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The National Scene—

Cuban Inquiry

By Frank van der Linden



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WASHINGTON — James T. Kendall, chief counsel of the Senate Preparedness Subcommittee, won't quarrel with Senator George Aiken's charge that the Russians have built "at least four submarine bases" on Cuba.

Without confirming or denying the Vermont Republican's claim, Kendall said in an exclusive interview:

"Yes, there could be Soviet submarine bases on Cuba. It wouldn't take very long to install refueling bases for conventional submarines. Of course, it would be a bigger job to build a dry-dock for major repairs."

AIKEN SAID he is "sure" the Soviets have built "at least four submarine bases" on Cuba as part of their attempt to transform it into "a very strong military and political base . . . for exporting revolution, riots and rebellions" throughout the Western Hemisphere. Aiken, relying on information from Cuban refugees, flatly contradicted Defense Secretary Robert McNamara who said, in his recent televised briefing, that he had "positive evidence" no Soviet submarine bases have been built on the island.

Senator John C. Stennis, D-Miss., chairman of the Preparedness subcommittee investigating the Cuban military buildup, has warned that the 17,000 Russian troops there, with armor, tanks, planes and missiles, are intended to export communism to other Western Hemisphere nations that are seething with unrest.

Kendall, a Jackson, Miss., lawyer, said the inquiry will run for "some weeks" until it produces a complete picture of the Russians' military power in Cuba and their apparent plans for using it.

JOHN McCONE, the Central Intelligence Agency's director, has been questioned in two days of closed sessions. "Next we will

quiz several military men, to find out exactly what weapons they have and what is the threat to us and the rest of the hemisphere," he added.

For instance, Kendall said, the senators want to know whether the "SAM" surface-to-air missiles, the 102 MIG fighter planes, and the patrol boats which the Kennedy administration has identified as being in the Cuban build-up could menace any part of the hemisphere.

"We will also look into the threat of subversive and saboteurs being trained in Cuba for clandestine revolutionary activities in other Latin countries," he said.

"Once the Communist occupied or controlled some other country besides Cuba, they would do whatever would advance communism." Conceivably, they might even set up intermediate or medium-range missiles like those in Cuba which menaced the United States until they were apparently withdrawn after the late October crisis.

THE STENNIS Subcommittee had no hearings this week, since Congress took the week off to let the Republicans make speeches honoring Abraham Lincoln's birthday. Hearings will resume sometime after the full Armed Services Committee questions top Pentagon officials in the annual "defense posture" briefings which are sure to include many questions about Cuba.

Senator Strom Thurmond, D-S.C., an Armed Services Committee member who first warned of Soviet missiles on Cuba more than a year ago, will be primed with many queries about his current charges of a Soviet army on the Caribbean island.

Thurmond's office reports he has received more than a thousand letters from various parts of the country, commenting on his new charges — and all but three of the letters commend his stand.