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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

Memorandum

APPROVED FOR RELEASE
DATE: DEC 2002



SOVIET PRESENCE
IN CUBA

7 DECEMBER 1962

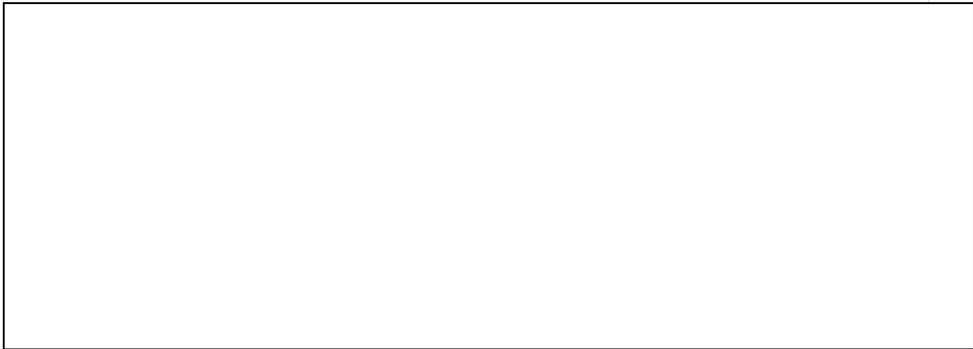
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7 December 1962

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

MEMORANDUM: The Soviet Presence in Cuba

1. The withdrawal of Soviet offensive missiles and IL-28's from Cuba still leaves the USSR with a substantial military presence on the island. (See Annex I and II) Although Khrushchev has suggested to the President that he would withdraw the Soviet ground combat groups and other units which were associated with protection of the offensive weapons, we have seen no evidence of preparations to carry this out.

2. We do not have the evidence upon which to make a firm judgment as to what disposition the USSR is likely to make of its forces in Cuba. This paper merely examines those factors which might lead the USSR to retain a large military establishment there.

3. Although Soviet-Cuban relations are now at their lowest point since Moscow recognized the Castro regime, Soviet leaders have no intention of abandoning their earlier conception of Cuba as the bridgehead for extending Soviet Communist influence in Latin America. Mikoyan is reported to have told Soviet correspondents at the UN that Moscow has lost face among neutrals and its own allies by its withdrawal of strategic missiles but has achieved its main objective: maintaining a Communist regime in the Western Hemisphere. This is the goal that probably remains uppermost in the minds of Soviet leaders as they reassess their Cuban policies.

4. We expect the Soviet leaders will try now to rebuild their relationship with Cuba. They cannot ignore the fact that the USSR's prestige is still committed to protecting Cuba from external efforts to undermine and destroy the Castro regime. This will mean continued and perhaps increased economic assistance and assurances of continued military aid.

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At the same time, the Soviet leaders wish to avoid a new flareup of the crisis. They probably recognize that the presence of advanced Soviet "defensive weapons," such as the SAMs and the personnel to man them, will present a constant danger of involvement with the US without any compensating strategic advantages, now that the offensive weapons have been removed.

5. The Soviet leaders, however, may decide to retain a substantial military presence in Cuba. Such a decision probably would be governed by two major considerations, the first to improve Soviet-Cuban relations and the second to deter future US pressures against the Cuban regime. In addition, the Soviets would strongly desire not to convey an impression of weakness in response to US firmness by removing their entire military presence from the island quickly.

6. In view of their present strained relations with Cuba, the Soviet leaders are anxious to avoid any appearance of a further major reduction of their commitments in Cuba. They feel obliged to demonstrate in some way that they remain committed to protecting Cuba against all external pressures. In addition, Moscow may view the retention of a substantial military presence as providing a base for an expanded program of assistance and training for the Cuban armed forces.

7. The Cubans were not consulted on Khrushchev's decision to withdraw the strategic missiles and they almost certainly resisted the removal of the IL-28s. They probably would bitterly oppose any future Soviet decision to withdraw the SAM installations, the MIG-21s, the KOMAR-class missile boats, and other equipment. The Cubans are likely to press for control of the SAMs and other equipment now being manned by Soviet personnel. A training program that would equip Cubans to operate the SAMs would require the continued presence of Soviet SAM technicians for at least a year.

8. Cuban leaders, in apparent recognition of their continued dependence on the USSR, have been circumspect in public statements critical of the withdrawal of Soviet strategic missiles. The closest any Cuban leader has yet come to public criticism of the Soviet position was an interview given by Che Guevara

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to a correspondent of the London Daily Worker on 28 November in which he said: "Some people in Europe are saying that a great victory has been won. We say that the danger is still here ...While war may have been avoided, that does not mean that peace has been assured. We ask whether in exchange for some slight gain we have only prolonged the agony."

9. In contrast to the restrained public comment, however, there have been strong private expressions of Cuban anger reported by clandestine sources. Emilio Aragonés is reported to have said that Cuban leaders are "disgusted" with Khrushchev. In an informal talk with students at Havana University while Mikoyan was in Cuba, Castro is reported to have said that as far as he is concerned, Mikoyan could go home immediately.

10. In addition to their desire to placate Castro, the Soviet leaders probably believe that preservation of a substantial military presence in Cuba would enhance their ability to deter renewed US military pressures. Moscow may also regard the continued presence of the SAMs as an essential element in any efforts to discourage the US from continuing its aerial surveillance of the island. Finally, the possibility cannot be excluded that the Soviets might look upon the existence of a substantial military presence as the foundation for a future attempt to re-establish Soviet offensive bases in Cuba.

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ANNEX I

Soviet Military Forces Still in Cuba

1. The USSR's presence in Cuba has been significantly reduced by the withdrawal of the strategic missiles and the IL-28s. We have seen no evidence to date of other Soviet equipment leaving Cuba. Construction continues on barracks in the armored group areas.

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2. We believe that at least 12,000 Soviet troops are still in Cuba. Our evidence does not permit a head count: we deduce this figure from the number of troops necessary to man the Soviet units and Soviet-operated installations known to be on the island from photography, communications intelligence, and covert reporting. We expect, however, that the 1000-2000 Soviet personnel associated with strategic missiles who are still in Cuba will join the approximately 4000 Soviet troops who have left since the end of October.

3. The four Soviet armed combat groups in Cuba are made up of about 6000 troops. Recent photography shows continuing construction or other activity at the bases of all four armored groups. Each of these groups includes one medium (T-54) tank battalion and some of the following: armored reconnaissance units, armored infantry units, multiple rocket launchers, FROG artillery rockets, SNAPPER antitank missiles, 120-mm mortars, 57-mm antitank guns, and engineer groups with self-propelled bridging equipment. We have not yet detected the removal of any of these units or equipment.

4. The 24 surface-to-air (SAM) missile sites are manned by at least 3000 Soviet troops. High level photography of the past week shows that all of these sites are still occupied and operational.

5. There are also smaller groups of Soviet military personnel in Cuba, totalling at least 2000. These groups are flying the 39 MIG-21 fighters known to be in Cuba, operating the coastal defense cruise missile sites, and training Cubans to operate the Soviet-installed radar network, the 12 KOMAR missile patrol boats, and other military equipment which has been supplied by Moscow. Aside from

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the recent dismantling of one cruise missile site, which may have been moved elsewhere on the island, there is no evidence of Soviet preparations to remove these personnel from Cuba. Photography of 2 and 3 December shows that the other three cruise missile sites are still operational.

6. [redacted]

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7. Another activity requiring an unknown number of Soviet personnel is a Soviet communications intelligence radio direction finding net which has been in full operation in Cuba since 27 November. [redacted]

[redacted] The fact that this net became operational well after the offensive missile bases were dismantled suggests that Moscow intends it to be a permanent feature of the Soviet presence in Cuba.

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ANNEX II

Soviet Military Personnel Movements to and from Cuba

1. We have no reliable methods for estimating the number of Soviet military personnel who arrived in Cuba during the buildup there from July to October. Judging by the capacities of the Soviet passenger ships which arrived during the buildup, not less than 6,000 Soviet military personnel arrived on these ships. Assuming that at least 20 persons arrived with each of the roughly 150 voyages to Cuba by Soviet dry-cargo ships during the same period, another 3,000 can be added. The total number, if based on the troop capacities of the passenger ships, could be as high as 25,000 men. The available information from all sources suggest that the actual figure lies between 10,000 and 20,000, but cannot be determined more accurately by shipping data.

Photography of ships en route to Cuba does not provide a more precise estimate. Photography neither supports nor conclusively negates personnel movements via freighters or the size of troop loadings on passenger vessels.

PASSENGER SHIPS CARRYING SOVIET MILITARY
PERSONNEL TO CUBA, JULY-OCTOBER 1962

<u>No.</u>	<u>Ship</u>	<u>ETA Cuba</u>	<u>Normal passenger capacity</u>	<u>Troop capacity</u>
1.	Maria Ulyanova	26 July	340	1400
2.	Khabarovsk	27 July	343	1200
3.	Mikhail Uritsky	28 July	340	1400
4.	Latvia	29 July	340	1400
5.	Nikolaevsk	21 August	343	1200
6.	Khabarovsk	27 August	343	1200
7.	Maria Ulyanova	28 August	340	1400

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<u>No. Ship</u>	<u>ETA Cuba</u>	<u>Normal Passenger capacity</u>	<u>Troop capacity</u>
8. Mikhail Uritsky	29 August	340	1400
9. Latvia	3 September	340	1400
10. Pobeda	12 September	433	1500
11. Nikolaevsk	22 September	343	1200
12. Maria Ulyanova	30 September	340	1400
13. Mikhail Uritsky	3 October	340	1400
14. Estonia	8 October	340	1400
15. Nikolaevsk	23 October	343	1200
Totals		5,208	20,100

In addition to these ships believed to be carrying military personnel, three other Soviet passenger ships (with a combined capacity of between 3,200 and 10,000 persons) arrived during this period. These ships carried Cubans who had trained in the USSR, students, Latin American delegates homeward bound from the Helsinki Youth Festival, Soviet economic specialists, possibly some Soviet dependents, and other personnel not connected directly with the buildup.

2. The identified equipment and Soviet combat units observed in Cuba suggest that actual arrivals of Soviet personnel almost certainly were higher than our minimum total of 6,000. Based on the organizational strength of military units in the USSR, we estimate that the total amount of equipment present on 22 October or due shortly thereafter, would have required a Soviet military force of not less than 15,000 and probably closer to 30,000 men. We do not believe, however, that all of the personnel were in Cuba by the time US quarantine was announced, or that all of the units were up to full strength.

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3. Information on the departure of Soviet personnel is equally sketchy. On the same basis used to calculate arrivals, we estimate that on the order of 4,000 Soviets have departed since early November and that more may be leaving shortly.

Since 22 October, four Soviet passenger ships with a combined minimum capacity of about 2,000 persons have left Cuba with Soviet military personnel. These ships could carry as many as 6,000 men if troop-loaded, not cruise passenger loaded. Photography of the ships suggests they are carrying at least normal capacity loads of personnel and possibly substantially more. There is no way to determine more precisely, however, how many--or which--Soviets have left Cuba in this way. Two other Soviet passenger ships are now en route to Cuba, possibly to pick up other Soviet personnel.

4. At least 19 Soviet dry-cargo ships have now left Cuba carrying missiles, missile-associated equipment, IL-28 bombers, and/or Soviet personnel. Photography shows that on at least one of these ships more than 200 Soviets boarded, and that many of the others carried at least 100 persons each. On the order of 2,000 Soviets may have left Cuba on these dry-cargo ships.

5. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] These payments probably do not cover Soviet troops in Cuba--that is, Soviet combat units--but probably are for Soviet military--technical personnel providing assistance to the Cuban armed forces. [REDACTED] November payments totaled more than \$1 million--twice the size of payments [REDACTED] in October and far more than ever noted previously. Because we lack information on what is covered by these payments, they cannot be treated as conclusive evidences of changes in the number of Soviet military personnel in Cuba. They strongly suggest, however, that a sizeable number of the Soviet military aid personnel remain in Cuba, in addition to Soviet combat units. Clandestine reporting indicates that some of the troops who earlier had expected to leave Cuba have not yet departed.

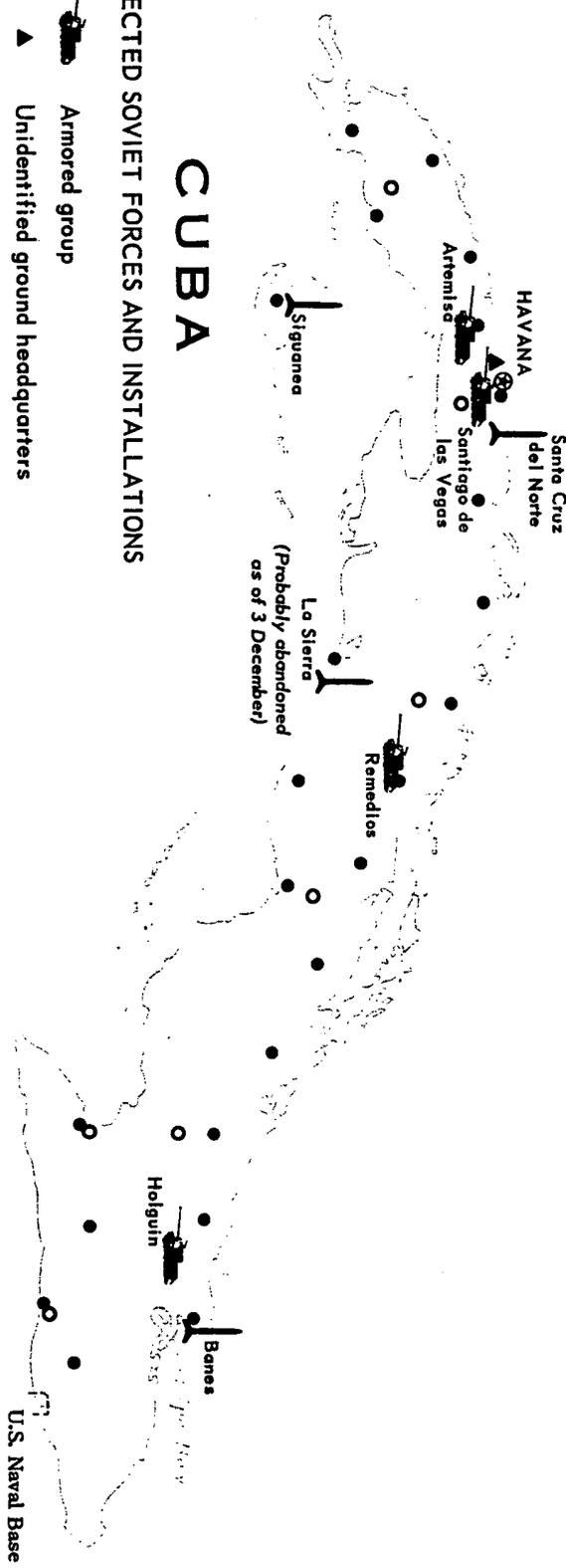
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SELECTED SOVIET FORCES AND INSTALLATIONS

-  Armored group
-  Unidentified ground headquarters
-  SAM site
-  SAM support and assembly area
-  Cruise missile site

CUBA



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NAUTICAL MILES
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GROUP 1 INFORMATION
EXCLUDED FROM AUTOMATIC
DOWNGRADING AND
DECLASSIFICATION