

[REDACTED]

CIA HISTORICAL REVIEW PROGRAM
RELEASE AS SANITIZED
1997

USSR Exploiting Cuban Situation

Khrushchev's qualified threat on 9 July to retaliate against the US with rockets "if necessary" in the event of American aggression against Cuba is designed to inflate the Cuban situation into a major international question. On the eve of the Cuban complaint against the US in the United Nations, Soviet propaganda accusing the US of plans for aggression against Castro reached a new peak during the week 4-10 July, and Soviet officials have sought privately to maximize the alleged danger of US intervention. Both First Deputy Premier Mikoyan and presidium member Kozlov in conversations with the Egyptian ambassador in Moscow expressed extreme anxiety over the US threat to Cuba's security.

Moscow is actively intervening in the Cuban situation to advance its campaign to discredit the US and to recreate the image of Soviet military superiority damaged by the U-2 incident. It may also intend thereby to justify an arms pact between Castro and the bloc. Khrushchev now is in a position to employ a familiar Soviet political warfare device and to claim--perhaps during his projected but as yet unscheduled visit to Havana--that the USSR compelled the US to abandon plans for intervention in Cuba. Castro lieutenant "Che" Guevara has already made such a claim. The Soviet press has been drawing parallels between the 1956 Suez crisis and the Cuban situation today.

However, the Soviet premier has neither repeated the threat nor made it less ambiguous. In a letter to Castro he limited himself to general expressions of "indignation" at US actions and "sympathy" for the Cuban people, and in his 12 July press conference he went no further than to pledge "support" to Cuba in the event of US aggression. [The press chief of the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs refused to clarify Khrushchev's 9 July threat on the grounds that it applied]

[to a hypothetical situation and therefore no clarification was "appropriate,"]

According to the US chargé in Moscow, Khrushchev in his 12 July press conference clearly recognized that the USSR could not establish a base on Cuba without damaging its campaign against American bases, but was prepared to give full psychological support to Cuba or any country in its effort to eliminate such bases. The chargé felt that the USSR was also using its threatened support of Cuba against US attack as a counter to Western guarantees of West Berlin.

