

63-4036

14 May 1963

J. J. Kennedy
MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

With reference to your note of 13 May concerning the Stennis Subcommittee report. I am informed confidentially that certain members of the Subcommittee insisted on reporting the highest defensible figure of Soviet troops in Cuba and that agreement was finally reached on "17,500 as a minimum."

I last testified before the Subcommittee on 12 March and this was the final Committee hearing. I did not touch, at that time, on the number of withdrawals. Originally the Subcommittee report was to have been current as of 12 March but it was subsequently decided to make it current as of the date of release, 9 May. In the interim, representatives from CIA and DIA who were working with the Subcommittee staff gave the staff a statement reflecting our belief that between 4,000 and 5,000 Soviet personnel had departed Cuba since the first of the year. The reason for not subtracting this number from the estimated total was also explained on the ground that the total was reached from a synthesis of all available intelligence including tables of organization of the suspected Soviet units we observed in Cuba and that did not change.

As a matter of fact, we still have very little hard intelligence on the total number of Soviets in Cuba. We continue to receive reports, which we are inclined to dismiss as irresponsible, of very large numbers of Soviets in Cuba and also of the withdrawals of very large numbers. For example, we have in the last 30 days received reports that 40,000 to 50,000 Soviets are still there. We have also recently received a report that 25,000 Soviets had left by 3 April. We are inclined to discount such reports.

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Our conclusion at the moment is that there has been a reduction by some 20 to 30 percent from our earlier estimate of 17,500. This estimate is arrived at from an analysis of all available current intelligence. However, as you know, we have no total head-count.

signed
JOHN A. McCONE
Director

EA/DCI/Welder:bd (14 May 63)

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May 13, 1963

MEMORANDUM FOR
DIRECTOR McCONE

I find some difficulty in reconciling the statement of the Stennis Committee with the statements that I have made. I was informed that there had been a withdrawal of some 4,000 personnel from Cuba. The Committee states, however, because of what is described by intelligence as "technical reasons" the 17,500 intelligence estimate of those remaining is unchanged at the writing of this report. My information was given to me from the Agency. Perhaps you could clarify this for me.

Thurman

SECRET

Eyes Only

Refer to Memo of Conversation, President - DCI,

15 May 1963, filed in O/DCI.

(EXECUTIVE REGISTRY FILE

White House)