

27 October 1962

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Notification of NSC Officials of Intelligence on Missile Bases in Cuba

1. At about 2100 on the evening of 25 October the President called me on the phone at a dinner party I was attending at the apartment of Mrs. Anna Chennault, widow of the late General, at 4101 Cathedral Avenue. He said he had heard stories that CIA officers were alleging that intelligence on offensive missile bases in Cuba had been available for several days before it was called to the attention of the President. He asked me to confirm that I was responsible for the analysis of this kind of intelligence and appropriate dissemination of it to higher authorities, and to tell him the facts in the case.
2. I told the President that I was responsible in CIA for substantive analysis of intelligence and the dissemination of current intelligence to the President and the National Security Council. I said I could state categorically that the stories he had heard were untrue, since I was sure the mission with the first photography of the MRBM offensive bases was flown on 14 October and it took approximately 24 hours for the film to be returned, processed, delivered to the National Photographic Interpretation Center and scanned by PI analysts. I said I was sure the technical analysis did not turn up the evidence until late afternoon or early evening of 15 October, that I myself heard of it first at that time, and that we completed the analysis before passing the information formally to the White House on the morning of 16 October. The President seemed content with this explanation.
3. In view of concern over this period of intelligence handling of this sensitive information, I have tried to reconstruct what I know of the events of the evening of 15 October and morning of 16 October, as follows.
4. Under direct orders from the President, given to me and General Carter at the White House several weeks earlier when the possibility that the Banes coast-defense missile was a longer-range weapon, I had issued instructions to the Director, NPIC, to see that intelligence on new offensive weapons in Cuba came to me as soon as analysis had identified the type of weapon and that absolutely no dissemination of this intelligence should be made without my approval. On 15 October I spent all afternoon at the opening session of the Commonwealth-US Intelligence Methods Conference.

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When I returned to my office at 1730 I found a delegation of PI and military intelligence analysts awaiting me. I do not know how long they had been waiting to see me but it could not have been many minutes or they would have passed a message to me at the Conference Room. They were all agreed that they had just identified a missile base for missiles of a range upwards of 350 miles. I reviewed their evidence and was obliged to concur.

5. The DCI had gone to the West Coast and General Carter was then at an informal reception for the Commonwealth conferees in the Executive Dining Room at the Headquarters building in McLean. I was the host but delayed my arrival until 1815 to study this intelligence. Upon arrival I called General Carter aside and advised him in broad terms of the intelligence. I said it would take several hours to wrap up a definitive report with fully considered analysis. General Carter said he was going to dinner with General Taylor and General Carroll (DIA) and would let them know. I asked if he would notify Mr. McGeorge Bundy for the White House and he said he thought he might be at the dinner and would notify him there.

6. About 2130 that evening my intelligence officers checking out the evidence on the site reported somewhat cryptically by phone that they had agreed on a report identifying offensive missile systems probably in the 700-mile and possibly in the 1,000-mile range. I instructed them to complete a written report and stand by for action early the next morning.

7. A few minutes later I decided it was a mistake to wait until morning to alert the key officers at the White House and State Department, since they should insure early attention to the problem on the next day. I assumed General Carter would have alerted the Pentagon adequately via JCS and DIA but that he might have missed the White House. Accordingly I called Mr. McGeorge Bundy, found he had not seen General Carter, and double-talked the information to him in broad terms. He was very clear as to the import despite being short on facts due to the problem of security over the phone. This was about 2200. I then called Roger Hilsman of the State Department and conveyed the same information to him. I had more difficulty indicating securely to him that I really meant MRBM's rather than aircraft or other equipment we had anticipated, but the light finally dawned and he (as he later informed me) called the Secretary of State to pass on the word.

8. Early the next morning, 16 October, at about 0830, I talked again on the phone to Mr. Bundy. (I forget whether he called me or vice versa) I had by then reviewed a brief memorandum on the subject and calculated the ranges of possible missiles (by then we had settled on 700 to 1100 miles) and crudely indicated them on a map. At Mr. Bundy's invitation I went immediately to his office, having cleared this with General Carter, who had another engagement and instructed me to follow through on the White House formal notification. [redacted] my missiles expert from OSI, accompanied me. In Bundy's office I told him the story. He shortly

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25X1 brought in the Attorney General, whom I also briefed. His initial comment was one four-letter word, off the record. If I remember correctly, Alex Johnson also came in to get the briefing. At any rate Mr. Bundy said that he had arranged an 1100 meeting with the President to fill him in and consider the US policy problems involved. At 0930 General Carter arrived. I showed him the memorandum we had prepared, discussed the evidence, and advised him [ ] could support him fully with analytical back-up. I said I felt the Acting DCI should handle the briefing of the President, with which General Carter agreed; that he probably did not need me, with which he somewhat reluctantly agreed; and that somebody had better get back to see that the DCI on the West Coast got the word, and continue research and analysis on the Cuban missile problem -- with all of which General Carter heartily agreed.

9. I presume General Carter did surface the information at 1100, the DCI returned later that afternoon, and a whirlwind of intelligence reporting and policy formulation on Cuba set in from which we have not yet recovered.

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Deputy Director (Intelligence)

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