

MEMORANDUM

State Department review completed

**SUBJECT: Cable Correspondence Between CIA Headquarters
and Mr. McCone Regarding Cuba in September, 1962**

1. After leaving New York on the night of 30 August to travel to Europe by ship, Mr. McCone was given the first information concerning photographic confirmation of SAM sites in Cuba in a message from Headquarters sent on 4 September. This cable included the following:

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"Cuban readout confirms eight and probably nine SAM sites under crash construction. Eight of nine sites noted will blanket entire western half of island. Ninth is on east coast and we expect others will be built to cover entire country. Construction proceeding so quickly we look for some to be operational within next week or ten days. Readout also showed eight torpedo boats with dual, radar-guided, missile launchers. Such missiles have estimated range of about 15 miles for a 2,000-pound hi-explosive payload with good accuracy. Presume you know of weekend communique in which Moscow claims right to extend military assistance to Cuba while danger of invasion persists. All this creates new atmosphere. Principals meeting with President today to discuss whether now, and with Hill leadership at White House this afternoon."

2. On 5 September Mr. McCone was advised as follows:

"In initial reaction to official U.S. statement 4 September re SAM sites and PT boats, Cuban spokesmen emphasizing claim that arms buildup is exercise of right of self-defense. Moscow is silent so far. Cuban military forces for past week or so in high state of alert. It may be that regime deliberately alarming populace to justify massive Soviet assistance and to divert minds from economic plight."

In backs of our minds is growing danger to the birds."

3. On 6 September the daily cable to Mr. McCone contained the following:

"Continued readout now shows total of nine, probably ten, SAM sites. Other info, from ground reports, points strongly to at least two others. In meeting with Latin American ambassadors here 5 September re Cuba, Sec State asked them to touch base with Home Governments and reach early agreement to convene meeting of OAS foreign ministers to discuss Cuban developments. Sec State in response to query from Mexican Ambassador said we have impression Moscow does not desire develop Cuba as Soviet base this hemisphere. He said Soviets under Cuban pressure give economic and military help but are thus far careful not to make unlimited security commitment."

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4. On 7 September, Headquarters received the following from Mr. McCone

"Question very much if C-package will be helpful and urge frequent repeat missions of recent reconnaissance operations which Gilpatric advises informative. Also I support use of R-101 if necessary. My hunch is we might face prospect of Soviet short-range surface-to-surface missiles of portable type in Cuba which could command important targets of southeast United States and possibly Latin American Caribbean areas.

"You might suggest to Rusk that we develop joint policies for action in Cuba with selected Caribbean, South American states as an alternative to seeking unanimous OAS action which most certainly will be an ineffective compromise solution if past history is any indicator."

5. On 7 September Headquarters cabled the following to Mr. McCone:

"Have report from good source [redacted]

[redacted] that Cuba has 'rockets of same kind that shot down U-2' and that preparations have been made for 'complete destruction' of Guantanamo Base in event of attack on Cuba.

"Assume you noting press reports showing how Congressional Republicans pressing for a Formosa-type resolution authorizing President to use troops if necessary in Cuba."

6. On 8 September the following was sent to Mr. McCone:

"Readout of latest (5 September) take shows three more SAMs, these in Las Villas Province in central Cuba. Total SAMs now twelve, probably thirteen. To blanket island, we look for eventual total of about 25. Also spotted one MIG-21 at Santa Clara airfield. Nineteen crates seen probably house MIG-21 which would total 20. (Total number MIG-15, 17 and 19 is carried at about 60.) MIG-21 is 1,000 MPH jet, with altitude capability 60,000 feet, equipped with two air-air infrared missiles as well as standard rockets and cannons.

"I have talked with Rusk who was most appreciative for your suggest re joint action planning with selected Latin states."

7. On 10 September Mr. McCone cables [redacted]

"Difficult for me to rationalize extensive costly defenses being established in Cuba as such extreme costly measures to accomplish security and secrecy not consistent with other policies such as refugees, legal travel, etc. Appears to me quite possible measures now being taken are for purpose of insuring secrecy of some offensive capability such as MRBM's

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to be installed by Soviets after present phase completed and country secured from overflights. Suggest Board of National Estimates study motives behind these defensive measures which even seem to exceed those provided most satellites."

8. On 10 September Headquarters sent the following to Mr. McCone:

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[redacted]
[redacted] Mexico and Brazil (who have been in vanguard of these opposing tough policy re Castro) now jointly discussing possibility of making diplomatic break with Cuba. Reason is not new Soviet inroads but that Mexican and Brazilian governments now think we will invade and erase Castro and want to be spared domestic embarrassment by breaking beforehand.

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"Thanks for your thoughts re Cuba. Board of National Estimates has them and is considering."

9. On 11 September Headquarters cabled the following to Mr. McCone:

"Havana Radio charges that two cargo ships, outward bound from Cuba, one Cuban and the other British, were attacked 11 September off northern coast of Cuba. [redacted] an exile group called Alpha-66 (based in Puerto Rico) probably did the job. Student exile group in Miami last weekend publicly announced intention to attack Bloc ships moving in and out of Cuba. There is growing mood of frustration among refugees and danger of unilateral operations and incidents is likewise growing.

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"Assume you noting in press the Soviet statement issued 11 September making sweeping charges that U. S. preparing Cuba invasion and warning that "if this attack is made, this will be beginning of unleashing of war." Implications of the 4,000-word statement under study. Will advise you further."

"Ref your request that Board of National Estimates examine implications of defense equipment. Following is preliminary Board of National Estimates statement:

'Whole question Soviet motivations, including possible reasons why Soviets might consider installation MRBMs, being examined in SNIE being drafted for USIB next week. Board of National Estimates still persuaded that costly crash operation to install SA-2's is more reasonably explained by other than desire to hide later buildup and that Soviets likely to regard advantages of major offensive buildup not equal to dangers of U. S. intervention. Cuba leaking like sieve from ground observation alone. Thus sudden crackdown on refugee flow and legal traffic would be strong indicator of possible desire to undertake further military buildup in secret.'"

10. The 12 September cable to Mr. McCone included the following:

"Castro has laid down strict censorship from Cuba. Western press and radio services have been out of touch with correspondents since about mid-day 11 September. Reuters man arrested. Others missing and may be in custody.

"Herewith extracts from Agency assessment of Moscow statement 11 September re Cuba:

'Statement designed to further variety of Soviet objectives, foremost being to deter U. S. from active intervention. Statement does not significantly alter nature of Soviet commitment to defend Castro. Moscow has once again used vague and ambiguous language to avoid clear-cut obligation of military support in event of attack.'

'Statement also calculated to enable Moscow to claim full credit for protecting Cuba if no invasion occurs.

'In addition to deterrent effect, statement seems intended to check growing alarm re Soviet intentions. It stresses defensive nature of Soviet military equipment and denies intention to establish Soviet base in Cuba. At same time Moscow emphasizes right to provide help to Cuba, citing existence of U. S. alliances and bases all along periphery of Sino-Soviet bloc.

'Statement brusque and strong re Cuba, but moderate on Berlin. It notes 'pause now has been reached' in Berlin talks and says it is 'difficult for the U. S. to negotiate during election campaigns.'

11. On 13 September Mr. McCone cabled as follows:

"Also I continue to be concerned that the establishment of defensive equipment and installations is merely a prelude to the location of an offensive weapon capability and once this is done the implementation of our policy as reported in the press might be extremely difficult and involve unacceptable dangers."

12. On 13 September headquarters cabled the following

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"At least 26 more Soviet ships currently en route to Cuba. Refugee source reports equipment for SAM site probably moved to Isle of Pines in late August. [redacted] contacts reports more torpedo boats and two types anti-sub ships expected to arrive in Cuba from Soviet Union late 1962 and early 1963."

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13. On 14 September the following was cabled to Mr. McCone:

"First Soviet comment on 13 September Presidential conference features allegation that Kennedy quote actually admitted preparations are underway in the United States for overthrowing Cuban Government unquote. This allegation hinges on President's statement that we will continue to work with exiles. Soviet domestic media giving heavy plan to quote contrast unquote between defensive aid to Cuba and U. S. military bases surrounding bloc."

14. On 15 September Mr. McCone was advised of the following:

"A review of Art Lundahl's material has now identified within the Soviet Union a number of sites for cruise-type coastal defense missiles which are similar to two which we have recently identified in Communist China and in the western part of Cuba. For the moment we conclude that the Cuban installation is entirely compatible with these other installations and we have assigned a range of about 25-35 miles."

15. On 16 September Mr. McCone sent in the following:

"Following August meeting principals when we first reported Soviet Cuban buildup I suggested BNE study economic prospects of Cuba assuming Soviet technical assistance and guidance could correct present mismanagement of industry and agriculture by Castro organization. I then felt that and stated that Soviets would reason that proper management could build Cuba into a viable economy with sufficient export of agricultural and manufactured product and other natural resources to cover needs for import and provide some excess for social betterment. In

view of very extensive press comment on deterioration of Cuban economy leaving impression situation can never be reversed and possibility of such reasoning influencing U. S. policy importantly I believe the study proposed will be revealing and useful.

"Also believe we must carefully study the prospect of secret importation and placement of several Soviet MRBM's which could not be detected by U. S. if Cuban defenses deny overflight. In reflecting on my observations of Thor installation in Britain and Jupiters in Italy I can envisage a Soviet plan to package missile, control and operating equipment in such a way that a unit could be made operational a few hours after a site cleared and a modest concrete pad poured. Do not wish to be overly alarming this matter but believe CIA and community must keep Government informed of danger of a surprise and also that detection of preparatory steps possible beyond our capability once Cuban defense system operative.

"Thrust of press reports reaching me is that there exists a clear demarcation between defensive and offensive preparations and I question if we can be sure of this. I recognize Cuban policy decisions most delicate and beyond Agency or my competence. However, believe we must give those making decisions our best estimate of possible developments and alternative situations which might evolve and unexpectedly confront us."

16. On 17 September Headquarters cabled the following to Mr. McCone:

"Soviet passenger ships have made nine unpublicized trips to Cuba since late July; two more believed en route now. The two will bring estimated total military technicians arriving since mid-July to about 4,200."

"Under agreement negotiated recently by British Guiana trade minister on visit to Havana, British Guiana will send up to 1,000 experienced cane cutters to help with next year's harvest."

17. On 18 September Headquarters cabled the following:

"No doubt that Cuban economic resources capable of substantial development given better management and sufficient capital investment. SNIE 85-3, before USIB tomorrow, recognizes this as a probable Soviet intention and that the objective is to stimulate Communist political action elsewhere in Latin America. As noted in 85-2 (1 Aug) however, present state of Cuban economy is very bad and substantial upturn will be delayed until after 1963.

"SNIE 85-3 discusses in detail possibility of introduction of MRBM's into Cuba, but judges this to be unlikely because of risk of U. S. intervention involved unless there is a radical change in Soviet policy not presently indicated. Such a change would have implications extending far beyond Cuba. We know from our briefings that Government top level realizes possibility of developments shielded from our detection once SA-2's operative. SNIE 85-3 stresses that there is a middle ground in which defensive or offensive character of buildup is a matter of interpretation. Various alternatives explored. Again we know ambiguities of offensive-defensive distinction brought to top level attention before public statements formulated."

18. On 19 September Headquarters sent the following to Mr. McCone. This cable was sent after USIB had met that day and had approved SNIE 85-3.

"Herewith conclusions of Special National Intelligence Estimate approved by USIB on 19 September.

"A. We believe that Soviet Union values its position in Cuba primarily for the political advantages to be derived from it, and consequently that the main purpose of the present military buildup in Cuba is to strengthen the Communist regime there against what the Cubans and the Soviets conceive to be a danger that the U. S. may attempt by one means or another to overthrow it. The Soviets evidently hope to deter any such attempt by enhancing Castro's defensive capabilities and by threatening Soviet military retaliation. At the same time, they evidently recognize that the development of an offensive military base in Cuba might provoke U. S. military intervention and thus defeat their present purpose.

"B. In terms of military significance, the current Soviet deliveries are substantially improving air defense and coastal defense capabilities in Cuba. Their political significance is that, in conjunction with the Soviet statement of 11 September, they are likely to be regarded as ensuring the continuation of the Castro regime in power, with consequent discouragement to the opposition at home and in exile. The threat inherent in these developments is that, to the extent that the Castro regime thereby gains a sense of security at home, it will be emboldened to become more aggressive in fomenting revolutionary activity in Latin America.

"C. As the buildup continues, the Soviet Union may be tempted to establish in Cuba, other weapons represented to be defensive in purpose, but of a more 'offensive' character: e. g., light bombers, submarines, and additional types of short-range surface-to-surface missiles. A decision to provide such weapons will continue to depend heavily on the Soviet estimate as to whether they could be introduced without provoking a U. S. military reaction."

"D. The Soviet Union could derive considerable military advantage from the establishment of Soviet medium and intermediate range ballistic missiles in Cuba, or from the establishment of a Soviet submarine base there. As between these two, the establishment of sub base could be more likely. Either development, however, would be incompatible with Soviet practice to date and with Soviet policy as we presently estimate it. It would indicate a far greater willingness to increase the level of risk in U. S. -Soviet relations than the Soviet Union has displayed thus far, and consequently would have important policy implications with respect to other areas and other problems in East-West relations.

"E. The Latin American reaction will be to the evidence of an increased Soviet commitment to Cuba, rather than to the technical implications of the military buildup. Many Latin Americans will fear and resent a military intrusion into the Hemisphere, but will regard this problem as one to be met by the U. S. and not their responsibility. We estimate the chances are better now than they were at Punta Del Este to obtain two-thirds OAS majority for sanctions and other steps short of military action aimed at Cuba. It became clear that the Soviet Union was establishing an 'offensive' base in Cuba, most Latin American governments would expect the U. S. to eliminate it, by whatever means were necessary, but many of them would still seek to avoid direct involvement."

19. On 20 September, Mr. McCone cabled as follows:

"Suggest most careful consideration to Conclusion last sentence Paragraph D. As an alternative I can see that an offensive Soviet Cuban base will provide Soviets with most important and effective trading position in connection with all other critical areas and hence they might take an unexpected risk in order to establish such a position."

26. On 20 September, Headquarters sent the following to Mr. McCone:

"Khrushchev, in two recent talks with visitors (Austrian Vice Chancellor and Belgian Economics Minister), held to firm line re Berlin but still no time deadlines for separate treaty. We gather from these talks and other assorted evidence that Khrushchev likely to show up here after elections to talk with President and, failing to get what he wants, to take up Berlin at UN before proceeding with treaty. Khrushchev also making belligerent noises re Cuba. He contends U. S. blockade would be act of war and he will use subs and rockets to enforce right of passage."

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21. On 21 September Headquarters filed its last briefing cable to Mr. McCone, who was then on his way back to the United States, [redacted] This cable contained the following:

"One of our best sources [redacted] reports a resurgence since mid-August of old-line Communists, especially Blas Roca. Castro said to be unhappy over dominant role, with Soviet backing, the old Communists playing once again. Source reports:

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'A. In econ field (this is the primary preserve of the Csechs), bloc technicians working closely with Cubans at plant and production levels.

'B. At ministry, polit, and policy levels, Soviets exerting influence through old and trusted comrades (Roca, Rodriguez, and Pena).

'C. In military field, Soviets providing advisers and conventional equipment to Cuban Army but are keeping sophisticated weaponry and electronic gear under Soviet direct control."

KHRUSHCHEV-KNOX TALK

1. According to a report from CINCUSNAVEUR, London, Khrushchev stated flatly during a talk with Westinghouse International president William Knox on 24 October that he had both conventional and nuclear warheads in Cuba at Soviet-manned missile sites.

2. However, we learned late yesterday from Alexis Johnson of State that a member of the USUN staff had already talked to Knox in New York following Knox's return to the US, and that Knox had said he did not have anything particularly new to report. (Johnson recognized that this was at variance with the Navy report, and also noted that the USUN member had not had the substance of the Navy report.)

3. Knox is presently scheduled to call the State Department at 0900 this morning, and the story of what Khrushchev actually said should then be clarified. [redacted] will follow up with State.

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OCI COMMENT: We still have no positive evidence of the presence of nuclear warheads in Cuba. However, we have noted in photography what appear to be nuclear warhead storage buildings in the vicinity of several ballistic missile launch sites.

Soviet tanker Grozny, still about a day out from the quarantine line, will presumably be the next Soviet ship across the line. The Grozny is the one which has ammonia tanks on deck--and is presumably heading for the Nicaro nickel plant as it has in past runs with ammonia.

We did not receive SAC overflight report. Ship did leave to yesterday. Our latest position report at 0200 this morning showed it had moved 125 miles toward Cuba since 1800 previous evening.

1. Lebanese vessel MARUCLA is well within the quarantine zone ~~transferring~~
and ~~was~~ ^{0930. Nothing unusual reported thus far,} due to be intercepted at dawn. We do not have an exact position, ~~so~~
no reporting. This information was obtained by [redacted] by phone from 25X1
Flag Plot at about 0600 EDT.

2. Our information ^{was} of the East German passenger ship VOELKERFREUNDSHAFT is
as follows: Ship should be in the Western Atlantic by now, but no recent
positions are available. Ship departed the Baltic and has an ETA in Havana
about 27 or 28 October, [redacted] Vessel reportedly 25X1
has some 500 industrial workers (probably East Germans) and at least 55

25X1 Czech workers on board. This is [redacted] [redacted] from press announcements
before the ship left. We have nothing on the ship ^{being} ~~being~~ in Leningrad, but
cannot say for certain that she was not there. The ship left

Leningrad on 13 October. We have no info
on what cargo it loaded there.

3.