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Fidel Is Flying High

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Cuban Communist dictator Fidel Castro's MIG-17 jet fighter planes are flexing their muscles closer to Florida shores these days, apparently to show that the bearded bandit can thumb his nose at the United States from the air without getting into any serious trouble.

United States defense officials have been keeping a close eye on the maneuvers of Castro's jets over the Florida Straits and are speculating on reasons for the increasing show of boldness.

The MIGs, believed to be flown by Cuban air force officers trained recently in Czechoslovakia, have been detected flying toward the United States at altitudes of more than 35,000 feet. They turn back to Cuba after reaching a distance approximately 30 miles from the Florida coast.

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The United States Navy and Air Force are making no effort to intercept the MIGs, since the planes are not violating any U.S. air space. They are being carefully tracked, however, and should any of them stray within the three-mile limit of the United States they will be forced down.

Castro reportedly now has about a dozen operational



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MIGs, with at least that many more in stages of assembly in Cuba. Flight crews and ground personnel have been schooled in Czechoslovakia, and Czech technical assistance is given now in Cuba.

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Meanwhile, as Castro's Soviet-built war machine continues to grow in size and training, the great debate continues in Washington about whether President Kennedy should invoke the Trading With the Enemy Act against the Caribbean Communist satellite.

Should the act be applied, all trade with Cuba would be barred. U.S. sales to Cuba, now limited to medical supplies and foodstuffs, amount to about 20 million dollars a year. Cuban exports to this country, mainly tobacco and fruits, amount to about 30 million a year.

There are strong voices in Washington for and against the presidential action. Those against it appear to be sticking steadfastly to the unrealistic idea that the U.S. inter-American policies must be based on a popularity poll formula.

Allen Dulles, who is retiring as head of the Central Intelligence Agency, reportedly is among the latest to join the New Frontier officials who oppose a tougher policy on Cuba. For Dulles, whose agents played a major role in the ill-fated Cuban invasion last April, his present posture is indeed a strange back-flip.

Dulles now has advised President Kennedy that the United States should not cut off all trade with Castro. He contends that a complete embargo would hurt the United States more with public opinion in Latin America than the good that would come of it.

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This view is in direct opposition to that held by the Defense Department, which is keeping an eye on the aforementioned MIG fighters over the Caribbean. Defense officials state flatly that the United States would be the big gainer by imposition of a total embargo against Cuba.