

100-118-628

NSC 117-1  
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The President opened the meeting by asking Secretary Rusk to read the attached message from Prime Minister Macmillan which had just been received. Secretary Rusk observed that for a first reaction to information of our proposed blockade it was not bad. He added that it was comforting to learn that the British Prime Minister had not thought of anything we hadn't thought of.

The President commented that the Prime Minister's message contained the best argument for taking no action. What we now need are strong arguments to explain why we have to act as we are acting.

[ ]

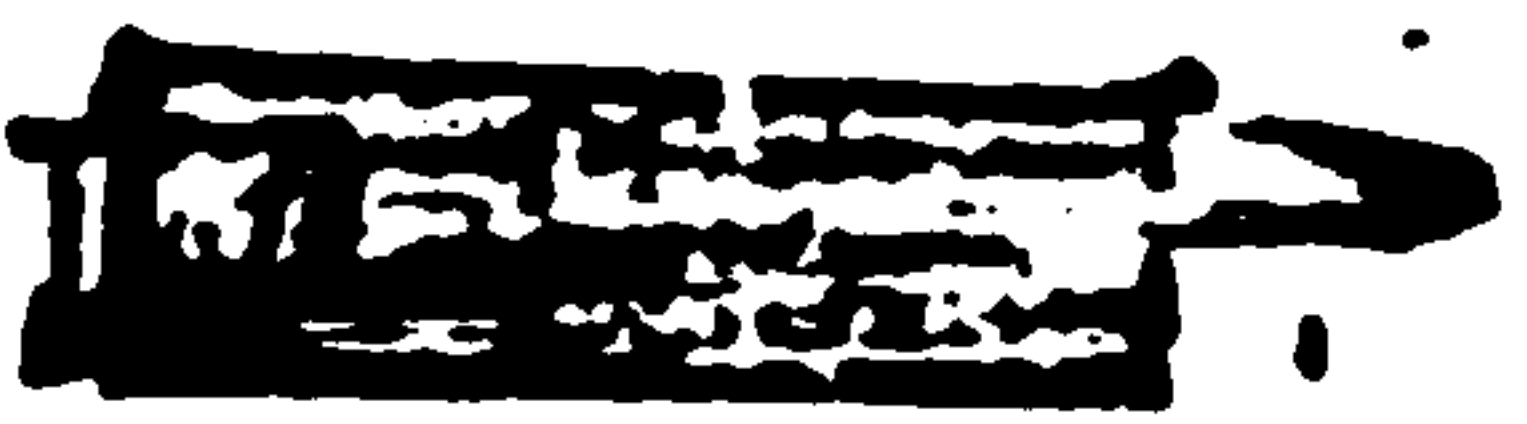
Mr. Salinger reported that Gromyko had departed from New York without making other than a usual departure statement containing nothing about Cuba.

Secretary Rusk said the Department had decided to hold off calling a Security Council meeting despite the possibility that the Russians might ask one first. The basis of this decision was that we would have to name Cuba in the documents requesting the Security Council meeting and this we did not wish to do.

[ ]

He also mentioned that the London Evening Standard had printed a great deal of information about the existence of Soviet strategic missiles in Cuba.

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NSC 117-1 (NLK-78-628)  
BY MLM NARS, DATE 10/1/81

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In response to a suggestion by Mr. Bundy, the President outlined the manner in which he expected Council Members to deal with the domestic aspects of the current situation. He said everyone should sing one song in order to make clear that there was now no difference among his advisers as to the proper course to follow. He pointed out the importance of fully supporting the course of action chosen which, in his view, represented a reasonable consensus. Any course is extremely troublesome and, as in the case of the Berlin wall, we are once again confronted with a difficult choice. If we undertake a tricky and unsatisfactory course, we do not even have the satisfaction of knowing what would have happened if we had acted differently. He mentioned that former Presidents, Eisenhower, Truman and Hoover had supported his decision during telephone conversations with each of them earlier in the day.

The President then summarized the arguments as to why we must act. We must reply to those whose reaction to the blockade would be to ask what had changed in view of the fact that we had been living in the past years under a threat of a missile nuclear attack by the USSR.

a. In September we had said we would react if certain actions were taken in Cuba. We have to carry out commitments which we had made publicly at that time.

b. The secret deployment by the Russians of strategic missiles to Cuba was such a complete change in their previous policy of not deploying such missiles outside the USSR that if we took no action in this case, we would convey to the Russians an impression that we would never act, no matter what they did anywhere.

c.

d. The effect in Latin America would be very harmful to our interests if, by our failure to act, we gave the Latinos the impression that the Soviets were increasing their world position while ours was decreasing.

~~TOP SECRET~~



Two questions were raised which the President hoped would be discussed and settled the following day:

- a. What is our response if one of our U-2 planes is shot down by a SAM missile?
- b. If the missile development in Cuba continues, what is our next course of action?

The President concluded by acknowledging the difficulties which he was asking the military to accept because of the necessity of our taking action which warned Cuba of the possibility of an invasion.

Secretary Rusk commented that if anyone thought our response was weak, they were wrong because he believed that a "flaming crisis" was immediately ahead of us.

The President read from a list of questions and suggested answers which might be made public. The first question was why we had not acted earlier. The response is that we needed more evidence of the existence of Soviet strategic missiles in Cuba. This additional evidence was required in order to gain the necessary fourteen votes in the OAS. ✓

Earlier action would undoubtedly have forced us to declare war on Cuba and this action, without the evidence we now have, would have thrown Latin American support to Castro.

There followed a discussion of why evidence of Soviet missiles was lacking. Information about the strategic missile sites was reported by the refugees but these reports could not be substantiated from aerial photography. ✓


It was not until October 14th that photographic evidence of the sites and missiles was available. The cloud cover prevented photography for a period of time. ✓

Mr. McCone

felt that the information given to Senator Keating about the missile sites had come from refugee sources, which he had accepted without further substantiation. The Attorney General pointed out that construction at the missile sites was not far enough along to have been detected by photography much earlier than October 14. It was pointed out that all Soviet experts agreed that Khrushchev would not send strategic missiles to Cuba. Therefore, there was a tendency to downgrade the refugee reports.

Commenting on what should be said publicly about our actions in Cuba, Secretary Rusk cautioned that we should say nothing now which might tie our hands later in the event we wanted to take additional actions.

General Taylor asked how we should reply to the question: Are we preparing to invade? The President responded by saying that we should ask the press not to push this line of questioning and to





accept our statement that we are taking all precautionary moves in anticipation of any contingency. Secretary McNamara agreed that we should say that the Defense Department had been ordered to be prepared for any contingency and that we were not now ready to say anything more than was in the President's speech.

It was agreed that no reserves would be called today, but that a review would be made tonight as to the necessity of such action.

Acting Secretary Fowler raised several questions involving domestic controls, including gold transfers, foreign exchange controls, and control of the stock market. He said, in response to the President's question, that another look would be taken the following day before any recommendation would be made as to closing the stock market.

Portion of the NSC Meeting Minutes, Monday, October 22, 1962

*at Assembly 7:00*  
*at Assembly*

