

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

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(Amb. Kirkpatrick) MEMORANDUM FOR WILLIAM P. CLARK
THE WHITE HOUSE

Subject: Delivery of Soviet Floggers to Cuba

An interagency meeting chaired today by Ambassador Stoessel concluded that our strategy for responding to the additional shipment of Floggers to Cuba should:

- build support for our ongoing programs to counter Cuba;
- avoid providing the Soviets with an opportunity to provoke a crisis in the Caribbean; and
- avoid accusations that we, like the previous Administration, have acquiesced to a clear Soviet challenge to our interests in the Caribbean.

Accordingly, we propose the following course of action:

Press Statement. The State Department will issue a press statement (attached) drawing attention to the MIGs and their serious implications for regional security and stability, but in a way that will attempt to avoid the development of a crisis in the Caribbean that would divert attention from the crisis in Poland. Our immediate objectives are to:

- preempt possible leaks;
- put the issue in proper perspective and help define the terms of the public and Congressional debate; and
- avoid having the Administration pressed into overreacting by exaggerated or distorted media reports.

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With these objectives in mind, we would anticipate releasing the proposed statement Tuesday.

Military Measures. We are continuing to examine a variety of possible steps. DoD believes that deployment of F-16 aircraft to Homestead AFB, Florida would be ineffective and would be regarded as entirely cosmetic. We are studying other possible measures including SR-71 surveillance flights, and increased air and naval activity in the area. Our objective is to avoid creating a crisis atmosphere while, at the same time, distinguishing our responses from the ineffective steps taken by the previous Administration when confronted with a similar situation. We will be working with the Defense Department on a discussion paper for interagency consideration of possible US military responses.

Diplomatic Strategy. We are developing an approach for raising the issue with the Soviets, including the question of its treatment in Secretary Haig's meeting with Foreign Minister Gromyko later this month. We are preparing a discussion paper for interagency consideration of the diplomatic issues, including the question of whether and how to refine or supplement the 1962 Understandings.

Congressional Consultations Given our desire to avoid dramatics and to control the evolution of this situation, we suggest no advance consultations with the Congress. We would draw on the same Q & A with the Congress as with the press, on an if-asked basis.


L. Paul Bremer, III
Executive Secretary

Attachments:

1. Press Statement.
2. Contingency Questions and Answers.

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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FOR PRESS BACKGROUNDER

MIGS IN CUBA

Q: How many FLOGGERS are there now? How many have just arrived?

A: A dozen were sent in May 1978. The recent shipment seems to be of a similar magnitude, raising the total to almost two dozen.

Q: Are these aircraft nuclear-capable?

A: All aircraft of this type can carry nuclear weapons or quickly be given that capability.

Q: Didn't the Carter Administration get the Soviets to promise not to send more?

A: No. The Carter Administration asked for and received assurances that the aircraft would not be used in a nuclear role.

Q: Do you see any signs of nuclear weapons in Cuba?

A: No.

Q: Does the FLOGGER have the range to attack the US?

A: Yes.

Q: Are these the ground attack or the interceptor versions?

A: I do not have that information. Both versions can perform nuclear strike missions. Even without nuclear payloads, the range and modern/multi-role nature of these aircraft ^{should} cause us serious concern.

Q: Is this the MiG-23 or the MiG-27?

A: Both the MiG-23 and the MiG-27 are called FLOGGER by NATO. The 23 is maximized in the air-to-air role and the 27 in the air-to-ground role, but both are multi-role aircraft.

Q: What has the USC asked the Russians to do?

A: We are not prepared to discuss the details of diplomatic exchanges except to say that we expressed our concern.

Q: When and where did you raise it with the Soviets?

A: Acting Secretary Stoessel called in Soviet Ambassador Dobrynin on this matter over the weekend.

Q: What was the Russian response?

A: I cannot comment on the substance of confidential diplomatic exchanges beyond noting the subject and essence of our demarche.

Q: What does the 1962 Understanding say?

A: It said the Soviets would not introduce "offensive" weapons into Cuba.

Q: Does this shipment mean that the Soviets have violated the 1962 Understanding?

A: No comment.

Q: What measures do you have in mind?

A. We are preparing a package of security and assistance measures that can be taken in the region to address the increasing Cuban threat. We will announce these measures shortly.

Q: Why do you think the Soviets sent Cuba the additional MiGs at this time?

A: Soviet intentions are unclear, but given the timing of this development, they may be attempting to divert attention from events in Poland. We will not allow ourselves to be diverted.

