup> He asked, according to Scali's notes, what Scali "thought" of a three-point proposition: a) The Soviet missile bases would be dismantled under United Nations supervision. b) Fidel Castro would promise never to accept offensive weapons of any kind, ever. c) In return for the above, the United States would pledge not to invade Cuba.<sup>6</sup> Feklisov was confident that if U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Adlai Stevenson "pursued this line," Soviet UN ambassador Valerian Zorin "would be interested." As if to give some weight to his proposal, Feklisov noted that the Cuban delegate to the UN had already made a similar proposal in a session of the Security Council but that it had been met with silence. Feklisov asked that Scali run this proposal by his contacts at the State Department and then gave the journalist his home telephone number, to be sure he could be reached at any time.<sup>7</sup> Scali rushed this proposal to the State Department. Roger Hilsman, State's director of Intelligence and Research, and Secretary of State Dean Rusk were extremely interested in it. Rusk considered this to be the first concrete offer from the Soviet leadership for ending the crisis. The letters already exchanged by Khrushchev and Kennedy had only brought about a hardening of each side's position. So long as the Soviets refused to discuss removing the missiles, there seemed to be no peaceful way out of the deepening crisis.<sup>8</sup> Transcripts of the ExComm [Executive Committee of the National Security Council] meeting of October 27 confirm that the Kennedy administration interpreted the "offer" from the KGB representative as an elaboration of a more general proposal contained in a private letter from Khrushchev that arrived late in the afternoon of October 26, in which the Soviet leader had written: We, for our part, will declare that our ships bound for Cuba are not carrying any armaments. You will declare that the United States will not invade Cuba with its troops and will not support any other forces which might intend to invade Cuba. Then the necessity for the presence of our military specialists will be obviated.<sup>10</sup> By itself the Khrushchev letter did not promise anything except that future Soviet ships would carry non-military cargoes. But when the letter was coupled with what Scali had relayed from Feklisov, the Kennedy administration believed it had received an acceptable offer from the Kremlin. Rusk instructed Scali to contact Feklisov to make clear that the U.S. found a basis for agreement in his offer. Sometime between 7:30 and 7:45 p.m. on Friday evening, Scali and Feklisov met at the Statler Hotel, near the Soviet Embassy. In a very brief meeting Scali conveyed his message: He was authorized by the highest authority to say that there were "real possibilities in this [proposal]" and that "the representatives of the USSR and the United States in New York can work this matter out with [UN Secretary General] U Thant and with each other." Feklisov listened carefully, then repeated the proposal to be sure that he understood the White House's offer correctly. Unsure of Scali, he asked repeatedly for confirmation that Scali spoke for the White House. Finally, Feklisov added that it was not enough for there to be inspection of the dismantling of Soviet missiles, it would be necessary for UN observers to observe the withdrawal of U.S. forces from the southern United States. This idea went beyond Scali's instructions, so he demurred. The situation changed the next day, October 27, which U.S. veterans of the Missile Crisis describe as "Black Saturday." Just as the ExComm was discussing a formal response to the Khrushchev letter and the Feklisov proposal, a second message arrived from Moscow, which this time immediately publicized the communication. Khrushchev had upped the ante. Now he demanded that the U.S.

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dismantle its Jupiter missile bases in Turkey before he went ahead with any deal that would strip Cuba of Soviet missiles. Scali was sent to see Feklisov to register the U.S. government's strong disapproval of the new terms. Although Feklisov defended his government's new position, the KGB Resident remained hopeful that the Kremlin would ultimately accept the October 26 proposal as the basis for a resolution of the crisis. Indeed, Kennedy's response to Khrushchev offered to accept the implicit terms of October 26 and ignored the Turkish issue raised in Khrushchev's letter of the 27th. The crisis ended the next morning, Sunday, October 28, with the Kremlin's public announcement of a deal—a withdrawal of Soviet missiles in exchange for a U.S. guarantee not to invade Cuba—that seemed to incorporate much of what John Scali and Aleksandr Feklisov had discussed. Both men were proud of their accomplishment. KGB records suggest that neither the traditional version nor Feklisov's revision is entirely accurate. Feklisov's cables to Moscow from October 26 and October 27 and evidence of how the KGB handled them suggest strongly that the Soviet government did not initiate the proposals that Scali presented to Rusk on the afternoon of October 26. Feklisov's cables, moreover, paint a different picture of his relationship with the American journalist. The KGB Resident considered him an intelligence contact, with whom he could exchange political information. In his cable to Moscow on October 26, Feklisov felt he had to introduce Scali to the KGB. "We have been meeting for over a year," he wrote. This statement, of course, would not have been necessary had Moscow already considered Scali a channel to the U.S. government. In previous cables Feklisov had referred to Scali only using a codename. This was the first time he introduced him and mentioned his position with ABC News. Feklisov's cable describing his first meeting with Scali on October 26 is almost a mirror image of the account that Scali gave Rusk. In Feklisov's version, Scali is the one who is fearful of war. After assuring Feklisov that the U.S. was planning air strikes and an amphibious landing on Cuba in the next 48 hours, Scali asked if the United States attacked Cuba, "would West Berlin be occupied?" Feklisov reported that he had replied defiantly that all heaven and earth might fall upon NATO if the U.S. were to attack Cuba. "At the very least," he said, "the Soviet Union would occupy West Berlin." Feklisov added that given the size of Soviet conventional forces on the line dividing East and West Germany, the situation would be very difficult for the West. And to make matters worse, he expected the crisis to unify the entire Socialist bloc, including China. Perhaps for dramatic effect, Feklisov assured his American interlocutor that the Cubans, and especially Castro, were ready to die like heroes.<sup>11</sup> Feklisov's report to the KGB Center creates the impression that the direction taken by the discussion depressed Scali even further. "A horrible conflict lies ahead," Scali said after hearing what the Soviet response would be to the use of American military force against Cuba. According to Feklisov, Scali fell into such a state of anxiety that he began to muse about possible ways out of the conflict. "Why couldn't Fidel Castro give a speech saying that he was prepared to dismantle and to remove the missile installations if President Kennedy gave a guarantee not to attack Cuba?" Scali is reported to have asked.<sup>12</sup> What is most significant about the version that Feklisov cabled to Moscow is that the KGB resident did not take Scali's musings as a formal U.S. offer. Instead of grasping this as a proposal, Feklisov told Scali that what he was saying sounded a lot like something already proposed by the Cubans in the Security Council, which had been ignored by U.S. Ambassador Stevenson. Although Scali responded that he could not recall any American rejection of a similar Cuban

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proposal, he said he was convinced that such a demarche at this time by Castro would meet with a positive reaction from U.S. civilian and military circles. Scali's confidence surprised Feklisov, who began to wonder whether indeed Scali might know something about the White House's negotiating strategy. When Feklisov inquired as to exactly who might be interested in this kind of proposal, Scali avoided giving any names. This was as far as he would go. As Scali and Feklisov parted, the KGB officer concluded that despite having taken an interesting turn, the meeting itself had been inconclusive. It is also significant that in his memoirs, Feklisov does not mention anything about having discussed a political solution with Scali at the first October 26 meeting. In fact, Feklisov categorically denies that he or Scali made any attempts to formulate a way out of the crisis at that time. Here the evidence from the SVR archives contradicts Feklisov's memoirs and suggests that Feklisov has, for whatever reason, forgotten the balance of his historic conversation with Scali.<sup>13</sup> The SVR record on the second Scali- Feklisov meeting of October 26 is less controversial. The account that Feklisov cabled to Moscow differs little from what the American journalist reported to the State Department. Feklisov reported that Scali, who had initiated the meeting, laid out a formula that could be the basis for negotiations between Stevenson and Zorin at the UN. The only difference between the Feklisov and Scali accounts is that whereas Feklisov described this as a new American proposal, Scali relayed to the State Department that Feklisov had responded energetically to word of formal U.S. interest in the Soviet proposal first mentioned at the Occidental Restaurant.<sup>14</sup> After this second meeting with Scali, Feklisov sent a long cable to Moscow, detailing both of his conversations with Scali. In retrospect, it seems odd that at a time when the Kremlin was hungry for any news about U.S. intentions, Feklisov would have waited so long to inform Moscow as to what John Scali was telling him. Feklisov was accustomed to cabling his superiors at all hours. And he had approximately five hours between the end of the lunch and his next discussion with Scali to tell KGB Center that something was going on. In his memoirs, Feklisov has explained this gap by saying that he did not expect anything to come of his discussion with Scali. Indeed, he writes that he did not even bother to mention the meeting to the Soviet Ambassador, Anatoli Dobrynin, until 4 p.m. Then, just as he was in the midst of giving this report to Dobrynin Feklisov received Scali's request for a second meeting. Not only did Feklisov have to leave the embassy before completing his briefing for Dobrynin but he had to put off cabling Moscow until returning from the Statler Hotel.<sup>15</sup> There was soon to be as much confusion in Moscow over what Feklisov was doing as in Dobrynin's embassy. The KGB had no warning that its representative in Washington had established, albeit unwittingly, a channel to the Kennedys. When Feklisov's long cable arrived in Moscow at 2:20 p.m., Saturday, October 27 (Moscow time was eight hours ahead of EST), the chief of the First Chief Directorate (FCD), the foreign intelligence division of the KGB, forwarded this telegram directly to the chairman of the KGB, Vladimir Semichastny.<sup>16</sup> In following the course taken by this important telegram, we see that it could not have played any role in shaping Khrushchev's letter of October 26, which proposed a U.S. guarantee of the territorial integrity of Cuba as a means of resolving the crisis, or even in influencing the letter of October 27 that asserted a parallel between U.S. bases in Turkey and the Soviet missile installations in Cuba. Feklisov's telegram arrived in well after (nearly a full day) Khrushchev had sent his letter of October 26 to Kennedy. Because it was not expected that Feklisov

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would act as a channel for resolving the crisis, this telegram was not given priority treatment. After deciphering and summarizing the telegram, which took the usual hour, the FCD sent the telegram to the Secretariat of the KGB, which was the headquarters staff of the Chairman, Semichastny. Inexplicably, the telegram sat in Semichastny's office for another four hours before the Chairman decided to send it to Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko. This delay was so long that by the time the Ministry of Foreign Affairs received a copy of the Feklisov cable, Khrushchev had already sent his second, October 27 letter to Kennedy referring to the Jupiters in Turkey.<sup>17</sup> The Scali-Feklisov meeting on October 27 looms even less significant in Russian records. Again Khrushchev could not have seen it in time to affect his strategy toward the Americans. Feklisov sent a short report after Scali scolded him for Khrushchev's new position on resolving the missile crisis. This cable did not reach the Chairman of the KGB until 4:40 p.m. on October 28. Semichastny's reaction was to forward the letter to the Foreign Ministry, where it arrived at 7 p.m. Moscow time, an hour after Khrushchev had publicly accepted the Kennedy administration's terms for ending the crisis.<sup>18</sup> The KGB materials substantiate claims that for the Kremlin the Scali-Feklisov meetings were a sideshow that played no part in the U.S.-Soviet endgame of October 26-28. Although of less consequence in light of this information, it is nevertheless interesting to consider the contradiction between the contemporaneous accounts by Feklisov and Scali of their meetings on October 26. Did Feklisov violate KGB procedure and present a completely unauthorized settlement formula? Or, at the other extreme, did Scali use the KGB resident to test some ideas that had occurred to him as perhaps the best way of averting nuclear disaster? The KGB documents suggest that in the heat of discussion, with the fear of war hanging over their heads, Scali and Feklisov fastened on a revival of a formula for ending the crisis that, among others, UN Secretary General U Thant had been suggesting since October 24.<sup>19</sup> Because of the possibility that Feklisov and/or Scali mischaracterized their first meeting on October 26, it may never be possible to resolve the central contradiction between their respective claims. However, the determination of which man actually proposed this plan is less important than the fact that, although the Kremlin was completely in the dark, John F. Kennedy was convinced that Feklisov spoke for the Soviet government, and indeed for Khrushchev personally. As we now know, President Kennedy decided not to use the Scali-Feklisov channel to settle the crisis. On the night of October 27, JFK sent his brother Robert to Dobrynin to offer a face-saving deal to Khrushchev. In addition to pledging not to invade Cuba, Kennedy offered a secret undertaking to remove Jupiter missiles from Turkey. Nevertheless, the story of the Scali-Feklisov backchannel remains significant as a prime example of how governments can misinterpret each other, especially in the grip of a crisis.

1. *The New York Times* broke the story of John Scali's role in the Cuban missile crisis on 4 August 1964. It was reported that *Look* magazine was about to publish an excerpt from Roger Hilsman's forthcoming book on foreign policymaking in the Kennedy years that named Scali as an intermediary between the U.S. and Soviet governments at the climax of the missile crisis. Just as Hilsman's piece was to appear in print, John Scali discussed his meetings with the Soviet KGB official, "Mr. X," on an ABC news special of 13 August 1964. Transcript, Cuban Missile Crisis Collection, National Security Archive, Washington, D.C. *U.S. News &*

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*World Report* carried an article about Hilsman's revelation in its 17 August 1964 issue. Hilsman's excerpt finally appeared in the 25 August 1964 issue of *Look*. A few months later, in its 25 October 1964 edition, *Family Weekly* published Scali's "I Was the Secret Go-Between in the Cuban Crisis." Pierre Salinger, Hilsman and Robert Kennedy all attested to the importance of the Scali channel in autobiographical books: *With Kennedy* (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1966), 274-280; *To Move A Nation: The Politics of Foreign Policy in the Administration of John F. Kennedy* (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1967), 217-223; and *Thirteen Days: A Memoir of the Cuban Missile Crisis* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1969), 90-91. Salinger's *With Kennedy* quoted directly from notes that John Scali had made after each of his meetings with the KGB officer.

2. The Moscow conference was one of a series of five conferences between 1987 and 1992 involving, at first, U.S. scholars and former officials, who were later joined by Soviet and then Cuban counterparts. The conferences were organized by James G. Blight, initially at Harvard University's Center for Science and International Affairs and later at Brown University's Center for Foreign Policy Development. For the Feklisov-Scali exchange, see Bruce J. Allyn, James G. Blight, and David A. Welch, eds., *Back to the Brink: Proceedings of the Moscow Conference on the Cuban Missile Crisis, January 27-28, 1989* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1992), 112-14; 117-18. Feklisov elaborated on his testimony in his memoirs, *Za Okeanom i Na Ostrovye* (Moscow: DEM, 1994), 222-40.

3. It appears that Feklisov first made this assertion to a Russian scholar in 1987. A year later, Georgi Kornienko, who had been the Counsellor in the Soviet Embassy at the time of the Missile Crisis, told Raymond Garthoff that on 26 October 1962 the Embassy had been confused by Feklisov's account of his first meeting with Scali. Neither Kornienko nor the ambassador, Anatoli Dobrynin, was sure whether it had been Scali or Feklisov who had made the proposal. See Garthoff's revised edition of *Reflections on the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 1989), 80-81. A 1988 article by Garthoff was the first published account of the Scali-Feklisov channel to raise doubts as to whether Feklisov had been authorized by the Kremlin to make his proposal. See Raymond L. Garthoff, "Cuban Missile Crisis: The Soviet Story," *Foreign Policy* 72 (Fall 1988).

4. Thus far, Crown has four books under contract. Each book will be written by a team. The Fursenko/Naftali study of the superpowers and Cuba, 1958-1963, will be the first book in the series. It will be followed by a history of Soviet intelligence penetration of the British government by John Costello and Oleg Tsarev; a study of KGB-CIA operations in Berlin by George Bailey, Sergei Kondrashev, and David Murphy; and a history of Soviet intelligence operations in the United States by Alexander Vassiliev and Allen Weinstein.

5. ABC news special of 13 August 1964. Transcript, Cuban Missile Crisis Collection, National Security Archive.

6. Elie Abel, *The Missile Crisis* (New York: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1966), 177-79. In their first public accounts, both Scali and Hilsman misremembered the details of the proposal. They had Khrushchev giving the pledge to keep Cuba free of offensive weapons, not Fidel Castro. This flawed version of the "Soviet" proposal gained wide currency when Graham T. Allison featured it in his influential *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1971), 260, 263. For Scali's confidential description on 26 October 1962 of what he had just heard from Feklisov, which confirms Abel's and Salinger's accounts,

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see "John Scali's notes of first meeting with Soviet embassy counselor and KGB officer Alexandr Fomin, October 26, 1962," Document 43 in Laurence Chang and Peter Kornbluh, eds., *The Cuban Missile Crisis, 1962: A National Security Archive Documents Reader*, (New York: New Press, 1992), 184.

7. Ibid.

8. Hilsman, *To Move A Nation*, 217-19.

9. Papers of John F. Kennedy, Presidential Papers, President's Office Files, *Presidential Recordings*, Cuban Missile Crisis Meetings, 27 October 1962, John F. Kennedy Library, Boston, MA.

10. Khrushchev to Kennedy, 26 October 1962, in Chang and Kornbluh, eds., *The Cuban Missile Crisis*, 185-88.

11. Feklisov to KGB Center, 26 October 1962, Delo 116, T.1, SVR Archives, Moscow.

12. Ibid.

13. Feklisov, *Za Okeanom u Na Ostrovye*, 223-25.

14. Feklisov to KGB Center, 27 October 1962, Delo 116, T.1., SVR Archives; John Scali, Report of 27 October 1962 Meeting, Cuban Missile Crisis Collection, National Security Archive.

15. Feklisov, *Za Okeanom u Na Octrove*, 225. There is a problem with Feklisov's chronology. Scali's call actually came later than 4 or 5 p.m.. Unless his meeting with Dobrynin actually occurred three hours later than he said, Feklisov should have had enough time to brief the Soviet ambassador and to send a cable to Moscow. After returning from the second meeting, Feklisov continued to wait before sending Moscow any word on his meetings with Scali. The long cable was not sent until approximately midnight, four hours after Feklisov and Scali parted. At a September 1994 conference in Moscow, entitled "The Caribbean Crisis in the Archives of the Russian Federation, the Republic of Cuba and the United States," Dobrynin and Feklisov argued over the reasons for the delays in sending a KGB cable on the Scali meetings. Feklisov alleged that he waited to give Dobrynin the opportunity to sign the cable; but when the latter stubbornly refused to do so, he sent it anyway. The former Soviet ambassador rejected this account, saying that Feklisov had not needed his signature to send a KGB cable.

16. Spravka on Feklisov's October 26 telegram on Scali, Delo 116, T. 1., SVR Archives.

17. Ibid.

18. Spravka on Delivery of Scali report of 27 October 1962, *ibid*.

19. U Thant, "Statement in the Security Council," 24 October 1962, in Andrew W. Cordier and Max Harrelson, eds., *Public Papers of the Secretaries-General of the United Nations, VI: U Thant, 1961-1964* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), 237-240.

*Alexandr A. Fursenko is the Vice President of the St.*

*Petersburg branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences;*

*Timothy J. Naftali is Assistant Professor of History, University of Hawai*

### Documents soviétiques

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**Report to CPSU Central Committee From Defense Minister Rodion Malinovskii and A. Epishev**

<b>Date:</b> 10/24/1962	<b>Source:</b> The response from the Soviet Army following the announcement of the Soviet government about the aggressive actions of the US toward Cuba.
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**Description:**  
The response from the Soviet Army following the announcement of the Soviet government about the aggressive actions of the US toward Cuba.

Secret  
Copy No. 1

CC CPSU

We report on work undertaken in connection with the announcement of the Soviet government about the aggressive actions of American imperialism against the Cuban republic.

The Ministry of Defense, fulfilling the Council of Ministers decision of 23 October 1962, has taken supplementary measures to support the Armed Forces at the highest state of military readiness. Commanders and military councils of military regions, groups of troops, Air Defense districts and fleets are ordered to delay the discharge of soldiers, sailors and sergeants in the last year of service, troops of the strategic rocket forces, Air Defense forces, and the submarine fleet; to cancel all leaves, and to increase military readiness and vigilance in all units and on every ship. At the present time commanders of the Armed Forces together with local party organs work on explaining to military men the Declaration of the Soviet government. In detachments, on ships, in military schools and in military institutions the Declaration of the USSR government was listened to collectively on the radio, talks, meetings and gatherings are taking place, where members of military councils, commanders and heads of political organs speak. In the country's Air Defense units, Secretaries of the Sakhalin regional CPSU committee (comrade Evstratov), the Khabarovsk provincial committee (comrade Klepikov), Berezovsk City Party Committee (comrade Uglov) spoke. In the military regions special leaflets with the text of the Declaration of the Soviet government were published and transferred by air to far-away detachments and garrisons. All servicemen passionately approve of the policies of the USSR government, support

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additional measures which it has undertaken and which are aimed at maintaining the troops in the state of maximum military readiness. At the same time Soviet soldiers express readiness to fulfill without delay every order of the Motherland aimed at the crushing defeat of the American aggressors. Captain Padalko and Captain Sorkov, pilots of the Second Independent Air Defense Army, and senior technical lieutenants Aziamov and Ovcharov declared: "At this alarming hour we are at the highest state of military readiness. If the American adventurists unleash a war, they will be dealt the most powerful crippling blow. In response to the ugly provocation of the warmonger, we will strengthen even more our vigilance and military preparedness, we will fulfill without delay any order of the Soviet government." The announcement of the Soviet Government received broad support among soldiers, sergeants and sailors due to be discharged from the Armed Forces. They all declare that they will serve as much as required in the interests of the strengthening of the preparedness of the troops. Private Kovalenko (415th Air Force Combat Air Wing), prematurely released into the reserves, returned to his base, gave back his documents and announced, "At such a troubling time, my responsibility is to be at my military post, and to defend the interests of the Motherland with a weapon in my hands." Many senior soldiers, striving with all their strength and knowledge to the increase in military readiness, declare their willingness to remain for additional service. After a meeting of the 15th Division of the Moscow District Air Defense Forces 20 soldiers reported with a request to enlist for additional service. Following the example of Communists Sergeant Kaplin and Junior Sergeant Afanas'ev, 18 soldiers who had been discharged from the 345th anti-aircraft detachment of the Bakinsk District Air Defense Forces requested permission to remain in the army. After the declaration of the Soviet government, at the bases and on the ships there was a strengthened desire of individual soldiers to defend Cuba as volunteers. On just one day in the 78th motorized infantry training division of the Ural Military District, 1240 requests to be sent to the Cuban Republic were received. At a meeting of the 300 and 302nd detachment (sic) of the Second Independent Air Defense Army of the Air Defense Forces the decision was made about the readiness of the entire unit to leave for Cuba. In response to the directions of the Soviet government relating to the aggressive actions of the American government, military personnel heighten their vigilance and increase their personal responsibility for the maintenance of military readiness. In the 3rd Corps of the Air Defense Forces of the Moscow Military District, soldiers work at night in fulfillment of daytime norms. In the 201st anti-aircraft detachment of the Ural Military District there has been a significant reduction in the time required for maintenance work on military equipment.

As an expression of the unprecedented trust of the individuals of the Armed Forces in the CPSU there is a strengthened desire among front-line soldiers to join the ranks of the Party and the Komsomol. Following the declaration of the Government of the USSR, the number of applications to join the Party and the Komsomol grew. During the explanation of the declaration of the Soviet Government, no sorts of negative manifestations were noted.

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We are reporting for your information.

(signed) R. Malinovskii

(signed) A. Epishev

24 October 1962

[Source: F. 5, Op. 47, D. 400, Ll. 69-71, TsKhSD; translation by Mark H. Doctoroff.]

**Dobrynin Cable to the USSR Foreign Ministry, 27 October 1962**

TOP SECRET  
Making Copies Prohibited  
Copy No. 1

CIPHERED TELEGRAM

Late tonight R. Kennedy invited me to come see him. We talked alone.

The Cuban crisis, R. Kennedy began, continues to quickly worsen. We have just received a report that an unarmed American plane was shot down while carrying out a reconnaissance flight over Cuba. The military is demanding that the President arm such planes and respond to fire with fire. The USA government will have to do this.

I interrupted R. Kennedy and asked him what right American planes had to fly over Cuba at all, crudely violating its sovereignty and accepted international norms? How would the USA have reacted if foreign planes appeared over its territory?

"We have a resolution of the Organization of American states that gives us the right to such overflights," R. Kennedy quickly replied.

I told him that the Soviet Union, like all peace-loving countries, resolutely rejects such a "right" or, to be more exact, this kind of true lawlessness, when people who don't like the social-political situation in a country try to impose their will on it—a small state where the people themselves established and maintained [their system]. "The OAS resolution is a direct violation of the UN Charter," I added, "and you, as the Attorney General of the USA, the highest American legal entity, should certainly know that."

R. Kennedy said that he realized that we had different approaches to these problems and it was not likely that we could convince each other. But now the matter is not in these differences, since time is of the essence. "I want," R. Kennedy stressed, "to lay out the current alarming situation the way the president sees it. He wants N.S. Khrushchev to know this. This is the thrust of the situation now."

"Because of the plane that was shot down, there is now strong pressure on the president to give an order to respond with fire if fired upon when American reconnaissance planes are flying over Cuba. The USA can't stop these flights, because this is the only way we can quickly get information about the state of construction of the missile bases in Cuba, which we believe pose a very serious threat to our national security. But if we start to fire in response—a chain reaction will quickly start that will be very hard to stop. The same thing in regard to the essence of the issue of the missile bases in Cuba. The USA government is determined to get rid of those bases—up to, in the extreme case, bombing them, since, I repeat, they pose a great threat to the security of the USA. But in response to the bombing of these bases, in the course of which Soviet

specialists might suffer, the Soviet government will undoubtedly respond with the same against us, somewhere in Europe. A real war will begin, in which millions of Americans and Russians will die. We want to avoid that any way we can, I'm sure that the government of the USSR has the same wish. However, taking time to find a way out [of the situation] is very risky (here R. Kennedy mentioned as if in passing that there are many unreasonable heads among the generals, and not only among the generals, who are 'itching for a fight'). The situation might get out of control, with irreversible consequences."

"In this regard," R. Kennedy said, "the president considers that a suitable basis for regulating the entire Cuban conflict might be the letter N.S. Khrushchev sent on October 26 and the letter in response from the President, which was sent off today to N.S. Khrushchev through the US Embassy in Moscow. The most important thing for us," R. Kennedy stressed, "is to get as soon as possible the agreement of the Soviet government to halt further work on the construction of the missile bases in Cuba and take measures under international control that would make it impossible to use these weapons. In exchange the government of the USA is ready, in addition to repealing all measures on the "quarantine," to give the assurances that there will not be any invasion of Cuba and that other countries of the Western Hemisphere are ready to give the same assurances—the US government is certain of this."

"And what about Turkey?" I asked R. Kennedy.

"If that is the only obstacle to achieving the regulation I mentioned earlier, then the president doesn't see any insurmountable difficulties in resolving this issue," replied R. Kennedy. "The greatest difficulty for the president is the public discussion of the issue of Turkey. Formally the deployment of missile bases in Turkey was done by a special decision of the NATO Council. To announce now a unilateral decision by the president of the USA to withdraw missile bases from Turkey—this would damage the entire structure of NATO and the US position as the leader of NATO, where, as the Soviet government knows very well, there are many arguments. In short, if such a decision were announced now it would seriously tear apart NATO.

"However, President Kennedy is ready to come to agreement on that question with N.S. Khrushchev, too. I think that in order to withdraw these bases from Turkey," R. Kennedy said, "we need 4-5 months. This is the minimum amount of time necessary for the US government to do this, taking into account the procedures that exist within the NATO framework. On the whole Turkey issue," R. Kennedy added, "if Premier N.S. Khrushchev agrees with what I've said, we can continue to exchange opinions between him and the president, using him, R. Kennedy and the Soviet ambassador. However, the president can't say anything public in this regard about Turkey," R. Kennedy said again. R. Kennedy then warned that his comments about Turkey are extremely confidential; besides him and his brother, only 2-3 people know about it in Washington.

"That's all that he asked me to pass on to N.S. Khrushchev," R. Kennedy said in conclusion. "The president also asked N.S. Khrushchev to give him an answer (through



the Soviet ambassador and R. Kennedy) if possible within the next day (Sunday) on these thoughts in order to have a business-like, clear answer in principle. [He asked him] not to get into a wordy discussion, which might drag things out. The current serious situation, unfortunately, is such that there is very little time to resolve this whole issue. Unfortunately, events are developing too quickly. The request for a reply tomorrow," stressed R. Kennedy, "is just that—a request, and not an ultimatum. The president hopes that the head of the Soviet government will understand him correctly."

I noted that it went without saying that the Soviet government would not accept any ultimatums and it was good that the American government realized that. I also reminded him of N.S. Khrushchev's appeal in his last letter to the president to demonstrate state wisdom in resolving this question. Then I told R. Kennedy that the president's thoughts would be brought to the attention of the head of the Soviet government. I also said that I would contact him as soon as there was a reply. In this regard, R. Kennedy gave me the number of a direct telephone line to the White House.

In the course of the conversation, R. Kennedy noted that he knew about the conversation that television commentator Scali had yesterday with an Embassy adviser on possible ways to regulate the Cuban conflict [one-and-a-half lines whited out].

I should say that during our meeting R. Kennedy was very upset; in any case, I've never seen him like this before. True, about twice he tried to return to the topic of "deception," (that he talked about so persistently during our previous meeting), but he did so in passing and without any edge to it. He didn't even try to get into fights on various subjects, as he usually does, and only persistently returned to one topic: time is of the essence and we shouldn't miss the chance.

After meeting with me he immediately went to see the president, with whom, as R. Kennedy said, he spends almost all his time now.

27/X-62 A. DOBRYNIN

*[Source: Russian Foreign Ministry archives, translation from copy provided by NHK, in Richard Ned Lebow and Janice Gross Stein, We All Lost the Cold War (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), appendix, pp. 523-526; also printed in the Cold War International History Project Bulletin No. 5, with minor revisions.]*



*Documents from Russian Archives* 183

### Document 3

#### КОМАНДУЮЩЕМУ ГРУППОЙ СОВЕТСКИХ ВОЙСК НА о.КУБА

В целях усиления Группы советских войск на о. Куба и увеличения возможности борьбы с десантами противника, Вам направляются дополнительные средства:

– эскадрилья самолетов-носителей ИЛ-28 (6 самолетов и 6 атомных бомб – 407 Н) с ПТРБ

– три дивизиона “Луна” (всего 6 пусковых установок, 12 ракет-носителей, 12 специальных головных частей и 24 ракеты в обычном снаряжении) с ПТРБ

В случае высадки десантов противника на о. Куба и сосредоточения вражеских кораблей с десантом у побережья Куба в ее территориальных водах, когда уничтожение противника ведет к затяжке и нет возможности получить указания Министра обороны СССР, Вам разрешается лично принять решение и применить ядерные средства “Луна”, ИЛ-28 или ФКР-1, как средства локальной войны, для уничтожения противника на суше и у побережья с целью полного разгрома десантов на территории Кубы и защиты Кубинской Республики.

Министр обороны СССР  
Маршал Советского Союза /Р. Малиновский/

П. П. Начальник Генерального штаба  
Маршал Советского Союза /М. Захаров/

8 сентября 1962 г.

Завизировано  
С. П. Иванов

(На обороте директивы, написанной от руки: исполнено в одном экз. исполнил генерал-майор Г. Елисеев 08.09.62 г. Ознакомлен генерал-лейтенант авиации Давидков 10.09.62 г.)



**Memorandum from Malinovsky and Zakharov Informing of Decision to Provide  
IL-28s and Luna Missiles and of the Pre-delegation of Launch Authority to Pliyev,  
8 September 1962**

**To the Commander of the Group of Soviet Forces in Cuba**

For the purpose of strengthening of the Group of Soviet Forces in Cuba and increasing [its] capability to fight against the enemy landing, [we] are sending you additional means:

- squadron of plane-carriers IL-28 (6 planes and 6 nuclear bombs—407 H) with PRTB
- three battalions of "Luna" (6 launchers, 12 missiles, 12 special warheads and 24 conventional missiles) with PTRB

In a situation of an enemy landing on the island of Cuba and of the concentration of enemy ships with amphibious forces off the coast of Cuba in its territorial waters, when the destruction of the enemy is delaying [further actions] and there is no possibility of receiving instructions from the USSR Ministry of Defense, you are permitted to make your own decision and to use the nuclear means of the "Luna," IL-28 or FKR-1 as instruments of local warfare for the destruction of the enemy on land and along the coast in order to achieve the complete destruction of the invaders on the Cuban territory and to defend the Republic of Cuba.

USSR Minister of Defense  
Marshal of the Soviet Union

[signature]  
R. Malinovsky

P.P. Chief of the General Staff  
Marshal of the Soviet Union

[signature]  
M. Zakharov

8 September 1962

Signed  
S. P. Ivanov

*[Translator's Note: This is a draft directive, handwritten. Defense Minister Malinovsky, who preferred to keep the instruction oral only, never signed it. On the back of the directive is written: "prepared in one copy by Major General G. Yeliseev 08.09.62. Shown to Lieutenant General of the Air Force Davidkov 10.09.62"]*

*[Source: A. Gribkov and W. Smith, Operation Anadyr: U.S. and Soviet Generals Recount the Cuban Missile Crisis, edition q, inc., Chicago, Berlin, Tokyo and Moscow, 1994, p. 183. Translated by Svetlana Savranskaya, The National Security Archive]*