

**No Time to Talk:  
Communication During the Cuban Missile Crisis**

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***“War is the unfolding of miscalculations” – Barbara Tuchman***

The problem was not missiles; the problem was time.

When grappling with a complex and multi-faceted problem, it is often best to distill the problem, or related problems, down to their root cause and establish the overarching problem. The United States military, for example, does this at three levels when planning an operation. They examine the strategic, operational, and the tactical problems. Once clearly and concisely identified, the efforts to develop solutions center around what is then called the problem statement.

During the Cuban Missile Crisis, the problem was time.

Looking with hindsight at the actions of American President John F. Kennedy and Soviet Chairman Nikita S. Khrushchev it is readily apparent that neither wanted war. Through hindsight, it is apparent that both were acting in defense of their nations' interests and were positioning themselves in the world forum of international diplomacy. Only in hindsight can some sense be made of the tremendous risks taken by both countries.

Looking into the crisis, however, the risks and the tension become overwhelming. The American generals wanted war. The American Congress wanted war. The President and his Executive Committee of the National Security Council initially wanted war. Khrushchev wanted to support a new Communist ally. Castro ultimately showed his willingness to become a martyr. The United Nations demonstrated its feebleness to bring resolution to the conflict.

All of these pressures were exerted in the midst of inaccurate intelligence, terrible communication, and overestimation of martial ability. There was too much at stake to

risk a failure using normal diplomacy. Normal solutions to international conflict took too long to develop and enact. With the prospect of nuclear war, *normal* was too risky. This paper seeks to address the problems in communication, the risks of miscommunication and misunderstanding all in light of the tremendous pressure of compressed time. This paper analyzes the key exchanges between President Kennedy and Chairman Khrushchev; acting Secretary-General U Thant and all belligerents; the President and his men; the Chairman and Prime Minister Castro; the commanders-in-chief and their generals; as well as the ambassadors, spies, and other secondary participants.

The entire crisis was constrained by time – particularly the time it took to exchange information and conduct dialogue. In the twenty-first century’s Information Age it is incomprehensible that it could take twelve hours to send a ten page letter to its recipient half a world away. With the responsibility and risks related to nuclear warfare it seems criminal that a communications gap could trigger a nuclear event. In 1962, it was precisely a communications gap that nearly triggered a nuclear war.

***“Oh shit!, Shit!, Shit! Those sons a bitches Russians!”<sup>1</sup>***

On Tuesday morning, 16 October 1962 the crisis’ tense thirteen days began for the leaders of the world’s two superpowers. Two days prior, two American U-2s flew over Cuba on a photoreconnaissance mission. The pictures produced by this mission provided the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) concrete data that there were medium range ballistic missiles (MRBM) being placed in Cuba.<sup>2</sup> McGeorge Bundy, Special Assistant to the President for National Security, was notified by Ray Cline, Deputy Director for Intelligence of the CIA, about 8:30 p.m.<sup>3</sup> on the night of the 15<sup>th</sup> via telephone. The next morning, President Kennedy was notified.<sup>4</sup>

On the 14<sup>th</sup>, the Marine Corps Emergency Actions Center (EAC) reported that all forces were at Defense Condition (DEFCON) 5 except Commander-in-Chief Pacific (at DEFCON 4 and subordinate elements in Asia at DEFCON 3), and Commander-in-Chief Strategic Air Command (SAC) (at DEFCON 4).<sup>5</sup> By 17 October, no change DEFCON was reported and forces continued to build in support of a joint military exercise PHILBRIGLEX-62 planned for the Caribbean which would begin the following day.<sup>6</sup>

On Saturday, 13 October, Ambassador-at-Large Chester Bowles met with Soviet Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin at the Soviet Embassy in Washington to discuss the trade embargo on Cuba along with other subjects. During that conversation, Bowles asked Dobrynin if he had read Barbara Tuchman's *Guns of August*; when Dobrynin replied that he had not, Bowles "urged him to read at least the first few chapters in which he would see a pattern of politico-military action and counter action that could be repeated in the next six months." He also suggested that the Soviets should be cognizant of the distinction between offensive and defensive weapons in Cuba, that they should not send any more arms, and that the Soviets should encourage Castro to state "that he has no design on his neighbors, that his entire energies would henceforth be devoted to the economic development of Cuba, and that he sought only peaceful competition with other Latin American nations." Dobrynin listened and assured Bowles that no offensive weapons were being shipped and repeatedly asked "Why do [the Americans] get so excited about so small a nation?"<sup>7</sup>

This highlights what would become the Soviet Union's official stance with regard to weapons in Cuba. They intentionally side-stepped the issue regarding "offensive" or "defensive" weapons by claiming that they were simply supporting Cuba's defensive

capabilities. The Soviets did not deny weaponry and assistance sent to Cuba, while they expressed concern about the aggressive acts of and the threat represented by the United States. In this manner, they remained confident that they were being diplomatically forthcoming while continuing their rhetoric against the aggression of the United States.

*“I now know how Tojo felt when he was planning Pearl Harbor.”<sup>8</sup>*

*Tuesday, 16 October 1962*

On the morning of the 16<sup>th</sup>, President Kennedy called in his senior advisors for an “off-the-record” meeting that would become the basis of the Executive Committee of the National Security Council. During this meeting, the President, his principal advisors, and the generals had to determine what the Soviets were doing in Cuba. They developed potential courses of action including planning for air strikes and invasion (even under false pretenses)<sup>9</sup>, diplomatic measures, and a naval blockade.<sup>10</sup>

At this point, Kennedy held the initiative. He knew information about a secret Soviet project to place missiles in Cuba. It was up to him to decide when to act and how to act on behalf of the United States. What Kennedy did not know, however, was whether the Soviets were aware he knew or if they intended for him to find out about the project. Kennedy became confident that the Soviets were operating in secret and did not know that the United States was aware of the project when he met with Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko the next day.

During this stage of the crisis, Kennedy had a limited amount of time to determine the United States’ response and to unify the information campaign that would be required to win international support for whatever the United States would decide. The United States would use this time to their advantage.

Meanwhile, in the Soviet Union, the United States Ambassador to the Soviet Union, Foy Kohler, met with Chairman Khrushchev and discussed the U2 incident of 30 August 1962, the unfortunate timing of the Cuba-Soviet Fisheries Agreement, the nuclear test ban, the recent summit in Vienna, and the upcoming American elections.<sup>11</sup> Khrushchev was an adept politician and was keenly aware of the impact of the November mid-term Congressional elections on the Kennedy Administration. Due to Khrushchev's sensitivity to the elections, he was not going to disclose the decision made in May 1962 to deploy Soviet missiles to Cuba until at least November 6, 1962 after which he intended to inform Kennedy himself.<sup>12</sup>

Khrushchev made a risky decision to support the Castro regime. Castro declared that Cuba was Communist in 1961. Six months later, Khrushchev decided to send nuclear weapons to protect Cuba from aggression from the United States. Khrushchev knew he did not have the ability to wage a war from Cuban soil, several thousand miles from the Soviet Union, and he felt that nuclear weapons were the best option available. At the same time, Khrushchev did not desire to unduly worsen Soviet-American relations. Khrushchev balanced the risks inherent in covert operations with a desire to maximize time to support Castro. Khrushchev hoped to secretly install the missiles and then, in an effort to minimize misunderstanding, discuss the weapons with Kennedy directly.

Unfortunately for Khrushchev, his risks were realized without the gain. Khrushchev didn't know it, but the opportunity to talk to Kennedy first was lost when the United States discovered the missile sites.

*“...we can't negotiate with a gun at our head...”<sup>13</sup>*

*Wednesday, 17 October 1962*

Wednesday morning, 17 October, the United States Ambassador to the United Nations, Adlai Stevenson, encouraged the President to talk directly with Khrushchev in order to “afford a chance of uncovering his motives and objectives far better than correspondence thru (sic) the ‘usual channels.’” In the same letter to the President he highlighted that the US stance on Cuba is less justifiable to the Europeans “who have lived so long under the same threat of Soviet attack from bases in the satellite countries.” Stevenson’s primary point to Kennedy is “I feel you should have made it clear that the existence of nuclear missile bases anywhere is negotiable [emphasis in original] before we start anything.”<sup>14</sup>

From the beginning of the crisis, a solution was available to President Kennedy. If Kennedy wanted the missiles out of Cuba there were several options available to achieve this end. This is the objective of diplomacy – to create options to resolve a problem short of war, but be available to use the threat of war. Here Kennedy could invade, his riskiest choice; or he could trade, his least beneficial choice.

Robert Kennedy received a message from Georgi Bolshakov conveying that Khrushchev wanted President Kennedy to know that the weapons being sent to Cuba were for defensive purposes only. Unfortunately, by the time this August message was relayed to Kennedy in October he was fully aware of the MRBMs in Cuba. This created a deep rift in the relationship between Khrushchev and Kennedy.<sup>15</sup> Khrushchev intended to convince the world that these missiles were defensive and meant to aid Cuba by encouraging the United States to respect Cuba’s sovereignty.

Unfortunately for Khrushchev, the timing of this message and the logical incongruity of the missiles as “defensive” led the President to seriously question the diplomatic integrity of the Soviets. President Kennedy viewed strategic weapons and strategic warfare as inherently offensive. Their mere existence threatened their use. Kennedy assumed that strategic weapons were offensive and therefore, he would not accept them, especially as deployed in Cuba, as defensive. For Americans, the assumption was that nuclear weapons would be used by the aggressor and there would only be a chance for a retaliatory strike if the capability was strong enough.

The next day this rift would be deepened further. At 5:00 p.m., Thursday, 18 October, Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko met with Kennedy (at Gromyko’s request) with an unidentified agenda. Secretary of State Dean Rusk correctly suggested that the meeting would center on Berlin, with other topics such as nuclear weapons and disarmament, the meeting between Khrushchev and Kohler, and the planned visit by Khrushchev to the United States.<sup>16</sup> During the meeting, President Kennedy reacted very harshly to Gromyko’s assertion “that the Soviet Union would never become involved in the furnishing of offensive weapons to Cuba.”<sup>17</sup> According to Sheldon Stern, “From that day on, JFK frequently referred to Gromyko as ‘that lying bastard.’”<sup>18</sup>

This encounter set the tone for the Cuban Missile Crisis debate in very black and white terms. From the Soviet point of view, the Americans were piratical aggressors; from the American point of view, the Soviets were deceitful, aggressive opportunists. This caused Kennedy to look at the military option very seriously. At this point, Kennedy’s inclination was to use force.

***“There is no good legal basis for a United States declaration of war against Cuba at the present time.”<sup>19</sup>***

***Thursday, 18 October 1962***

Sometime on the 18<sup>th</sup>, the USMC EAC was notified of the developments in Cuba by the CIA and began to make arrangements to facilitate the use of Naval Air Station Opalocka during the presumed execution of Operational Plan (OPLAN) 316-61 (CUBA). OPLANs 312-62, 314-61 and 316-61 (CUBA) were to be reviewed by Commander-in-Chief Atlantic (CINCLANT). The EAC also notes that there were no changes in the DEFCON.<sup>20</sup> The mobilization of the Pentagon’s war planners to develop a military solution to the Cuban Crisis set the military behemoth on a course leading to war. The generals did not worry about the legitimacy of their actions, nor did they worry about world opinion. Their focus was strictly on how to achieve the objective of neutralizing the threat presented by nuclear missiles in Cuba.

In solving the military problem, their problem was time. The generals needed a maximum amount of time to hone their pre-established contingency plans into a workable operations plan and then execute their plan as quickly as possible. The best option available was a rapid air strike to neutralize 100% of the missile sites followed by a full invasion of the island-nation. The generals needed time to marshal the necessary forces into place to effectively conduct the operation; but they needed to do it quickly enough to retain the element of surprise which would then rob the Soviet generals the time required to complete and arm the missiles, or bolster their operational capacity, or establish significant defenses.

Because of the pressures indicated, the generals, once set in motion, remained fixed on options that would best enable the strike and follow-on invasion of Cuba. Their judgment was clouded because they remained fixed on the military option as the only option. This severely strained their relationship with their civilian bosses and in many ways tested the limits of civilian leadership over the United States military. The military would, from the beginning until beyond the conclusion of the crisis, exert the maximum pressure available on the President to yield to their desires.

Also on the 18<sup>th</sup>, State Department Legal Advisor Leonard Meeker advised the Secretary of State that he was not convinced of the legality of a blockade and that he was certain that the United Nations Security Council would never support such a measure. Meeker held some hope that the Organization of American States (OAS) could bring forth a chance of legitimacy, but in his view, it would be very difficult to get the requisite two-thirds vote to pass such a resolution.<sup>21</sup> On the 19<sup>th</sup> Leonard Meeker presented his legal opinion about the blockade to the Executive Committee.

The diplomat's goal in such a conflict is to gain legitimacy for his claim. Meeker's opinion two days after the crisis began set the stage for the rest of the diplomatic struggle. The direct route – force – would be condemned and held no legitimacy. A quarantine would only have the required legitimacy with the support of an international body such as the OAS.

***“These brass hats have one great advantage in their favor. If we listen to them and do what they want us to do, none of us will be alive later to tell them they were wrong.”<sup>22</sup>***

***Friday, 19 October 1962***

As Kennedy struggled to make up his mind about his opening moves, he sought non-military options for the resolution to this crisis. The strain between the civilian

leadership and the generals over the security of the nation was worsening as a result. On the 19<sup>th</sup>, the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) joined the Executive Committee in the 9:45 a.m. meeting. The tense meeting between the generals and the Commander-in-Chief illustrated the frustration the generals had with their civilian bosses.

The men in the room, with the exception of the Army Chief of Staff Earle “Bus” Wheeler, were field commanders during World War II and Korea. Their experiences from those wars confirmed their belief in the supremacy of the United States military. They controlled the most powerful military in the world and they arrogantly viewed this young politician with distrust. Subsequently, direction from him was hard to bear. During the meetings on the 19<sup>th</sup>, the chiefs showed limited ability to restrain their contempt for civilian oversight. The generals were convinced that the military could solve the problem and in order to do so, the decision would have to be made quickly to enable successful execution of their plans to attack and invade Cuba. In their minds, the military held the best options and no other courses of action should be considered.

The most notable evidence of this is found in the heated exhortations from the irascible Air Force Chief of Staff, General Curtis LeMay. LeMay demanded military action in Cuba and at one point accused Kennedy of appeasement. LeMay summed his point by saying, “I just don’t see any other solution except direct military intervention, *right now* [emphasis in original].” Admiral George Anderson, Chief of Naval Operations agreed, “I do not see that... there is any solution to the Cuban problem except a military solution.” The career staff officer, General Wheeler, Army Chief of Staff, declared that bombing, a blockade, and an invasion were required. He further offered, “I feel that the lowest risk... is the full gamut of military action by us.” Marine Commandant David

Shoup concurred with the other chiefs by calling for an invasion. Kennedy demurred saying “I appreciate your views. I’m sure we all understand how rather unsatisfactory our alternatives are.” The tapes that secretly continued to record after the meeting concluded fully illustrate what Stern calls “disdain for civilian control of military decisions.”<sup>23</sup>

Military leaders are trained for war. They study war constantly and have devoted their lives to understanding aspects of combat and applications of military power. All but one of the chiefs had significant combat command experience and all were inclined to take their chances on the battlefield with little thought of working doubly hard to stay off the battlefield to begin with. In this manner, the JCS wore blinders that restricted their view of options other than.

*“You should all hope that your plan isn’t the one that will be accepted.”<sup>24</sup>*

*Saturday, 20 October 1962*

On 20 October, President Kennedy began a letter to Chairman Khrushchev. The edits to the first draft indicated that the tone was tense and condescending. Phrases like “For your information...”; “I must tell you...”; and “I should inform your further...” all convey the irritation of the Executive Committee.<sup>25</sup> It is fortunate that neither this letter nor any subsequent drafts of such tone were relayed to the Soviets. The perceived arrogance of the Americans with their anti-diplomatic tone and rattling of sabers could have provoked harsh reaction in an already tense situation.

At this point in the crisis, Kennedy held all the options. He knew what the Soviets were doing and the Soviets didn’t know he knew. Kennedy still held the option of how and when to initiate the conflict. However, once initiated, the choices after the

first one lose their flexibility precipitously. As in chess, the first series of moves need to be right. Kennedy decided that they had two more days to unify their plan, still giving the Americans a significant advantage in time to prepare and evaluate the choices they would potentially face.

Throughout this day, the Executive Committee would struggle to present the President with courses of action and evaluations of the impacts of those choices on the crisis.

Simultaneously, the White House prepared a draft resolution for the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). This document took a much more diplomatic tone with phrases like “Noting with concern...”, “Gravely concerned...” The draft specifically calls for the withdrawal of foreign military personnel and nuclear-capable weapons from Cuba, the “termination of all quarantines and other military restrictions directed against Cuba”, pledges by UNSC members the territorial integrity of Cuba, and UN military observer force to be sent to ensure compliance.<sup>26</sup> This maneuver enables a negotiable diplomatic response. The draft letter, on the one hand, is bold and threatening while the resolution, on the other makes it clear that all options are on the table – even the United States completely backing off.

In an internal letter, presumably written by Theodore Sorenson for President Kennedy, an outline of tactics in the UNSC was put forth. In this letter, the author proposed two fronts, one that encompassed the items cited in the draft resolution; the other is a “military standstill in Cuba, supervised by the UN.”<sup>27</sup> Here, the advantages and disadvantages of the courses of action were highlighted while an alternative was proposed to “evacuate our missiles from Turkey and Italy.”<sup>28</sup> The author warned of

possible implications of this course of action and advises that this would be “less desirable.”

When President Kennedy returned from a campaign trip to Chicago he heard the arguments of the Executive Committee and decided to authorize the blockade.<sup>29</sup> The emphasis of the Executive Committee shifted from debating what to do to how to accomplish this task in context of the international community. At this point, the military option was a fallback in the event of an unforeseen turn of events or if negotiations could not produce an acceptable solution.

The Executive Committee had a little over one day to consolidate the plan and the information campaign. All the components had to be queued correctly to enable Kennedy to present a unified image of American resolve.

Meanwhile, at 7:14 a.m. in Washington, the JCS sent a message to all unified commanders warning them that increased tension in the Cuban situation “could lead to military action.”<sup>30</sup> The chiefs were prepared to execute air strikes against missiles on 22 October with twenty-four hour notice and proceed on to CINCLANT OPAN 312, 314, and 316 leading to a state of “general war.” Plans were made that evening to develop a blockade operation that would be executed twenty-four hours after the President’s speech (designated at P-Hour).<sup>31</sup>

The acting director of the United States Information Agency (USIA), Donald Wilson, set forth a comprehensive information operations plan. His plan ensured that all available broadcast platforms from Voice of America (VOA) to Armed Forces radio outlets would be ordered to broadcast the President’s speech. Officials from the State Department and the Department of Defense were directed to highlight the distinction

between “offensive” and “defensive” missiles. Further distinction should be made as to the differences between the weapons in Cuba and the US weapons in Turkey and Italy. Additional calls would be made to ensure Republicans would offer immediate support of the President to present a unified country.<sup>32</sup>

To ensure maximum coverage in Cuba, Mr. Wilson also proposed that VOA stations broadcast twenty-four hours a day over shortwave frequencies in Spanish. He also identified five commercially owned medium wave stations in the US that should be used to broadcast the same Spanish broadcasts throughout the night. Wilson identified that there is a problem with “taking over” these stations and suggested that a senior US official contact the station owners and coordinate the details.<sup>33</sup>

The United States was preparing its case and had a significant additional advantage: The United States possessed information. Because Kennedy was in a position to choose when the crisis would be made public, he would be able to get the United States’ message out first. The message that gets out first, and the one that is best developed, is the one that often holds sway. The United States’ case was simple. They had evidence that missiles were in Cuba and they wanted the missiles out. There is clear fact and little rhetoric. It is easier to build international legitimacy when more emphasis is placed on fact and less on rhetoric. To borrow from the modern media: The United States was ahead of the story.

*“[A] U.S. military adventure against Cuba is almost beyond belief.”<sup>34</sup>*

*Sunday, 21 October 1962*

President Kennedy’s fourth draft of the speech he would deliver to the nation was completed by Ted Sorenson around 11:00 a.m. that day.<sup>35</sup> The letter to Khrushchev that

would be delivered one hour prior to the speech was prepared and transmitted to Ambassador Kohler at the American Embassy at Moscow.<sup>36</sup> Additionally, a draft resolution for the UNSC was transmitted to Ambassador Stevenson.

The letter to Khrushchev highlighted the position of the United States on the discovery of missiles in Cuba. Kennedy expressed his concern that Khrushchev may “not correctly understand the will and determination of the United States,” and simultaneously assumed that Khrushchev would not advocate nuclear war which “is crystal clear no country could win”. Kennedy reminded Khrushchev that he desired to find solutions to problems through peaceful negotiation but not at the cost of an upset to the “over-all balance of power.” Kennedy clearly asserted that the US would not back down from its obligations to West Berlin. Finally, Kennedy declared that “the United States is determined to remove this threat [that the missiles in Cuba pose] to the security of this hemisphere.” He pointed out to Khrushchev that “the action we are taking is the minimum necessary to remove the threat to the security of the nations of this hemisphere. The fact of this minimum response should not be taken as a basis, however, for any misjudgment on your part.”<sup>37</sup>

The resolution that was transmitted to Ambassador Stevenson announced the concern over the developments in the Caribbean and the imposition of a quarantine line around Cuba. This resolution declared that the situation could result in conflict and called for the removal of all missiles and offensive weapons from Cuba under the auspices and guarantees of United Nations observers. The resolution further called for a summit between the United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.<sup>38</sup>

Diplomatic and information operations continued with a message to all diplomatic posts from the Secretary of State to be prepared to consult with their respective heads of state upon receipt of a “GO” message from the Secretary. Within a couple of hours of receipt of the “GO” message, diplomats were to seek an appointment with the most senior officials available and inform them that pro-communist attacks may be imminent and precautions should be taken. Embassies will receive full texts of the President’s speech one hour in advance of the President’s speech and that they should convey the texts to the respective Chiefs of State. The message also advises that the Organization of American States will meet the next day to consider a reaction to this situation. The diplomats are advised to inquire about the possibility of collaboration in military action and the JCS is prepared to send envoys to assist if it is so required. Anticipating the high volume of message traffic that this would create, the Secretary advised that all non-related message traffic should be kept to a minimum.<sup>39</sup>

Admiral Anderson briefed President Kennedy on his concept for the naval blockade. He had forty Navy ships in position and twenty-seven more on the way and required no call-up of Naval Reserve forces at this time. He envisioned the enforcement of the blockade with a cruiser intercepting any incoming ship in accordance with international rules. Anderson recommended a twenty-four hour grace period to allow the Soviets time to transmit instructions to their ships and to better position the US Navy. The subject of rules of engagement came up and Secretary McNamara indicated he favored responses with force against hostile action.<sup>40</sup>

Still not aware that the Americans knew about the missiles in Cuba, the GRU (the Main Intelligence Directorate of the Soviet General Staff, the *Glavnoje Razvedyvatel'noje*

*Upravlenije*) noted a significant increase in military activity in the United States. They reported aircraft convoys headed towards Puerto Rico, an increase in the number of SAC bombers airborne, and a growing US Navy presence in the Caribbean. They were even aware that McNamara had ordered senior military officers to remain “near the Pentagon to participate in a series of intensive meetings.”<sup>41</sup>

***“The thing is we were not going to unleash war. We just wanted to intimidate them...”<sup>42</sup>***

***Monday, 22 October 1962***

At noon White House Press Secretary Pierre Salinger requested airtime for the President to address the nation, revealing for the first time the crisis.<sup>43</sup> At 3:00 p.m. (10:00 p.m. in Moscow), President Kennedy formally established the Executive Committee with National Security Action Memorandum (NSAM) 196.<sup>44</sup> One hour later, the President addressed the full Cabinet – this was the first time some of the cabinet members learned of the crisis.<sup>45</sup> At 5:00 p.m. (midnight in Moscow), he met for an hour and a half with seventeen congressional leaders from both parties and both houses. This meeting was led by President Kennedy and Secretary Rusk and quickly became contentious as many congressional leaders called for a stronger response, voiced an opposition to the blockade, and demanded fuller involvement.<sup>46</sup>

The information operation to present the United States’ case to itself and the world had begun. In rapid succession, the President briefed the leadership of the country while his Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, and the United States Information Agency all proclaimed the clear case: the Soviet Union supplied offensive nuclear weapons to Cuba, the United States viewed that as a threat, the weapons must go, and the United States was acting to effect that course of events.

Beginning at 3:00 p.m. that afternoon, the President briefed the leadership of the country of his choice to implement a blockade of Cuba in order to encourage the Soviets to remove their missiles from bases installed in Cuba. Four hours later, at 7:00 p.m. (2:00 a.m. in Moscow) President Kennedy addressed the nation. One hour before, Ambassador Kohler delivered his message to Chairman Khrushchev announcing the blockade and informing the Chairman of the impending speech. At the same time, Secretary Rusk delivered the text of the speech to Ambassador Dobrynin in Washington.<sup>47</sup> Also, at that time, Kennedy instructed his ambassadors to meet with the heads of state of many non-Eastern Bloc countries to provide them advance notice.<sup>48</sup>

In the span of one afternoon, President Kennedy informed the leaders of the United States and the leaders of the non-Eastern Bloc world.<sup>49</sup> Given the technology of the time, this was an unprecedented move and showed clear control over a critical instrument of international power: information. There was an applicable maxim at work: the story that gets out first is the one that is best believed.

Kennedy's speech outlined the recent false statements regarding the deployment of offensive weapons to Cuba, proposed that in the nuclear age threats and deception represent "maximum peril," and stated that the American response to this threat is one of restraint but one representing only one of the options available to the President. Further, President Kennedy outlined seven steps: Impose a quarantine on all offensive military equipment, continue and increase surveillance of Cuba, regard any nuclear launch from Cuba as an attack by the Soviet Union, reinforce the base at Guantanamo, call for a meeting of the OAS, call for a meeting of the UNSC, and call upon Khrushchev to withdraw weapons from Cuba.<sup>50</sup>

In the Soviet Union Chairman Khrushchev received word that the President was going to address the American public. This, along with the earlier intelligence report of military forces building in the southeastern United States, served as his most clear sign that a serious crisis could be building.

Khrushchev called a meeting of the Presidium to discuss the possible implications of this address. Khrushchev himself was confident that the focus of this speech would be Cuba although other members of the Presidium offered different opinions; none were optimistic. An emotional Khrushchev declared to the Presidium, “[T]he thing is we were not going to unleash war. We just wanted to intimidate them, to deter the anti-Cuban forces.”

Khrushchev regained his composure and once again boasted, “They can attack us and we shall respond... This may end in a big war.” He continued debating how Kennedy would act and what the Kremlin could do to respond with the clear indication that Cuba would be in a position to use tactical nuclear weapons to respond to an invasion.<sup>51</sup>

Earlier, on 8 September, an order was prepared to send to General Pliyev authorizing that “In a situation of an enemy landing... and there is no possibility of receiving instructions from the USSR Ministry of Defense, you are permitted to make your own decision and to use the nuclear means of the ‘Luna’, IL-28 or FKR-1 as instruments of local warfare...”<sup>52</sup> Soviet Defense Minister Rodion Malinovsky never signed that order and instead, on the 22 October, the Presidium granted Pliyev authority to use tactical nuclear weapons in the event of an invasion, but restricted Pliyev from using the long-range missiles without explicit permission to do so. Malinovsky

persuaded the Presidium to follow this more cautious route by convincing them that this was a less provocative move.<sup>53</sup>

The Soviet military was not in a position to seek war. In Cuba, units were several thousand miles from the Soviet Union and were not sufficiently manned or supplied for combat operations. As such, the Soviet military leaders assumed a defensive tone and posture though they were completely prepared to defend themselves with everything they had available. For the Soviet units on the ground, hostile force was a last resort.

In Washington, the State Department drafted the OAS resolution for the next morning's meeting. This resolution called for the "immediate dismantling and withdrawal from Cuba of all missiles and other weapons with any offensive capability and dismantling of all bases with offensive capability;" to invoke the Rio Treaty to take measures to prevent Cuba from receiving "Sino-Soviet... military material and related supplies which may threaten peace and security;" and to "inform the UNSC of this resolution in Accordance with Article 54 of the UN Charter."<sup>54</sup>

As previously indicated, Secretary Rusk met with Ambassador Dobrynin at the State Department at 6:00 p.m. He conveyed the letter to Khrushchev and the text of the speech that would be given an hour later and expressed to the ambassador, "that it was incomprehensible to him how leaders in Moscow could make such gross error (sic) of judgment as to what [the] US can accept. He expressed hope [that the] Soviet Union would make[a] major effort to reverse [the] situation."

According to the State Department telegram summarizing the meeting, "Dobrynin commented 'all of this' [is] unjustifiable and will very strongly aggravate [the] international situation."<sup>55</sup> This statement continued by anticipating that the Soviet

response would draw heavily upon rhetoric and further established the lines upon which the negotiations could be built.

Concurrent with the President's speech, Ambassador Stevenson relayed a letter to Soviet Ambassador the United Nations Valerian Zorin, in his capacity as the President of the UNSC, calling for "an urgent meeting of the Security Council" citing "incontrovertible evidence" of nuclear weapons in Cuba.<sup>56</sup> This letter followed the same logic and format of the President's speech and continued to present the unified message of the United States to the international community citing the extent of the Cuban missile project, past statements of Russian officials, and the need to secure international harmony and return to the *status quo ante*. Included with the letter was the draft resolution calling for the removal of the offensive weapons, a request for UN observers to monitor the withdrawal, a call for the termination of the quarantine upon completion of the withdrawal and a call for a summit between the United States and the Soviet Union.<sup>57</sup>

Immediately upon learning of the blockade the Cuban Ambassador to the United Nations, Mario Garcia Inchaustegui, requested Ambassador Zorin call a meeting of the UNSC to "consider the act of war unilaterally committed by the Government of the United States in ordering the naval blockade of Cuba."<sup>58</sup>

At 8:00 p.m. the Secretary of Defense, Robert McNamara, delivered an hour-long "background conference" detailing and supporting the position of the United States. This background conference highlighted the plans to conduct the naval quarantine, the troop movements towards Florida, the evacuation of civilians and non-combatants from Guantanamo, the rationale of quarantine, a declaration that the quarantine was not an act of war, detailed information regarding the missiles and other nuclear forces in Cuba,

anticipated reaction to the quarantine, the resolution before the OAS, the concept of response escalation, reserve force mobilizations, stop-loss, the change in DEFCON, Cuban reaction to reconnaissance flights, and the possibility of nuclear strike.<sup>59</sup>

The JCS continued to mobilize forces. The naval base at Guantanamo was ordered to evacuate all dependents and non-combatants. The build-up at Naval Air Station Key West was proceeding. The Commandant of the Marine Corps set DEFCON 3 as of 12:57 a.m. on 23 October (7:57 a.m. in Moscow).<sup>60</sup> JCS also directed the alerting of SAC and the dispersal of USAF interceptor aircraft on a “very quiet basis.” The 1<sup>st</sup> Armored Division (1AD) was directed to begin movement to either Fort Stewart, GA or gulf ports. The JCS ordered DEFCON 3 for all forces worldwide effective at 7:00 p.m. in Washington (2:00 a.m. in Moscow on the 24<sup>th</sup>) that day.<sup>61</sup>

In an interesting aside, the JCS authorized CINCLANT to “expend \$20,000 for the purchase of representative US magazines and hard items such as fountain pens, cigarette lighters, etc. to be given to crew members of Russian ships boarded. This action is designed for face to face influence upon Soviet merchant sailers (sic), many of whom have never seen an American.”<sup>62</sup> Further, General Lauris Norstad, Commander-in-Chief Europe (CINCEUR), did not place American troops at DEFCON 3 in an effort to present a “non-provocative and non-public” display.<sup>63</sup>

The international phase of the Cuban Missile Crisis had begun.

***“Anyone who tries to come and inspect Cuba must know that he will have to come equipped for war”<sup>64</sup>***

***Tuesday, 23 October 1962***

At 3:00 p.m. in Moscow (8:00 a.m. in Washington – twelve hours after the Soviets learned of the quarantine plan from Ambassador Kohler), on the 23<sup>rd</sup>, Ambassador Kohler met with Soviet Foreign Minister Kuznetsov who relayed the response from Chairman Khrushchev to President Kennedy.<sup>65</sup> At 11:05 a.m. in Washington, President Kennedy received the letter from Chairman Khrushchev via State Department Telegram. In his letter, Khrushchev accused the United States of threatening the peace, violating the UN Charter, piracy, and aggression against both Cuba and the Soviet Union. Khrushchev adamantly declared that “the armaments which are in Cuba, regardless of the classification to which they may belong, are intended solely for defensive purposes in order to secure the Republic of Cuba against the attack of an aggressor.” Khrushchev called on the US to “display wisdom and renounce the actions pursued [by the US], which may lead to catastrophic consequences for world peace.”<sup>66</sup>

Khrushchev offered the Soviet case back to Kennedy: the weapons were defensive and would not be necessary if the United States stopped its aggressive actions toward Cuba. The “defensive” weapons argument possessed a logical weakness, but frames the clear intent: Leave Cuba alone.

Khrushchev also sent a letter to Castro reaffirming his support to Cuban defenses. He did not, however, inform Castro that some shipments bound for Cuba would be returned to Russia.<sup>67</sup>

This letter was followed by an interview with Cuban Prime Minister Fidel Castro affirming that the weapons were of a defensive nature because Cuba “never harbored any

aggressive intentions against anyone... We shall never change this policy.

We shall never be aggressors. That is why our weapons will never be of the offensive type.” Castro went further to declare, “We decidedly reject any attempt at supervision, any attempt at inspection of our country. Our country will not be subjected to inspection from any quarter... Anyone who tries to come and inspect Cuba must know that he will have to come equipped for war. That is our final answer to illusions and proposals for carrying out inspections on our territory.”<sup>68</sup>

The same day, Castro mobilized the entire armed forces of Cuba and Kennedy signed Executive Order 11058 “ordering persons and units in the Ready Reserve to Active Duty” and suspending service separations.<sup>69</sup>

Kennedy responded to Khrushchev with a letter on the evening of 23 October expressing the hope that “we both show prudence and do nothing to allow events to make this situation more difficult to control than it already is.” He announced that the OAS approved the quarantine and informed Khrushchev the quarantine would be in effect as of 2:00 p.m. Greenwich time (10:00 a.m. in Washington and 5:00 p.m. in Moscow) on the 24 October and stressed to him that “I hope you will issue immediately the necessary instructions to your ships to observe the terms of the quarantine...”<sup>70</sup>

In their opening letters, both the United States and the Soviet Union agreed that they did not desire war. Both sides wanted all parties to show prudence to ensure that nothing happened to cause the situation to worsen. The United States kept its options open, primarily military, if the Soviets “continued” to lie. The Soviets stalled for time to develop options to seek the most gain or least loss from this situation.

During the day on the 23<sup>rd</sup>, the OAS and the UNSC met separately to discuss the crisis. Secretary Rusk spoke convincingly at the OAS continuing the unified information campaign waged by the United States. Rusk cited “incontrovertible evidence,” past deceitful statements by Soviet officials, the offensive character of the weapons now in Cuba, the Soviet contribution to the “enslavement of the Cuban people... to which the Castro regime has surrendered the Cuban national heritage,” and Soviet intervention in the Western Hemisphere. The address called for support to establish a “strict quarantine to prevent further offensive military equipment from reaching Cuba” and Rusk submitted a resolution convoking the “Organ of Consultation” and one calling for the removal of offensive weapons. The speech also highlighted the action occurring at the UNSC and claimed that the OAS had the independent right to act to this hemispheric threat to stability.<sup>71</sup>

The resolutions passed unanimously.<sup>72</sup>

Also on the morning of the 23<sup>rd</sup>, Ambassador Stevenson released a statement to the UNSC calling for an emergency meeting of the Security Council to address the crisis at hand. This message continued the information campaign and elaborated on the presentation by President Kennedy the night before. He highlighted the domineering spirit of the Soviets citing the Russian advances immediately after the Second World War and calling for a peaceful return to the *status quo ante* highlighting the American patience and dialog in response to “Soviet expansionism.” He further identified the plight of the Cuban people under Castro as one that betrayed the revolution’s goal of freedom in Cuba. Stevenson focused his comments on the need to remove Soviet influence and withdraw

the weapons that the Soviet Union has placed in Cuba. He concluded by submitting his resolution to that end and announced the decision of the OAS.<sup>73</sup>

Again the United States' case was pled clearly and uniformly, relying heavily on evidence and fact supported by rhetoric to gain the international community's support and thus legitimize the quarantine operation.

At the UNSC Ambassador Garcia Inchaustegui railed at length against the American imperialism and historic threat to the people of Cuba but quoted the Cuban President Dorticas "Were the United States able to give Cuba effective guarantees and satisfactory proof concerning the integrity of Cuban territory, and were it to cease its subversive and counter-revolutionary activities against our people, then Cuba would not have to strengthen its defences (sic)... Were the United States able to give us proof, by word and deed, that it would not carry out aggression against our country, then, we declare solemnly before your here and now, our weapons would be unnecessary and our army redundant." Ambassador Garcia Inchaustegui, however returned to his strongly anti-American rhetoric citing American piracy, airspace violations, and asserted that American "aggressions" are a threat to Cuba. He continued to claim that Cuba was acting only in its defense against aggressors and repeated Castro's assertion that UN observers would not be allowed in Cuba.<sup>74</sup>

The Cuban case, in contrast to the United States', was highly rhetorical and emotional. While the Cubans claimed to be open to negotiations, their case relied on the emotional aspects of United States' aggression against Cuban Communism to frame its argument. This did not represent a denial of the United States' claim that Cuba has Soviet nuclear missiles; it only offered as its rebuttal a side-stepping of the issue.

Ambassador Zorin responded with charges citing the Monroe Doctrine, American “Bick Stick” diplomacy, and other American incursions into Latin American affairs. He charged the United States with “aggressive acts... against the small Cuban State” accusing the United States of “naked” imperialism... creating this international crisis, forcing the Soviet Union to call upon the UNSC to investigate this act of war.” At the conclusion of his speech, he submitted a resolution to the UNSC condemning the United States’ action, insisting that the blockade be lifted, proposing that that United States cease interference in Cuban affairs, and calling a summit be called between the Americans, Cubans, and Soviets.<sup>75</sup>

The Soviets case led with an emotional and rhetorical argument that also failed to deny the United States’ claim and only offered the same side-step regarding American aggression towards a Communist nation. This diluted the strength of the Soviet claims.

As the international community formally discussed the Cuban crisis, other principals were continuing to seek avenues for solution. Robert Kennedy met with Ambassador Dobrynin at his office at the Soviet Embassy in Washington. In the emotional meeting, Kennedy stressed that the deception caused serious harm to the relationship between the President and the Chairman. Dobrynin convinced Kennedy that he was not fully aware of the weapons in Cuba during his earlier meeting with the President. Unfortunately, the meeting didn’t open any specific solutions, but it did establish a tentative bridge of communications and possibly restored some faith in the word of the Ambassador. The Attorney General conveyed a very important message as he departed the Ambassador’s office, “I don’t know how all this will end, but we intend to stop your ships.”<sup>76</sup>

The diplomatic stage was set. Kennedy opened a back-channel communication route to ensure that his message to Khrushchev got through. That also allowed more face-saving flexibility on the international scene, and enabled a more fruitful agreement behind the scenes to avert war.

The Joint Chiefs issued instructions to go to DEFCON 3 at 7:00 p.m. on 22 October<sup>77</sup> and outlined the procedures to for “visit, search, diversion, and taking into custody” ships entering into the quarantine area stressing maximum use of communications and minimum use of force, but stipulating that “if boarding meets with organized resistance (sic), the ship will be destroyed... If it becomes necessary to destroy a ship, ample warning should be given to intentions in order to permit sufficient time for debarkation of the passengers and crew.”<sup>78</sup>

Donald Wilson reported to President Kennedy that the USIA, using the VOA, broadcast the speech in Spanish over nine stations. Further, he reported that VOA had been completely jammed in Moscow. The stations re-broadcasted the speech every hour and on the 23<sup>rd</sup> carried the speech by Ambassador Stevenson live from the United Nations.<sup>79</sup>

The first substantial progress towards a solution began with a phone call from *Daily News* correspondent Frank Holeman to Georgi Bolshakov. When the two met, Holeman relayed a message from someone in the Department of Justice indicating that “Robert Kennedy and his people believed... that the missiles in Cuba were the Soviet Union’s way of responding to US Jupiter missiles in Turkey.” This was the first potentially semi-official link between the two items. Bolshakov reported to Moscow, “In connection with this [assumption about Soviet motives] Robert Kennedy and his circle

consider is possible to discuss the following trade: The US would liquidate its missile bases in Turkey and Italy, and the USSR would do the same in Cuba.” Bolshakov noted, “The conditions of such a trade can be discussed only in a time of quiet and not when there is the threat of war.” According to Fursenko and Naftali, “inexplicably, the GRU station decided to sit on this information from Holeman”<sup>80</sup>

Also that day a friend of the Kennedys’ Charles Bartlett, met with Bolshakov to discuss solutions, yielding little result. Robert Kennedy then supplied Bartlett with photos of the missiles and asked him to meet with Bolshakov again that day. When confronted with the evidence, Bolshakov was able to convince the GRU Rezydent in Washington to forward the message from Holeman to Moscow.<sup>81</sup>

The advantage the United States held with its days of preparation were clear. The international information campaign established the United States’ case to the international community in less than twenty-four hours from the start of the public phase of the crisis. The Soviet and Cuban diplomats, on the other hand, were presented with the problem on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and a quarantine on the 23<sup>rd</sup> accompanied by an unprecedented, unanimous resolution from the OAS on the same day. The pressures of time now were much more compressed with the Americans holding the initiative and the advantage of a unified and consolidated plan.

***“The Soviet government considers that the violation of the freedom to use international waters and international air space is an act of aggression which pushes mankind toward the abyss of a world nuclear-missile war.”***<sup>82</sup>

***Wednesday, 24 October 1962***

On the 23<sup>rd</sup>, at 7:06 p.m. in Washington, Kennedy signed the quarantine proclamation. It was transmitted and delivered to the Soviets at 6:00 a.m. Moscow Time (11:00 p.m. 23 October, Washington time).<sup>83</sup>

The following day, 24 October 1962, a response from Khrushchev came to Kennedy via a *Telegrafnoe Agentstvo Sovetskogo Soyuza* (TASS – the Soviet news agency) broadcast declaring that “The Soviet government will not take any actions which would be reckless... We shall do everything in our power to prevent war from breaking out.” The broadcast agreed that a “top-level meeting” would be useful but that the US should avoid “piratical threats” and that the Soviet government “cannot accept them in any form.” Khrushchev repositioned responsibility for catastrophe back on the Americans by stating, “if the American government carries out the program of pirate action it planned then of course we shall have to make use of the means of defense against the aggressor. We have no other way out.”<sup>84</sup> The Chairman’s creative and unprecedented use of TASS to broadcast his message to Kennedy displayed his determination to ensure Kennedy knew the Soviets would do everything in their power to prevent war.

Khrushchev’s letter of 24 October refused Kennedy’s demands and refused to recognize the authority of the OAS to decree such quarantine. Khrushchev further advised Kennedy, “The Soviet government considers that the violation of the freedom to use international waters and international air space is an act of aggression which pushes mankind toward the abyss of a world nuclear-missile war.”<sup>85</sup> This effort attempted to reverse the blame for the conflict and at the same time gain absolution for results should Soviet ships defend themselves.

The rapid Soviet response clearly expressed their desire not to start a war. The words, however, illustrated that the Soviets were stalling for more time by threatening nuclear war . They did this to further develop the situation to enable conditions more

favorable to their negotiations and shore up their diplomatic arguments against the quarantine proclamation.

Also on the 24<sup>th</sup>, acting Secretary General U Thant appealed to both Kennedy and Khrushchev to participate in a “voluntary suspension for a period of two to three weeks [to] greatly ease the situation and give some time to the parties to meet and discuss with [them] a view to finding a peaceful solution to the problem.”<sup>86</sup> U Thant further asked President Kennedy not to confront Soviet vessels.<sup>87</sup>

U Thant sought more time to stabilize the situation to allow the aggrieved parties to come to the negotiating table. A pause, however, helped Khrushchev by allowing the completion of the missiles with equipment already in Cuba and hurt Kennedy for the same reason.

The idea of negotiating the missiles out of Turkey and Italy gained momentum with the Executive Committee. Near midday, George Ball contacted the United States Ambassador to Turkey Thomas Finletter instructing him to begin investigating that option.<sup>88</sup>

Within the Department of Defense, at 10:00 p.m. SAC announced a full nuclear alert – DEFCON 2.<sup>89</sup> The Department also informed the Soviet government of the procedures the Navy would use to signal a submarine with instructions to surface and identify itself. The naval task force will “drop four or five harmless explosive sound signals which may be accompanied by the international codes signal ‘IDKCA’ meaning ‘rise to surface.’” The measures were declared to be “harmless.”<sup>90</sup> Further, in a belated effort to aid communication, the Navy moved thirteen available Russian-speaking sailors to the task force while maintaining six in reserve.<sup>91</sup>

The almost reckless approach to signaling the Soviet submarines and the lack of ready and available Soviet language experts demonstrated that the United States military was ill-prepared to confront the Soviets in any manner that would not lead to war.

*“We must dismantle the missiles to make Cuba into a zone of peace.”<sup>92</sup>*

*Thursday, 25 October 1962*

President Kennedy responded to acting Secretary-General U Thant on the afternoon of the 25<sup>th</sup> with a neutral response to his proposal to suspend the blockade for two weeks to better allow the international community to broker an agreement on the crisis. While the President did not explicitly refuse the offer, it was clear in the tone that he had no interest in subrogating the interests of the United States in this matter to the United Nations.<sup>93</sup> A delay worked against President Kennedy as it limited his military options and thus devalued the military course of action.

In his response to U Thant’s proposal, Chairman Khrushchev, perhaps looking for an opportunity to diffuse the crisis and secure more time to develop opportunities, replied in a much different tone to U Thant. Khrushchev welcomed the proposal and agreed with it in “the interests of peace.”<sup>94</sup>

U Thant responded to both Kennedy and Khrushchev by acknowledging each leader’s “encouraging reply” and indicated that talks will begin with their ambassadors on the 26<sup>th</sup>.<sup>95</sup>

Lying juxtaposed to the apparent forward motion of diplomacy is the letter that Kennedy sent to Khrushchev early that morning, delivered to the Soviet Embassy in Washington at 1:45 a.m. (8:45 a.m. in Moscow). In that letter, Kennedy “regret[s] very much that you still do not appear to understand what it is that has moved us in this

matter.” Kennedy highlighted the salient events to date indicating the deceit of previous Soviet statements regarding offensive weapons in Cuba. The tone of the letter is calm and firm and heavily imbued with regret. Kennedy closed by saying, “I repeat my regret that these events should cause a deterioration in our relations. I hope that your Government will take the necessary action to permit a restoration of the earlier situation.”<sup>96</sup>

Kennedy’s letter made no mention of the 24 October proposal from Khrushchev and further solidified the US stance that the only acceptable solution must include the removal of the weapons from Cuba. According to Freshinko and Naftali, it is at this point Khrushchev ordered the remaining transports to turn around and not press the quarantine and he offered the crux of the future proposal to the Presidium: “Give us a pledge not to invade Cuba, and we will remove the missiles.” The Soviet decision was made. The Soviets would “wait and see” a little longer to see if the situation developed in such a manner that offered any gain for the Soviets. It was at this point when Khrushchev advised his ministers to join him at the Bolshoi Theater in an effort to display calm and confidence in at the height of the crisis.<sup>97</sup>

Diplomatically, the Soviets agreed to work toward a solution. They, however, chose not to relay their acceptance of Kennedy’s demands as they wanted to see if any fruit could be brought to bear by waiting a little longer, but the decision had been made to settle.

The diplomatic wheels were turning of their own inertia. The United Nations Security Council became the scene of an emotional and dramatic debate between Ambassadors Stevenson and Zorin where both played their roles impeccably. Neither

moved from their approved scripts and both accused the other of using the UNSC for displays of self-interested propaganda contrary to the spirit of the United Nations Charter.<sup>98</sup>

The US Ambassador to NATO, Thomas Finletter, responded to a cable sent from Secretary Rusk the day prior advising that it is “possible that negotiated solution... may involve dismantling and removal Jupiters (sic).”<sup>99</sup> In his response he cautioned Secretary Rusk that Turkey greatly values the Jupiters and that the “[f]act that Jupiters are obsolescent (sic) and vulnerable does not apparently affect present Turkish thinking.” He suggested that it would be better to consider removing a non-NATO base to better correlate the fact that Cuba is not a NATO country and he stresses that the trade of Jupiters for Polaris would not interest the Turks.<sup>100</sup>

The following day, the United States Ambassador to Italy, Frederick Reinhardt was more optimistic. He indicated that “Removal [of] Jupiters from Italy would probably be manageable.” He further indicated that the Italians would prefer the seaborne weapons and the “next generation missiles.”<sup>101</sup>

Meanwhile, evidence that the Soviets may be considering a peaceful solution became apparent. At the 11:50 a.m. Department of Defense press briefing the Assistant Secretary of Defense, Arthur Sylvester, reported that “at least a dozen Soviet vessels have turned back” and confirmed that a Soviet tanker *Bucharest* was allowed through the quarantine line.<sup>102</sup> The blockade appeared to be working and the Soviets appeared to be adhering to it.

While the diplomats and the executives grappled at hope in a solution, the generals were marching onward with their operations. President Kennedy asked the

USIA to develop a course of action for a propaganda campaign should an invasion be required that was in addition to the ongoing Voice of America broadcasts. Although Operation BUGLE CALL was developed as a result, its leaflets were never dropped.<sup>103</sup>

The Washington correspondent to the *New York Herald Tribune*, Warren Rogers met with KGB agent Aleksandr Feklisov early that morning. Rogers planned to participate in the press embedding that Assistant Secretary of Defense Sylvester would talk about later that day. The night prior, Rogers and co-worker Robert Donovan were overheard at the National Press Club by longtime bartender Johnny Prokov as they discussed the trip. Prokov passed word to Feklisov who contacted Rogers early on the morning of the 25<sup>th</sup>.

This blatant security violation suggests that Rogers may have been intended to relay information. He was well connected at the Pentagon and his contact with TASS “correspondents” at the National Press Club was well known. It is possible that he was asked to relay information about the pending “invasion.”

During their conversation, Feklisov asked Rogers, “Do you think Kennedy means what he says?” Rogers responded, “You’re damn right, he does... He will do what he says he will do.”<sup>104</sup>

The morning meeting was almost immediately followed up with a lunch invitation from Georgi Kornienko, Dobrynin’s chief political advisor. During the lunch to confirm the validity of Feklisov’s source, Rogers reaffirmed his opinion that military action was inevitable and that Kennedy meant what he said.<sup>105</sup> The notes were forwarded to Moscow, delivered to the head of the KGB, Vladimir Semichastny, at 8:30 a.m. Friday morning (1:30 a.m. in Washington). When Khrushchev read these reports later that

morning, he was convinced that the United States would start war. Khrushchev's desire to "look around" to judge the Americans' determination seemed impossible.<sup>106</sup>

Diplomatically, the time had expired.

***"...Mr President, you and I should not now pull on the ends of the rope in which you have tied a knot of war, because the harder you and I pull, the tighter this knot will become."***<sup>107</sup>

***Friday, 26 October 1962***

Friday morning, Khrushchev authored a long, emotional, rambling ten-page letter to President Kennedy with the objective of informing Kennedy that a solution could be worked out. After he emotionally explained why the Soviets chose to support Cuba in their defense against the United States, and implored Kennedy to use his reason, Khrushchev offered this:

If the President and Government of the United States would give their assurances that the United States would itself not take part in an attack upon Cuba and would restrain others from such action; if you recall your Navy – this would immediately change everything... Then the question of armaments would also be obviated, because when there is not threat, armaments are only a burden for any people. This would also change the approach to the question of destroying not only the armaments which you call offensive, but of every other kind of armament...

Let us therefore display statesmanlike wisdom. I propose: we, for our part, will declare that our ships bound for Cuba are not carrying any armaments. You will declare that the United States will not invade Cuba with its troops (sic) and will not support any other forces which might intend to invade Cuba. Then the necessity for the presence of our military

specialists in Cuba will be obviated. ...Mr President, you and I should not now pull on the ends of the rope in which you have tied a knot of war, because the harder you and I pull, the tighter this knot will become.”<sup>108</sup>

This letter was delivered to the American Embassy at Moscow at 4:43 p.m. (9:43 a.m. in Washington) and transmission to the State Department began around 6:00 p.m. Washington time and was completed by 9:00 p.m. (4:00 a.m. Moscow time the following day). The olive branch was extended but it took almost twelve hours to be translated, transmitted, and reach the President.

Meanwhile, U Thant, not aware of the message from Khrushchev or the information that Khrushchev held regarding potential invasion, continued his efforts of diplomacy, this time with Castro. He wrote to Castro on the 26<sup>th</sup> to advise that Castro “can make a significant contribution to the peace of the world at this present critical juncture by directing that the construction and development of major military facilities and installations in Cuba... be suspended during the period of negotiations which are now under way.”<sup>109</sup> U Thant stalled to provide a more stable environment in which to conduct the negotiations.

Late that night, Castro wrote to Khrushchev. In his letter of 26 October, he was convinced that the American invasion was “almost imminent within the next 24 or 72 hours” and that “if they actually carry out the brutal act of invading Cuba... that would be the moment to eliminate such danger forever... however harsh and terrible the solution would be.”<sup>110</sup> This call seemed to be a request to Khrushchev to commit to a nuclear response should the Americans invade. This letter was communicated to Moscow early the next morning.

Cuba represented the unpredictable wild card in the crisis at this point. Castro determined that it would be better to martyr Cuba than to back down from the aggressor. From such a stand-point, no negotiation can occur. At that point, time had expired and a solution had to be found quickly to ensure war did not break out.

President Kennedy communicated with U Thant the same day an acceptance of U Thant's second proposal to avoid confrontation with Soviet ships in exchange for Soviet avoidance of the quarantine area. Kennedy expressed concern however, that some Soviet ships continued towards Cuba and he restated his "requirement that these offensive military systems in Cuba be withdrawn." Kennedy closed his letter by pointing out that work continues on the missile sites.<sup>111</sup>

Castro, further aggravated the situation by issuing orders to his general staff that, effective Saturday, 27 October, Cuban anti-aircraft batteries were authorized to fire on any breaches of Cuban airspace.<sup>112</sup> Castro represented the most dangerous participant in this crisis and this action threatened to upset the tenuous balance between the United States and the Soviet Union. To this point, the Soviets and the Cubans were passively defensive and no shots had been fired.

On Friday, 26 October, the Secretary General of the Cuban Communist Party, Blas Roca, spoke at Humboldt University in East Germany and declared that the United States has wrongly accused Cuba of threatening world peace and that the arms in Cuba are for defense "exclusively against North American aggression." He further said that "We can negotiate, and we are willing to negotiate," but stressed that Cubans would fight if "they push aside the hands that are stretched out toward them, then their hands must be

cut off.”<sup>113</sup> This seems to represent an opposition to Castro’s plan to martyr Cuba and suggests that such cavalier bravado may not be universal within Cuba’s leadership.

Ambassador Hare concurred with Ambassador Finletter’s response that removing the Jupiters from Turkey would damage US-Turkish relations as the Turks placed great confidence in the missiles. Hare encouraged solution to this crisis in a manner that would not bring the Turkish missiles into the picture and even presented as a course of action “dismantling of Jupiters...in... relationship to [the] Cuban situation... on a strictly secret basis with the Soviets.”<sup>114</sup> Interestingly, this letter, dated 26 October at 6:00 p.m. was not received at the State Department until 10:07 a.m. in Washington the following day.

In Cuba, Soviet General Pliyev had the authority to arm the tactical nuclear weapons and he reported that by the 26<sup>th</sup> all strategic weapons systems were operational. He did not give the order to arm any of the weapons, but it would only take three and a half hours to arm a missile and fuel it for launch.<sup>115</sup>

Friday morning, John Scali, Washington correspondent for ABC News, received a call from Feklisov asking for an urgent meeting. The two met near the Willard Hotel at 1:30 p.m. Scali told Feklisov that a landing in Cuba was imminent, and an offer was proposed. Though accounts differ as to which made the proposal, a three point plan was discussed: 1) Soviet missiles would be dismantled under UN supervision; 2) Castro would promise not to accept any more weapons; and 3) US would pledge not to invade Cuba.<sup>116</sup>

By that afternoon, Roger Hilsman was aware of the encounter and assumed that it was a backchannel message to the United States. He and Secretary Rusk agreed that if

this were a message, then quick response was required to ensure the Soviets knew the United States' government was considering it seriously.

Scali and Feklisov met for the second time that day at 7:30 p.m. (2:30 a.m. in Moscow on the 27<sup>th</sup>) near the Soviet embassy. Scali relayed that there were “real possibilities in this [proposal]” and that this could be worked out in the UN. Feklisov added a caveat about the UN watching US troop withdrawals, but Scali replied that he was not in a position to comment on this aspect.<sup>117</sup>

This may have been the most dangerous time of the conflict. The United States wanted to ensure that the Soviets were convinced that the US was willing to go to war over this issue, but would not do so recklessly. Scali relayed to Feklisov that the United States could agree to the Soviet demand that it pledge not to invade Cuba, but the missiles had to be removed. This represented the first time the two proposals from opposing sides were joined.

The next morning, the Executive Committee learned of the details of this second meeting as the 27 October letter from Khrushchev arrived at the State Department.

*“There is always some son of a bitch that doesn't get the word.”<sup>118</sup>*

*Saturday, 27 October 1962*

Around 9:00 a.m. in Washington, Radio Moscow (5:00 p.m. Moscow time) began broadcasting the letter that the American Embassy in Moscow just received. In this letter, Khrushchev made no reference to his earlier letter and instead publicly declared that “We are willing to remove from Cuba the means which you regard as offensive.” In exchange, Khrushchev asked that “the United States... will remove its analogous means from Turkey.” Further, Khrushchev promised to respect Turkish sovereignty and borders

and thus not to invade or threaten Turkey in exchange for similar pledges from the United States regarding Cuba. In a much more confident tone than his previous letter, he closed:

“All of this could possibly serve as a good impetus toward the finding of mutually acceptable agreements on other controversial issues on which you and I have been exchanging views. These issues have so far not been resolved, but they are awaiting urgent solution, which would clear up the international atmosphere. We are prepared for this.”<sup>119</sup>

This represented one last try by the Soviet Union to obtain some measure of negotiating success from this crisis.

After much debate within the Executive Committee, Kennedy replied to Khrushchev at 8:00 p.m. (4:00 a.m., 28 October in Moscow). In this letter, he made scant reference to the 27 October broadcast as he required that work must cease on the weapons sites in Cuba. Further, he gave Stevenson the authority to reach a settlement based on the 26 October letter, namely to remove the weapons from Cuba under UN supervision and in exchange the US would remove the quarantine and “give assurances against an invasion of Cuba.”

He noted Khrushchev’s proposal in his 27 October letter to reduce “other armaments” and indicated that the “United States is very much interested in reducing tensions and halting the arms race” but clarified that “cessation of work on missile sites in Cuba” is the “first ingredient.”<sup>120</sup>

Castro responded to U Thant’s letter of 26 October asking for cessation of work by declaring Cuba “would be prepared to accept the compromises that you request... provided that at the same time, while negotiations are in progress, the US govt (sic)

desists from threats and aggressive actions against Cuba including the naval blockade of our country.” Castro went further to invite U Thant to Cuba “should you consider it useful to the cause of peace.”<sup>121</sup>

Castro was not aware of the status of the negotiations between the United States and the Soviet Union. His actions and demands suggest he was hoping for a static situation in which he could leverage the crisis for a key concession – a pledge of non-hostility from the United States. The events that occurred beyond Castro’s purview precluded his ability to successfully leverage the situation.

Castro’s elevation of his air defense response capability led to the only direct casualty of the crisis and a potential catastrophe. Around noon in Cuba Major Rudolf Anderson was shot down in his U2 while conducting a photoreconnaissance mission. Anderson’s death prompted the military to call for retaliatory measures and represented the most tenuous time of the entire crisis.<sup>122</sup>

Further complicating the situation was the report from SAC that one of its U2 aircraft wandered into Soviet airspace off the coast of Alaska en route to the north pole to conduct “routine air sampling”. MIG fighters were scrambled to intercept and American escort fighters with nuclear tipped missiles rushed to the U2’s aid to escort it back to Alaska. Aware of the near miss that had just occurred, Kennedy quipped, “There is always some son-of-a-bitch who doesn’t get the word.”<sup>123</sup>

As the text of President’ Kennedy’s response to Khrushchev was being delivered, Robert Kennedy and Ambassador Dobrynin met at the Justice Department at 7:45 p.m. (2:45 a.m. in Moscow). In that meeting, Kennedy issued an ultimatum to Dobrynin, “We had to have a commitment by tomorrow that those bases would be removed.” Robert

Kennedy relayed the substantive parts of the letter being transmitted to Khrushchev and reiterated that Turkey was not a part of this deal. Kennedy opened a door however, by saying “President Kennedy had been anxious to remove those missiles from Turkey and Italy for a long period of time... it was our judgment that, within a short time after this crisis was over, those missiles would be gone.” Robert Kennedy stressed that “we needed an answer immediately from the Soviet Union. I said we must have it the next day.”<sup>124</sup>

Diplomatically, this was the endgame. The United States’ final offer was on the table and there was no more room for stalling. That point had to be relayed to Khrushchev clearly. Khrushchev had to respond quickly to prevent a catastrophe.

General Pliyev was aware that Castro ordered his air defense units to fire on US aircraft and that he believed an invasion was set for the next twenty-four hours. He informed the Soviet Ministry of Defense at 9:00 a.m. in Moscow (2:00 a.m. in Havana) that “We have decided that in the event of a U.S. air attack on our installations, we will employ all available means of air defense.” By 11:00 a.m. in Moscow, Malinovsky responded by saying “I propose to confirm” as he informed the Kremlin. At noon, Khrushchev approved the order.<sup>125</sup>

That afternoon in Moscow (morning in Cuba) the Presidium considered their military options and moved to relax the potential for mishap. Since 22 October, Pliyev had the authority to use tactical nuclear weapons to defend his forces. On 27 October, that was rescinded by the Presidium, “You are forbidden to apply nuclear warheads to FKR, Luna, Il-28s without authorization from Moscow.”

Also that afternoon, John Scali met again with Feklisov to inquire of him why there were confusing messages from the Soviet Union. Feklisov blamed it on communications problems and, according to Stern, “pleaded with Scali to persuade U.S. officials that the Soviet Union was serious about reaching a settlement.”<sup>126</sup>

***“Allow no one near the missiles. Obey no orders to launch and under no circumstances install the warheads.”<sup>127</sup>***

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At 5:00 p.m. Moscow time (9:00 a.m. in Washington)<sup>128</sup> Chairman Khrushchev broadcast his response over Radio Moscow.<sup>129</sup> In his response, he confirmed that he had issued orders to cease work on the sites and “to dismantle the arms which you described as offensive, and to crate and return them to the Soviet Union.” He appealed to President Kennedy not to support actions against Cuba and indicated that he would trust Kennedy’s 27 October pledge not to attack or invade Cuba or to support other countries in attacking Cuba. He reminded Kennedy of the dangers of reconnaissance over flights and indicated that, out of his concern for Russians in Cuba, “that violation of Cuban airspace by American planes could also lead to dangerous consequences. And if you do not want this to happen, it would be better if no cause is given for a dangerous situation to arise.”<sup>130</sup>

Khrushchev again used the Radio Moscow option to quickly relay his decision to the United States. Khrushchev was determined not to go to war over Cuba and he was convinced that the United States was prepared to go to war. He had to get the message of resolution through quickly. As the events of the 27<sup>th</sup> confirmed, there were too many opportunities for a mistake that could result in war. The decision not to go to war would do no good if it did not get to its recipient in time to resolve the crisis.

At the same time, Khrushchev asked Castro to refrain from provoking the Americans by continuing to shoot at their aircraft. Khrushchev said, “Therefore, I would like to advise you in a friendly manner to show patience, firmness and even more firmness.” He couched this request in terms that portray the settlement of the crisis in Cuba’s favor “creating a guarantee against the invasion of Cuba.”<sup>131</sup>

Khrushchev also forwarded a copy of the letter to Kennedy to U Thant with the information that Deputy Foreign Minister Kuznetsov would be leaving for the United Nations to coordinate the Soviet negotiations.<sup>132</sup>

At 5:03 p.m. in Washington (1:03 a.m., 29 October in Moscow) President Kennedy responded to Chairman Khrushchev welcoming the Chairman’s letter and expressing hope “that the necessary measures can at once be taken through the United Nations... so that the United States in turn can remove the quarantine measures now in effect.” Kennedy continued to express his desire to use this momentum to explore disarmament.

U Thant, for his part, welcomed the apparent resolution to the crisis and informed Khrushchev that he accepted Castro’s invitation to go to Cuba in the hopes that “at the present time such a visit could contribute to the peaceful solution of the problem.” He also indicated he would discuss “modalities of verification by the United Nations” with both Kuznetsov and Castro.<sup>133</sup>

Prime Minister Castro responded to U Thant and to the United Nations with a five point proposal declaring that Kennedy’s guarantees are “ineffective” unless the economic blockade is stopped, subversive activities are stopped, “piratical attacks” are stopped, airspace violations are stopped, and Guantanamo is abandoned by the United States and

returned to Cuba.<sup>134</sup> Castro's effort tried to leverage the crisis for Cuba's gain, this time adding a demand for the American's to abandon Guantanamo.

Castro also replied to Khrushchev and defended his actions to secure Cuban airspace and clearly stated his position on UN inspections: "I also wish to inform you that we are in principle opposed to an inspection of our territory."<sup>135</sup>

Secretary Rusk spoke to Latin American and OAS Ambassadors at 5:00 p.m. in Washington to update them on the situation. Rusk recounted the 26, 27, and 28 October letters from Khrushchev and highlighted that the United States rejected the notion of a Turkey for Cuba trade. He confirmed the decision not to "base any policy on Castro's broadcast today of five points," that the "US remains cautious". Rusk reaffirmed the United States' commitment to the OAS and hemispheric defense, and he delicately indicated that the assurance made by Kennedy not to invade Cuba "does not (rpt not) (sic) mean we [are] guaranteeing [the] Castro regime." Rusk confirmed that the quarantine would not end until verification had been completed and that the next steps lay with the acting Secretary General of the UN.<sup>136</sup>

General Pliyev had received his clear orders revoking the authority to fire the weapons with permission from Moscow. His new orders left nothing to chance, "Allow no one near the missiles. Obey no orders to launch and under no circumstances install the warheads."<sup>137</sup> The Soviet military forces were standing down.

At 11:35 a.m. the Joint Chiefs sent a telegram to the State Department indicating their knee-jerk reaction to the message from Moscow. In their message, "the JCS are of the opinion that this may be an insincere proposal to gain time. Hence, there should be no relaxation of alert procedures."<sup>138</sup>

At 1:54 p.m., however, the State Department received information that as of 12:20 p.m. the Joint Chiefs issued an order that “no forceful action or boarding of any... ships until further orders.”<sup>139</sup>

That evening, Scali met with Feklisov, “who reported, ‘I am under instructions to thank you. The information you provided Chairman Khrushchev was most helpful to him in making up his mind quickly. And that includes your explosion of Saturday.’”<sup>140</sup>

***“In the end, it was luck. We were this close to nuclear war, and luck prevented it.”<sup>141</sup>***

Time was the problem. It took time to receive information and decide on a reaction to it. It took critical time to convey information and decisions to all parties. With the risk of nuclear war evident, a miscommunication or mis-timing of information could have had disastrous effects.

The military constantly pressured the President for a decision to use force; the President and the Chairman did not want to act with force at all (though each was not confidently aware of the other’s intentions); and there was no time to pursue solution through normal diplomatic channels. Castro’s paranoia and willingness to be a martyr added additional constraints on time and elevated the risk of a catastrophic turn of events.

In response to the problem, Chairman Khrushchev imaginatively used the media to convey critical messages while Kennedy used back-channel communications to do the same. Both were forced to act creatively to ensure this crisis would not erupt into nuclear war. Secretary McNamara may have been right, it could have been luck that prevented nuclear war; luck certainly helped prevent an accident. Creativity and a determination to exhaust every option available short of war before committing to military action were the deciding factors.<sup>142</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Robert F. Kennedy, quoted on 16 October 1962 in Sheldon M. Stern, The Week the World Stood Still: Inside the Secret Cuban Missile Crisis (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005) 22.

<sup>2</sup> McGeorge Bundy, Danger and Survival: Choices About the Bomb in the First Fifty Years (New York: Vintage Books, 1990) 391 and Stern, The Week the World Stood Still, 38.

<sup>3</sup> Until 28 October, Washington, DC was at Daylight Savings Time(DST) (Greenwich Mean Time (GMT) – 4:00); on the 28<sup>th</sup> Washington, DC transitioned to Eastern Standard Time (GMT – 5:00); Moscow was at GMT + 3:00 throughout the crisis.

	Washington, DC	GMT	Moscow
Before 28 October	-4:00	0:00	+ 3:00
<i>example</i>	12:00	16:00	19:00
On 28 October	-5:00	0:00	+ 3:00
<i>example</i>	12:00	17:00	20:00

<sup>4</sup> Aleksandr Fursenko and Timothy Naftali, One Hell of A Gamble: Khrushchev, Castro, and Kennedy 1958-1864 (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1997) 234 and Bundy, Danger and Survival, 395.

<sup>5</sup> United States Marine Corps Emergency Actions Center, 15 October 1962 “Summary of Items of Significant Interest Period 140701 - 150700 October 1962” Originally Top Secret (Washington, DC: National Security Archives at George Washington University), DNSA Number: CC00608 <http://nsarchive.chadwyck.com>, 2 pp.

<sup>6</sup> United States Marine Corps Emergency Actions Center, 18 October 1962 “Summary of Items of Significant Interest Period 170701-180700 October 1962” Originally Top Secret (Washington, DC: National Security Archives at George Washington University), DNSA Number: CC00673 <http://nsarchive.chadwyck.com>, 3 pp.

On October 24, 2002, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld issued a memo directing that the use of the term CINC is reserved solely for the President of the United States and that the Combatant Commanders as outlined in the Goldwater-Nichols Defense Reorganization Act of 1986 would be called “Commanders” or “Combatant Commanders.”

<sup>7</sup> Chester Bowles, 13 October 1962 “Report Of Conversation With Ambassador Dobrynin On Saturday, October 13th, Regarding Cuba And Other Subjects,” Originally Secret, Department of State, Central Files, 601.6111/10-1562

<sup>8</sup> Robert F. Kennedy, 16 October 1962, “handwritten note on 16OCT1962 after 1800 EXCOMM Meeting” (Washington, DC: National Security Archives at George Washington University), DNSA Number: CC00620 <http://nsarchive.chadwyck.com>, 1 pp.

<sup>9</sup> Stern says RFK “suggested using the U.S. naval base at Guantanamo Bay to stage an incident justifying military intervention: “You know, sink the *Maine* again or something.” Stern, The Week the World Stood Still, 50.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 38-43

<sup>11</sup> Foy D. Kohler, 16 October 1962, “Report on Khrushchev-Kohler Meeting, October 16 (Part IV: Discussion of U-2, Cuban Fishing Port, Nuclear Test Ban and U.S. Elections) - In Two Sections,” Originally Secret (Washington, DC: National Security Archives at George Washington University), DNSA Number: CC00628 <http://nsarchive.chadwyck.com>, 6 pp.

<sup>12</sup> Fursenko and Naftali, One Hell of A Gamble, 182

Khrushchev later instructed Ambassador Dobrynin to tell the White House “[N]othing will be undertaken before the American Congressional elections that could complicate the international situation or aggravate the tension in the relations between our two countries.” *Ibid.*, 197

<sup>13</sup> Adlai S. Stevenson, 17 October 1962, “Letter From the Representative to the United Nations (Stevenson) to President Kennedy,” Originally Secret, Eyes Only, (Boston: Kennedy Library, National Security Files, Countries Series)

<sup>14</sup> Fursenko and Naftali, One Hell of A Gamble, 107; Stern, The Week the World Stood Still, 53

<sup>15</sup> Fursenko and Naftali, One Hell of A Gamble, 197

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<sup>16</sup>Dean Rusk, 18 October 1962, "Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko's Appointment with You on Thursday October 18," Originally Secret (Washington, DC: National Security Archives at George Washington University), DNSA Number: CC00665 <http://nsarchive.chadwyck.com>, 2 pp.

<sup>17</sup> Robert F. Kennedy, Thirteen Days: A Memoir of the Cuban Missile Crisis, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1971), 31

<sup>18</sup> Stern, The Week the World Stood Still, 65

<sup>19</sup> Leonard C. Meeker, 18 October 1962, "Legal Aspects of Declaring a Blockade of Cuba," Originally Top Secret (Washington, DC: National Security Archives at George Washington University), DNSA Number: CC00668 <http://nsarchive.chadwyck.com>, 6 pp.

<sup>20</sup> United States Marine Corps Emergency Actions Center, 19 October 1962 "Summary of Items of Significant Interest Period 180701-190700 October 1962" Originally Top Secret (Washington, DC: National Security Archives at George Washington University), DNSA Number: CC00618 <http://nsarchive.chadwyck.com>, 3 pp.

<sup>21</sup> Meeker, "Legal Aspects of Declaring a Blockade of Cuba,"

Full text of his concluding paragraphs follows:

1. There is no good legal basis for a United States Declaration of war against Cuba at the present time. Such a declaration would impair our legal position rather than improve it.

2. A blockade of Cuba undertaken unilaterally by the United States in the present circumstances would subject this country to very telling charges of violation of the United Nations Charter and illegal use of force. In this connection, it should be observed that the Monroe Doctrine was a statement of policy and did not create a special legal regime for the Western hemisphere in which the United States is entitled to depart from the ordinary rules. This was the view taken by Charles Evans Hughes 40 years ago when he was Secretary of State. Over many years the United States has sought to effectuate the policy of the Monroe Doctrine through agreed collective arrangements among the American Republics. This is the understanding of the great majority of them today, as well as the understanding of countries elsewhere in the world.

3. The use of armed force, through blockade, to stop a build-up of Communist offensive capabilities in Cuba, would have substantial though not conclusive legal support if it were backed by an OAS decision under Articles 6 and 8 of the Rio Treaty. Security Council authorization under Article 53 of the Charter would be unobtainable, but some argument could be made that such authorization was not necessary. We could prevent Council determination that it was necessary.

4. To secure a two-thirds vote in the OAS for a blockade of Cuba would clearly be very difficult. To the extent that we are able to furnish convincing evidence to the OAS members of what has been taking place in Cuba, we may be able to improve our prospects of getting such a vote. Moreover, it could be helpful if as a preparatory measure the OAS were to call upon Cuba itself to permit impartial international inspection to determine the exact character of military preparations in Cuba.

<sup>22</sup> John F. Kennedy, quoted by Stern, The Week the World Stood Still, 71

<sup>23</sup> Stern, The Week the World Stood Still, 67-71

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 72

<sup>25</sup> Unknown, 20 October 1962, "Proposed Changes in President's Message to Khrushchev," Originally Top Secret (Washington, DC: National Security Archives at George Washington University), DNSA Number: CC00714, <http://nsarchive.chadwyck.com>, 2 pp.

<sup>26</sup> Theodore Sorenson, 20 October 1962 "Draft U.N. Security Council Resolution Calling for the Demilitarization of Cuba," Originally Top Secret (Washington, DC: National Security Archives at George Washington University), DNSA Number: CC00710, <http://nsarchive.chadwyck.com>, 1 pp.

<sup>27</sup> Theodore Sorenson, 20 October 1962, "Tactics in the UN Security Council" Originally Top Secret (Washington, DC: National Security Archives at George Washington University), DNSA Number: CC00707, <http://nsarchive.chadwyck.com>, 3 pp.

<sup>28</sup> On 25 October 1962, *Washington Post* Correspondent Walter Lippmann suggests a "face-saving" alternative in trading missiles in Turkey for missiles in Cuba. Khrushchev believed that this was a feeler submitted by Kennedy contributed to Khrushchev's addition a Turkey-for-Cuba trade proposal to his 27

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October 1962 message to Kennedy. Walter Lippmann, "Today and Tomorrow," The Washington Post 25 October 1962

<sup>29</sup> Robert F. Kennedy, Thirteen Days, 37-38

<sup>30</sup> United States Joint Chiefs of Staff, 14 August 1964, Enclosure A: Historical Analysis of Command and Control Actions in the 1962 Cuban Crisis, C&C Internal Memorandum No. 40, 3<sup>rd</sup> Draft, Originally Top Secret (Washington, DC: Department of Defense), [http://www.dod.mil/pubs/foi/reading\\_room/979-4.pdf](http://www.dod.mil/pubs/foi/reading_room/979-4.pdf), 93

<sup>31</sup> United States Joint Chiefs of Staff, 21 December 1962, "Chronology of JCS decisions concerning the Cuban Crisis," Originally Top Secret (Washington, DC: National Security Archives at George Washington University), DNSA Number: CC02780, <http://nsarchive.chadwyck.com>, 139 pp.

<sup>32</sup> Donald M. Wilson, 20 October 1962, "Psychological Program," Originally Top Secret (Washington, DC: National Security Archives at George Washington University), DNSA Number: CC00730, <http://nsarchive.chadwyck.com>, 2 pp.

<sup>33</sup> Donald M. Wilson, 20 October 1962, "Radio Propaganda Plan," Originally Top Secret (Washington, DC: National Security Archives at George Washington University), DNSA Number: CC00731, <http://nsarchive.chadwyck.com>, 3 pp.

(excerpt below)

1. WGBS Miami. Owned by George B. Storer, Jr. and linked to the CBS network. This station already broadcasts two hours a day in Spanish [excised text] The station is capable of broadcasting at 50 Kilowatts but only broadcasts at 10 kw at night because it is on the same frequency as WOR in New York. We would propose that the station be upped to 50 kw for all nighttime broadcasting and that WOR would be asked to cooperate during the period of the emergency. We know from the systematic questioning of Cuban refugees that WGBS already has a good listenership in Cuba.
2. WMIE Miami. Owned by E. D. Rivers, Sr. This station also has a Spanish program on late at night and early in the morning [excised text]. Although the strength of this station is only 5 kw at night, it has a small following in Cuba at this time. Its power should also be upped to 10 kw at night.
3. WSB Atlanta. Owned by the Cox Chain with Leonard Reinsch as Executive Director, This is a 50 kw clear channel station.
4. WWL New Orleans. Owned by Loyola University. Rev. W. Patrick Donnelly, President. This is a 50 kw clear channel station.
5. WKWF Kev West. 1/2 kw. Owned by John M. Spottswood. [excised text] some Spanish broadcasting late at night. Even though it has a rather small audience in Cuba, it should still be utilized in this plan because of that.
6. WRUL. Headquarters in New York and bought in the last few days by the Mormon Church. It is a short wave broadcasting facility. It currently broadcasts in Spanish to Cuba [excised text]. It has the second largest audience in Cuba after VOA according to refugee interviews at Opa Locka. We would recommend that WRUL carry the VOA programming 24 hours a day.
7. Armed Forces Radio Guantanamo Bay. This equipment, used for broadcasting on the Guantanamo Base, could easily pick up the short wave VOA show and relay it live. We believe it would probably attract a considerable listenership in the Santiago area. Undoubtedly the local base might want to interrupt the Spanish program from time to time with English news for the American military listeners.
8. Radio Americas - formerly called Radio Swan [excised text] In an effort of this type, uniformity is essential and therefore, we would advocate Radio Americas pick up and rebroadcast the entire VOA program.

<sup>34</sup> GRU Report of 20 October quoted in Fursenko and Naftali, , One Hell of A Gamble, 237

<sup>35</sup> Digital National Security Archive Timeline, "11:00 a.m. entry for Sunday, October 21, 1962," Secret (Washington, DC: National Security Archives at George Washington University), Cuban Missile Crisis Timeline, <http://nsarchive.chadwyck.com>

<sup>36</sup> Dean Rusk, 21 October 1962, "Text of Message from Kennedy to Khrushchev to Be Delivered by Foy Kohler One Hour Prior to Kennedy's Speech on Cuba," Originally Top Secret (Washington, DC: National Security Archives at George Washington University), DNSA Number: CC00746, <http://nsarchive.chadwyck.com>, 3 pp.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> United States Department of State, 21 October 1962, "Transmittal of Suggested Draft Resolution and Authorization to Submit Resolution to U.N. Security Council," Originally Top Secret, (Washington, DC: National Security Archives at George Washington University), DNSA Number: CC00739, <http://nsarchive.chadwyck.com>, 2 pp.

<sup>39</sup> Dean Rusk, 21 October 1962, "Instructions to Brief Foreign Minister and Chief of State on the Situation in Cuba upon Receipt of the "Go" Signal," Originally Top Secret, (Washington, DC: National Security Archives at George Washington University), DNSA Number: CC00741, <http://nsarchive.chadwyck.com>, 5 pp.

<sup>40</sup> McGeorge Bundy, 21 October 1962 "Minutes of the 506<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the National Security Council," Originally Top Secret (Boston: Kennedy Library, National Security Files, Meetings and Memoranda Series, NSC Meetings) Foreign Relations of the United States 1961-63 Volume XI, [http://www.state.gov/www/about\\_state/history/frusXI/index.html](http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/frusXI/index.html), #38

<sup>41</sup> Fursenko and Naftali, One Hell of A Gamble, 237

<sup>42</sup> Khrushchev, quoted in Fursenko and Naftali, One Hell of A Gamble, 241

<sup>43</sup> Digital National Security Archive Timeline, "12:00 noon entry for Monday, 22 October 1962," Secret (Washington, DC: National Security Archives at George Washington University), Cuban Missile Crisis Timeline, <http://nsarchive.chadwyck.com>

<sup>44</sup> John F. Kennedy, 22 October 1962, "National Security Action Memorandum 196," (Boston: Kennedy Library, National Security Files, Meetings and Memoranda Series, NSAMS) Foreign Relations of the United States 1961-63 Volume XI, [http://www.state.gov/www/about\\_state/history/frusXI/index.html](http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/frusXI/index.html), #42

<sup>45</sup> Digital National Security Archive Timeline, "3:00 p.m. entry for Monday, 22 October 1962," Secret (Washington, DC: National Security Archives at George Washington University), Cuban Missile Crisis Timeline, <http://nsarchive.chadwyck.com>

<sup>46</sup> John McCone, 24 October 1962, "Leadership meeting on October 22<sup>nd</sup> at 5:00 p.m.," Originally Top Secret, Eyes Only (Washington, DC: Central Intelligence Agency, DCI/McCone Files, Job 80-B01285A, Meetings with the President) Foreign Relations of the United States 1961-63 Volume XI, [http://www.state.gov/www/about\\_state/history/frusXI/index.html](http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/frusXI/index.html), #43

<sup>47</sup> John F. Kennedy, 22 October 1962, "Letter From President Kennedy to Chairman Khrushchev," (Washington, DC: Department of State, Presidential Correspondence: Lot 77 D 163) Foreign Relations of the United States 1961-63 Volume XI, [http://www.state.gov/www/about\\_state/history/frusXI/index.html](http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/frusXI/index.html), #44

<sup>48</sup> Dean Rusk, 22 October 1962, "Message from President Kennedy to Heads of State," Originally Confidential, (Washington, DC: National Security Archives at George Washington University), DNSA Number: CC00790, <http://nsarchive.chadwyck.com>, 3 pp.

<sup>49</sup> United States Department of State, 22 October 1962, "Talking Points – Ambassadorial Briefings," Originally Top Secret (Washington, DC: National Security Archives at George Washington University), DNSA Number: CC00814, <http://nsarchive.chadwyck.com>, 4 pp.

United States Department of State, 22 October 1962 "U.S. Embassies in Soviet Bloc Nations Not to Brief Heads of Government on Kennedy's Speech," Originally Secret (Washington, DC: National Security Archives at George Washington University), DNSA Number: CC00798, <http://nsarchive.chadwyck.com>, 1 pp.

<sup>50</sup> John F. Kennedy, 22 October 1962, "Address by President Kennedy, October 22, 1962," (Washington, DC: National Security Archives at George Washington University), DNSA Number: CC00847, <http://nsarchive.chadwyck.com>, 5 pp.

<sup>51</sup> Fursenko and Naftali, One Hell of A Gamble, 240-241

<sup>52</sup> Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, 8 September 1962, "USSR, draft directive, Directive to the Commander of Soviet Forces in Cuba on transfer of Il-28s and Luna Missiles, and Authority on Use of Tactical Nuclear Weapons, September 8, 1962," Draft Directive (Washington, DC: National Security Archives at George Washington University), [http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/nsa/cuba\\_mis\\_cri/docs.htm](http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/nsa/cuba_mis_cri/docs.htm), 2 pp.

<sup>53</sup> Fursenko and Naftali, One Hell of A Gamble, 242-243

<sup>54</sup> Allen P. Ward, 22 October 1962, "United States Request That a Meeting of the OAS As an Organ of Consultation Be Convened to Consider the Cuban Situation," (Washington, DC: National Security

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Archives at George Washington University), DNSA Number: CC00773, <http://nsarchive.chadwyck.com>, 3 pp.

<sup>55</sup> Dean Rusk, 22 October 1962, "Brief Summary of Dean Rusk-Anatoly Dobrynin Meeting on October 22 Prior to President Kennedy's Speech on the Cuban Crisis," Originally Confidential (Washington, DC: National Security Archives at George Washington University), DNSA Number: CC00806, <http://nsarchive.chadwyck.com>, 2 pp.

<sup>56</sup> Adlai E. Stevenson, 22 October 1962, "Letter Delivered to Valerian Zorin As Acting President of the U.N. Security Council Requesting a Meeting of the Security Council and Transmitting a Draft U.S. Resolution," (Washington, DC: National Security Archives at George Washington University), DNSA Number: CC00809, <http://nsarchive.chadwyck.com>, 3 pp.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Mario Garcia Inchaustegui, 22 October 1962, "Cuban Request That a Meeting of the U.N. Security Council Be Convened on the Cuban Situation," (Washington, DC: National Security Archives at George Washington University), DNSA Number: CC00774, <http://nsarchive.chadwyck.com>, 1 pp.

<sup>59</sup> Robert S. McNamara, 22 October 1962, "Defense Department Background Briefing on Cuban Situation" (Washington, DC: National Security Archives at George Washington University), DNSA Number: CC00779, <http://nsarchive.chadwyck.com>, 43 pp.

<sup>60</sup> United States Marine Corps Emergency Actions Center, 23 October 1962 "Summary of Items of Significant Interest Period 220701-230700 October 1962" Originally Top Secret (Washington, DC: National Security Archives at George Washington University), DNSA Number: CC00949 <http://nsarchive.chadwyck.com>, 7 pp.

<sup>61</sup> United States Joint Chiefs of Staff, 22 October 1962, "DEFCON 3 Established for U.S. Forces Worldwide Effective 22 October at 2300 Hours Due to the Cuban Situation" (Washington, DC: National Security Archives at George Washington University), DNSA Number: CC00833, <http://nsarchive.chadwyck.com>, 1 pp.

<sup>62</sup> United States Marine Corps Emergency Actions Center, 23 October 1962 "Summary of Items of Significant Interest Period 220701-230700 October 1962"

<sup>63</sup> Thomas K. Finletter, 22 October 1962, "Lauris Norstad Not Ordering U.S. Forces in Europe to DEFCON 3," Originally Secret (Washington, DC: National Security Archives at George Washington University), DNSA Number: CC00837, <http://nsarchive.chadwyck.com>, 1 pp.

<sup>64</sup> Fidel Ruz Castro, 23 October 1962, "Statement by Castro Rejecting the Possibility of Inspection and Noting That Cuba Has Taken Measures to Repel a United States Attack" (Washington, DC: National Security Archives at George Washington University), DNSA Number: CC00888, <http://nsarchive.chadwyck.com>, 1 pp.

<sup>65</sup> Foy D. Kohler, 23 October 1962, "Report on Meeting between Ambassador Foy Kohler and Foreign Minister Vasily Kuznetsov in Which Kuznetsov Delivered Khrushchev's October 23 Letter to President Kennedy," Originally Secret (Washington, DC: National Security Archives at George Washington University), DNSA Number: CC01066, <http://nsarchive.chadwyck.com>, 2 pp.

<sup>66</sup> Nikita S. Khrushchev, 23 October 1962, "Khrushchev's Message to President Kennedy of October 23, 1962," Originally Secret (Washington, DC: National Security Archives at George Washington University), DNSA Number: CC00896, <http://nsarchive.chadwyck.com>, 2 pp.

<sup>67</sup> Fursenko and Naftali, *One Hell of A Gamble*, 248

<sup>68</sup> Fidel Ruz Castro, 23 October 1962, "Statement by Castro Rejecting the Possibility of Inspection and Noting That Cuba Has Taken Measures to Repel a United States Attack" (Washington, DC: National Security Archives at George Washington University), DNSA Number: CC00888, <http://nsarchive.chadwyck.com>, 1 pp.

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- <sup>129</sup> According to Stern, "The Kremlin had received a report from the Soviet embassy in Washington that President Kennedy had scheduled a television address on Sunday afternoon – presumably to announce an invasion of Cuba. In fact, the broadcast was a repeat of JFK's October 22 speech, but Soviet leaders had little understanding of a free media and assumed that the telecast of a presidential speech had originated at the highest governmental levels. Khrushchev therefore decided to broadcast his message immediately over Moscow radio." Stern, The Week the World Stood Still, 195
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