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THE KENNEDYS AND CUBA

*The Declassified
Documentary History*

EDITED WITH COMMENTARY BY

Mark J. White



Ivan R. Dee

CHICAGO 1999

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The Kennedys and Cuba

The abortive U.S. invasion of Cuba at the Bay of Pigs in 1961 and the Cuban missile crisis the following year were two of the most important moments in American foreign policy in the twentieth century. They were also early hallmarks of the presidency of John F. Kennedy in which his brother Robert played key roles. The involvement of the Kennedys with Fidel Castro's Cuba began in JFK's earliest days in the White House and extended until well after the missile crisis, almost until the assassination in Dallas.

In this intriguing assemblage of documents, drawn from the State Department, the Kennedy Library, private papers, and the Assassination Records Review Board, and including newly released materials, Mark White traces the attitudes and actions of the Kennedys in their fateful dealings with Castro and Cuba. In his selection and commentary, Mr. White has constructed a virtual narrative which allows the reader to see, through the documents, how the story developed. It becomes clear that the Kennedys' fervent desire was to oust Castro by any means possible short of all-out war. Yet in JFK's last days, as Mr. White reveals, the United States signaled what seemed to be a move toward rapprochement.

In his introduction, Mr. White traces history's changing opinion of the Kennedys' handling of Castro, from the high praise of Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., and Theodore C. Sorensen in the 1960s to the sharp criticism of Thomas Reeves in the 1970s. A more balanced view has now emerged, but interpretations remain divided. Mr. White himself finds particularly disappointing the "myopia of the Kennedy team" in considering how their anti-Castro policies would be viewed in Havana and Moscow.

(continued on back flap)

(continued from front flap)

The Kennedys and Cuba will allow the reader to become a historian, deriving his or her own interpretation from the raw data provided by Mr. White. This is an important record of one of America's thorniest and most persistent foreign policy problems.



Mark J. White is Lecturer in American History at Queen Mary and Westfield College, University of London. He was born in Holbrook, England, and studied at the University of Nottingham, the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, and Rutgers University, where he received a Ph.D. in history. He has written widely on American foreign policy and is the author of *Missiles in Cuba* and *The Cuban Missile Crisis*, and editor of *Kennedy: The New Frontier Revisited*.

Jacket design by Richard Rossiter

Jacket photographs: John and Robert Kennedy, UPI/Corbis Bettmann; Fidel Castro, Archive Photos



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PART 5

Loose Ends

AFTER OCTOBER 28, 1962, the world no longer teetered on the brink of war. But the period until early January 1963, and particularly the first month after the October crisis, remained tense. The settlement of the missile crisis, forged by JFK and Khrushchev on October 27 and 28, remained to be implemented. And that proved to be no easy task.

The superpowers had to answer a cluster of questions during this period. How could Soviet withdrawal of the nuclear missiles from Cuba be verified, given that Castro would not permit UN observers on Cuban soil? Would Khrushchev accept President Kennedy's demand that IL-28 bombers, as well as the missiles, be removed? Would Kennedy make an explicit, official promise not to invade Cuba, as Khrushchev insisted? Could the superpowers reach an agreement at the United Nations, codifying the commitments they had made at the end of the missile crisis?

The documents in this chapter relate chiefly to the roles played by John and Robert Kennedy. Much of the intense correspondence between JFK and Khrushchev is included, as are records of clandestine meetings between Robert Kennedy and Dobrynin, used by their leaders as intermediaries during these weeks. Instructions sent by JFK to United Nations negotiators in New York are also included, as are some records of ExComm meetings.

These documents demonstrate an emerging ambivalence on the part of the Kennedys toward the Cuban issue and the cold war in general. On the one hand, the pre-crisis notion that the United States must work for the overthrow of Castro had not been completely discarded, as indicated by the Kennedys' reluctance to offer the Russians an explicit promise not to invade Cuba. On the other hand,

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after the missile crisis there were signs that John and Robert Kennedy were deeply troubled by how close they had come to war in October 1962. Hence they were ready to embrace a more conciliatory approach to cold war issues.

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1. Telegram from Ambassador Dobrynin to the Soviet Foreign Ministry

After the missile crisis, Robert Kennedy and the Soviet ambassador in Washington continued the clandestine dialogue they had developed. Here Bobby Kennedy insists that the part of the settlement relating to the removal of the Jupiter missiles from Turkey be kept secret.

October 30, 1962.

Today Robert Kennedy invited me to meet with him. He said that he would like to talk about N. S. Khrushchev's letter to the President yesterday.¹

The President, Robert Kennedy said, confirms the understanding with N. S. Khrushchev on the elimination of the American missile bases in Turkey. Corresponding measures will be taken towards fulfilling this understanding within the period of time indicated earlier, in confidential observance of NATO guidelines, but of course without any mention that this is connected to the Cuban events.

We, however, said Robert Kennedy, are not prepared to formulate such an understanding in the form of letters, even the most confidential letters, between the President and the head of the Soviet government when it concerns such a highly delicate issue. Speaking in all candor, I myself, for example, do not want to risk getting involved in the transmission of this sort of letter, since who knows where and when such letters can surface or be somehow published—not now, but in the future—and any changes in the course of events are possible. The appearance of such a document could cause irreparable harm to my political career in the future. This is why we request that you take this letter back.²

It is possible, Robert Kennedy continued, that you do not believe us and through letters you want to put the understanding in writing. The issue of Soviet

¹Dobrynin had provided Robert Kennedy on October 29 with a message from Khrushchev to JFK that sought to formalize the secret component of the settlement to the missile crisis, namely the removal of the Jupiters from Turkey.

²Bobby Kennedy did return Khrushchev's October 29 message to Dobrynin on this occasion, making clear that the Kennedy administration would not acknowledge the withdrawal of the Jupiters as a formal part of the settlement.

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missile bases in Cuba has unfortunately introduced a real element of uncertainty and suspicion even into confidential channels of contact. We will however live up to our promise, even if it is given in this oral form. As you know, it was in precisely the same oral form that the President made his promise to N. S. Khrushchev regarding the removal of a certain number of American soldiers from Thailand.³ That promise was kept. So too will this promise be kept.

As a guarantee, Robert Kennedy added, I can only give you my word. Moreover I can tell you that two other people besides the President know about the existing understanding: they are [Secretary of State Dean] Rusk and [adviser on Soviet affairs Llewellyn] Thompson. If you do not believe me, discuss it with them, and they will tell you the same thing. But it is better not to transfer this understanding into a formal, albeit confidential, exchange of letters (as can be noted, the greatest suspicion in the two Kennedy brothers was elicited by the part of Khrushchev's letter which speaks directly of a link between the Cuban events and the bases in Turkey). We hope that N. S. Khrushchev will understand us correctly. In regard to this Robert Kennedy insistently asked to take the letter back without delay.

I told Robert Kennedy that everything said above I would report to N. S. Khrushchev, emphasizing in doing so that even the President and he, Robert Kennedy, could be sure of the fact that the Soviet government is regarding the understanding that has been reached as strictly secret and not for publication. At the same time, in order to confirm Robert Kennedy's statement about the understanding, I asked him again about whether the President really confirms the understanding with N. S. Khrushchev on the elimination of American missile bases in Turkey. Robert Kennedy said once again that he confirmed it, and again that he hoped that their motivations would be properly understood in Moscow. Taking what they explained into account, I believed it conditionally possible—before receiving any instructions from Moscow—to take this letter [back], since a categorical refusal to do so would, in my opinion, only weaken Robert Kennedy's firm statements on the understanding that has been reached. Moreover, leaving the letter with him, after he had clearly expressed the President's desire not to exchange letters, could scarcely be in the interests of doing business [in the future].

In conclusion Robert Kennedy said that, in his opinion, the events connected with the Cuban issue have been developing quite favorably, and that he hoped that everything would eventually be settled. He added that, on the Turkish issue and other highly confidential issues he was prepared to maintain a direct contact with me as earlier, emphasizing in doing so that the point was the possible oral considerations of the President and the head of the Soviet government N. S. Khrushchev on the exchange of letters on such delicate issues as missile bases in Turkey, or issues which need to be handled more by the State Department than by him personally, taking into account the delicacy of his situation as the President's brother and as Attorney General of the United States. I

³Following a request from Khrushchev transmitted by KGB official Georgi Bolshakov to Robert Kennedy in June 1962, JFK agreed to remove the American troops that had been dispatched to Thailand in May 1962 in response to an assault by Communist forces in Laos.

do not want, Robert Kennedy added, to claim for myself the function of the State Department, but my "solitary diplomacy" may be needed several more times, and we will [be] meeting with each other periodically.

I answered to Robert Kennedy that I was prepared to maintain contact with him on highly important issues in the future, passing over the heads, as he himself suggested, of all intermediaries. Robert Kennedy confirmed this. From what Robert Kennedy said it was clear that the President is trying now to avoid exchanging any documents on issues of a highly delicate nature like Turkey which could leave a trace anywhere, but that he favors the continuation of a confidential exchange of opinions between the heads of the two governments.

We believe it expedient to visit Robert Kennedy once again and to issue a statement, in referring to our mission, that the Soviet government and N. S. Khrushchev personally are prepared to take into account the President's desire for maintaining the secrecy of the oral understanding on the removal of the American missile bases from Turkey. It is also expedient to tell of our willingness, if the President is also prepared for this, to continue the confidential exchange of opinions between the heads of the governments on many important unresolved issues, on whose resolution the lessing of international tension, and of the tension between our two countries in particular, is to a very great degree dependent.

2. Telegram from Soviet Official Georgy Zhukov to Moscow

Using a different pair of intermediaries, JFK tells Khrushchev that he must receive evidence that the missiles are being withdrawn from Cuba, but also optimistically predicts that the removal of these nuclear weapons will usher in a harmonious phase in Soviet-American relations.

November 1, 1962.

I am reporting about a meeting with [White House Press Secretary Pierre] Salinger on 31 October.

1. Salinger requested that I pass on to N. S. Khrushchev that Kennedy is thankful to him for the decision which he made to dismantle and remove the missiles, and expresses his confidence that the agreement which was reached, built on mutual trust, will open the way to the resolution of other ripe problems. "The President does not want to portray the matter as if we won a victory over the USSR," said Salinger. His version for the press is exactly reflected in [*New York Times* correspondent James] Reston's article of 29 October. Kennedy de-

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clared to the members of the government that it makes no sense to try to use the situation that developed to Khrushchev's detriment. In this spirit, Rusk conducted talks with 50 of the most prominent and trusted observers in the USA and allied countries.

2. Kennedy, in Salinger's words, is now extremely preoccupied with somehow disarming his adversaries, who are asserting that he has once again "fallen into a trap. . . ." We must, he said, no matter what, publish evidence that the missiles have been dismantled and taken away. Let it be representatives of the UN or of the Red Cross, let it be observation photos taken from the air, it is all the same to us. In this regard we are not demanding access to the missiles themselves, they really are secret. We must publish evidence that they are no longer on the launching pads and that they have been taken away.

3. Kennedy, in Salinger's words, as in the past is under strong pressure from the "right-wingers," who are condemning him for the fact that he, for the first time in the history of the Western hemisphere has given a guarantee for the permanent preservation of a "Communist preserve" by the shores of the USA. In order to deflect these attacks, Kennedy must receive evidence to the effect that Castro has no "offensive" weapons.

4. Kennedy, as Salinger asserts, believes that achieving a resolution to the Cuban crisis "will open a completely new epoch in Soviet-American relations," when mutual trust will become the "basis of everything." One of the first issues to be resolved can and must be the issue of a [nuclear] test ban.

5. Regarding a meeting between Kennedy and Khrushchev, before the Cuban crisis a majority of members of the government spoke out against such a contact, although it had been publicly stated that Kennedy will meet with Khrushchev if he comes to the General Assembly. Kennedy himself had doubted that this meeting will bring any sort of positive results.

"Now—said Salinger—the situation has changed. The Cuban crisis showed that the issues on which the improvement of Soviet-American relations depends must be resolved urgently. Therefore, it will be necessary to review the position in relation to a meeting in light of the results of the settlement of the crisis. We were too close to war for it to be possible to forget about this and to allow ourselves to delay even longer in reaching a resolution to the problems which have become urgent. However, the President still does not have a prepared decision about the expediency of a meeting and about the issues which should be considered. We still have to think about that." . . .

7. Salinger stressed that even with all the "shortcomings" of Kennedy and Khrushchev's Vienna meeting,¹ it had given a positive result, at least insofar as on the basis of the agreement that had been achieved there the Laos problem had been settled,² which prompted confidence that it is possible to develop our relations on the basis of trust. For precisely this reason Kennedy had withdrawn the forces from Thailand.³

¹In June 1961.

²See Chapter 4, Document 6, footnote 3.

³See Document 1, footnote 3.

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"The Cuban crisis undermined this development of relations, but Khrushchev's wise decision may put the development of Soviet-American relations onto a basis of mutual trust," said Salinger. . . .

3. Telegram from Ambassador Dobrynin to the Soviet Foreign Ministry

In another tête-à-tête between Robert Kennedy and Dobrynin on the withdrawal of Russian missiles from Cuba, the crucial issue of verification is explored.

November 1, 1962.

[. . . Dobrynin] expressed the hope, in accordance with the letter sent by N. S. Khrushchev,¹ that the USA would renounce the quarantine without waiting for the introduction of a supplementary procedure for inspecting ships, and so on.

Robert Kennedy has said that this issue does not represent any difficulties. The important thing for us now (he implied that he was talking about public opinion, rather than the thoughts of the President himself), is to have some confirmation, from the UN for example, that the Soviet bases are being dismantled, and that the corresponding missile weaponry is being removed.

We and the USA government have essentially two possible courses of actions in this matter: first, to carry out reconnaissance flights over Cuba. But this entails the danger that the Cubans (he emphasized the Cubans, and not the Russians) may shoot down an American plane, and thus a possible new and highly undesirable chain reaction of events in the Cuban affair would be unleashed.

The second course of action is to get from the UN some information on the dismantling of the bases. The government of the USA could then be satisfied with this as a prerequisite for lifting the quarantine. Robert Kennedy emphasized that he was not yet prepared to talk about the details of this whole affair, since the President did not yet have any information on the results of U Thant's trip.² . . .

Robert Kennedy emphasized that the point was not that they do not trust our information on this account, but rather the question of how to present this whole affair to the public opinion of the USA in connection with the earlier statements

¹A reference to a message sent by Khrushchev to JFK on October 30.

²U Thant had traveled to Havana for talks with Castro and other Cuban officials. On October 30 he presented various plans for verification of the removal of the missiles from Cuba. Castro rejected them all. U Thant returned to New York on October 31.

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offered by the President.³ It was felt that he had been somewhat worried by how Fidel Castro might hinder the carrying out of the agreement that had been reached.

4. Telegram from the State Department to the U.S. Mission at the United Nations

In his instructions to American officials at the UN, JFK himself stresses the importance of verification of the missile withdrawal. He was concerned about Soviet subterfuge and the concealment of missiles that might go undetected by photographic intelligence.

Washington, November 1, 1962.

Eyes only from Undersecretary Ball. President believes it essential that in conversation with Mikoyan (and Kuznetsov as appropriate) following points be made with utmost emphasis:

1. Kennedy-Khrushchev understanding based on assumption that Sovs would and could deliver on Khrushchev commitment to remove all offensive weapons systems in Cuba and through UN verification satisfy U.S. and other OAS countries. This in fact done and does not recur.

2. Although four days have now passed since understanding reached that U Thant has made best efforts,¹ all we have so far is verbal assurances by Sov reps in NY and Cuba to US and UN without element of verification which in view history of this affair US regards as essential.

3. US has acted expeditiously and in good faith, promptly accepting Soviet proposal that ICRC act as UN agent for inspection incoming vessels. (US believes we should promptly move to put this in effect with or without Cuban agreement. Further instructions on this will come later today.) US also promptly responded SYG [U Thant] request suspend quarantine and recon flights² during period his Havana visit. Also as Sovs aware USG has close watch to prevent anti-Castro Cubans from any action which would upset execution of agreement, e.g. arrest of group with boat in Florida yesterday.

4. On question verification USG has expressed willingness accept wide

³A reference perhaps to JFK's October 27 letter to Khrushchev or to a public statement the president released at the end of the crisis on October 28. Alternatively it may be a reference to Kennedy's September 4 and 13 public statements.

¹A reference to U Thant's unproductive talks with Castro in Havana. See Document 3, footnote 2.

²A reference to U.S. reconnaissance flights over Cuba.

range of possible UN arrangements but there does not yet appear likelihood even any one of these can be implemented.

5. President's responsibility for US security demands that in absence UN verification, US undertake whatever steps it can to provide verification. Subordinate to this overriding consideration but nevertheless important is assurance to US and LA publics.

6. Thus, although much less satisfactory than UN verification on the ground and from the air with cooperation Sovs and Cuba, US must in elemental interests of safety continue aerial surveillance. This surveillance is being carried out in as unprovocative a manner and on as limited a scale as possible by unarmed aircraft. While US accepts that some conventional anti-aircraft guns may be under Cuban control, it cannot accept that sophisticated weapons and control systems, including SAM's, do not require participation of Sov technicians and thus are not or could not be made subject to Soviet control. If US reconnaissance aircraft fired on or destroyed, serious question appropriate means protect US aircraft will arise. We might thus face a cycle of action and reaction which would put us back where we were last week. Thus of utmost importance Sovs immediately take measures to assure reconnaissance aircraft not fired on.

7. Second sentence of President's letter to Chairman Khrushchev of October 27 is clear in covering "all weapons systems in Cuba capable of offensive use." This covers not only systems under Soviet control but also those allegedly under Cuban control. The President considers Khrushchev's reply of October 28 as clear acceptance that all of these arms are to be dismantled, crated and returned to Sov Union (or destroyed). You should seek to elicit a clear confirmation that the IL28's are included and are being dismantled for removal from Cuba.

8. In addition, you should point out that if Sov missiles and bombers are being removed, there seems no need for Soviets to leave in Cuba equipment and military technicians brought to Cuba primarily to protect the offensive weapons. (Note that SAM's use missile fuel which proscribed under quarantine regulations.) President's undertaking against invasion is adequate assurance that these weapons are not needed.

9. The President particularly desires that there should be no discussion of wider issue from our side until the offensive weapons in Cuba are clearly on their way home. You must therefore avoid any exploration of tempting fields like Berlin and disarmament, making it plain that while we look forward to such discussion later, we cannot get anywhere on anything else until we have successfully put in operation the Kennedy-Khrushchev agreement on this present matter.³

³Rusk's name was placed at the end of this message.

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5. Message from President Kennedy to Chairman Khrushchev

Kennedy responds to a lengthy, wide-ranging message from Khrushchev of October 30.

Washington, November 3, 1962.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: I wish to thank you for your letter of October 30.¹ I am commenting now only on a problem raised in your letter which relates to the Cuban affair.

With respect to the quarantine on shipments to Cuba, I am hopeful that arrangements can be worked out quickly by the United Nations which would permit its removal. We were happy to agree to your suggestion that the International Committee of the Red Cross undertake responsibility for inspection. You are, of course, aware that Premier Castro has announced his opposition to measures of verification on the territory of Cuba. If he maintains this position this would raise very serious problems. So far as incoming shipments are concerned, I understand that efforts are being made to have the International Red Cross carry out the necessary measures at sea and I hope that these will be successful. In the meantime, perhaps the existence of the quarantine can be of assistance to Mr. Mikoyan in his negotiations with Premier Castro.² I should also like to point out that in an effort to facilitate matters, I instructed our [UN] delegation in New York to inform your representative there, Mr. Kuznetsov, that for the next few days any Soviet ships in the quarantine area would be passed without inspection and only the hailing procedure which was carried out in the case of your vessel, the *Bucharest*, would be applied.³

I am hopeful we can dispose of this pressing matter quickly so that we can go on in a better atmosphere to the broader questions. We both must make our best efforts to this end.

¹Not included in this chapter.

²Close Khrushchev aide Anastas Mikoyan arrived in Havana on November 2 for talks with Castro.

³The *Bucharest* was the Soviet tanker that on October 25 had been hailed and then permitted to cross the quarantine line.

6. Telegram from the State Department to the U.S. Mission at the United Nations

JFK seeks to stiffen the resolve of Adlai Stevenson and John McCloy, his senior officials involved in UN negotiations with the Russians aimed at tying up the loose ends of the missile crisis settlement. He tells them there must be verified removal of all offensive Soviet weapons from Cuba.

Washington, November 3, 1962.

Eyes only for Stevenson and McCloy. Following is text of an instruction from the President to all concerned with present negotiations in Cuba:

"It is time for a review of our basic position in these negotiations and for a clear restatement of our policy and purpose.

We have good evidence that the Russians are dismantling the missile bases.¹ We have no decisive evidence of what they will do with this equipment. The assembly of IL-28's continues. There is some evidence of an intent to establish a submarine-tending facility. The future of the SAM sites is unclear. We have no satisfactory assurances on verification. Our aerial surveillance still proceeds without guarantee of safety.

This crisis is likely to move in one of two major directions in the next few weeks. On the one hand, we may be able to make arrangements which will in fact ensure the verified removal of all Soviet offensive weapons systems from Cuba and establish reliable safeguards against their reintroduction. This is the object of our policy and it is precisely stated in my letter to Khrushchev of October 27:² "You would agree to remove these weapons systems (previously defined as "all weapons systems in Cuba capable of offensive use") from Cuba under appropriate United Nations observation and supervision; and undertake, with suitable safeguards, to halt the further introduction of such weapons systems into Cuba." Chairman Khrushchev's message of 28 October³ contained an explicit undertaking to dismantle, crate and return to the Soviet Union "the weapons which you describe as "offensive" under UN verification. It is the position of the United States Government that this is a clear acceptance of my proposal of October 27.

This requirement means removal of all offensive missiles and supporting equipment, and of all bombers and their equipment. These items and associated equipment are generally described in my statement of September 13 and in my address of October 22; they are clearly defined in my Proclamation of October

¹U.S. photo reconnaissance on November 1 had revealed that Soviet medium-range missile sites had been bulldozed and the missiles removed. In addition, construction of intermediate-range missile sites had been halted.

²See Chapter 4, Document 29.

³See Chapter 4, Document 33.

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23.⁴ All Americans should stick firmly to this position. We should add that a submarine base is equally unacceptable. . . .

In blunt summary, we want no offensive weapons and no Soviet military base in Cuba, and that is how we understand the agreements of October 27 and 28.

If in fact the Soviet Government executes this kind of removal with the associated and necessary inspection, supervision, and safeguards against reintroduction, then we in turn will hold with equal clarity to the undertaking given in my letter of October 27, as follows: '(a) to remove promptly the quarantine measures now in effect and (b) to give assurances against an invasion of Cuba.' We also have an obligation to work with other Western Hemisphere countries to get them to take a similar position. The exact terms and meaning of this undertaking require further work, but its broad implication is clear: in the absence of other provocation or justification, we will give an undertaking not to invade Cuba if we are properly assured that Cuba ceases to be a Soviet military base and ceases to harbor weapons. This commitment in no way derogates from our Hemispheric obligations to deal with aggressive or subversive activities by the present regime in Cuba.

There is another major course which events may take. It is one with which all who have negotiated with the Soviet Government in the past are familiar. It is a course in which bargains are fudged, secrecy prevents verification, agreements are reinterpreted, and by one means or another the Soviet Government seeks to sustain and advance the very policy which it has apparently undertaken to give up.

There is much evidence to support the conclusion that this is what is now beginning.

This second line of Soviet conduct is unacceptable to the United States. To prevent it we must make it very clear, at every stage, by both word and act, that the United States Government will not accept a mere gentlemen's agreement relating only to visible missiles on identified launch pads. We must have adequate arrangements for verification and inspection to be sure both that offensive weapons are removed and that no more are introduced. Without them, both surveillance and the quarantine must be continued and both may need to be extended. (This condition does not exclude temporary relaxation of either quarantine or surveillance in return for useful steps toward fully effective arrangements. Such a relaxation is foreseen in connection with our plans for ICRC inspection of certain inbound cargoes.) All the offensive weapons systems, including anything related to a submarine base, must be removed, or we shall have to consider further action of our own to remove them.

Finally, and most generally, the undertaking of the United States against invasion cannot take effect in any atmosphere of ambiguity or uncertainty such that the American Government or the American people would lack proper assurance against the existence in Cuba now, or at any future time, of any Soviet military base or offensive weapons. The Soviet Government must recognize that

⁴JFK's October 23 Proclamation formally established the blockade. For JFK's September 13 statement and October 22 address, see Chapter 3, Document 12, and Chapter 4, Document 14, respectively.

the events of the last three weeks have made it impossible for opinion in this Hemisphere to be satisfied with Soviet assurances alone. Verification is essential if the Governments of the Western Hemisphere are to be able to live with this situation without further action.

I repeat that this statement of policy should be taken as binding guidance by all who are engaged in the framing of instructions or the conduct of negotiations on this matter.⁵ It is of fundamental importance that we speak as one voice and continue to keep it entirely clear to all Soviet representatives that the agreements of October 27 and 28 must be carried out in full—and that otherwise the United States Government will find it necessary to move again by its own means to insure itself against a repetition of the extraordinary act of deception which initiated this crisis. In this situation the Soviet Government has a clear choice between verified removal of all offensive weapons systems and renewed action by the United States. It has no middle choice, and we believe its own interests should lead it to accept the honest and full execution of the Kennedy-Khrushchev agreement, and to see to it that Castro provides the necessary cooperation.

Detailed guidance in support of this general policy has been provided in approved instructions to USUN earlier this week. . . . My only addition at present is that I now believe we should not be satisfied with aerial surveillance and post-removal ground inspection for departing offensive weapons. We must also have some way of verifying the reexport of the missiles, and the best practicable way seems to be to count them on departing ships. This can be done with no violation of Soviet security by reliable and nontechnical non-Americans, and we should insist on this or an equally effective verification."⁶

7. Memorandum from Attorney General Kennedy to President Kennedy

On November 2 Stevenson provided the Russians with a list of what the Kennedy administration regarded as those "offensive weapons" in Cuba that had to be removed. This list mentioned not only surface-to-surface missiles but also such equipment as IL-28 bombers and Komar torpedo boats. It showed that JFK and his advisers had decided to seek the removal of as much Russian military equipment from Cuba as possible. In the following two documents, Bobby Kennedy discusses this issue with Dobrynin, and Khrushchev takes umbrage at the American list in correspondence with JFK.

⁵This statement was probably aimed at Stevenson, thought by John and Robert Kennedy to be incorrigibly "soft" in dealings with the Soviets.

⁶Rusk's name was placed at the end of this telegram, but it was drafted by McGeorge Bundy and approved by U. Alexis Johnson.

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Washington, November 5, 1962.

Dobrynin asked earlier this morning if I could see him and I made arrangements to have him come to the office at 12 o'clock Noon.

He delivered another letter from Mr. Khrushchev.¹ I read it and found that it concerned our list of offensive weapons that Stevenson had submitted.²

I explained to Dobrynin that from the first it had been made clear by the Soviet Union that they would get rid of any weapons which we considered offensive and certainly it was very clear that the bombers, the IL-28's, had to go.³ Dobrynin replied that he was not familiar with that position and also did not know what was on the list that Khrushchev mentioned in his letter. I told him I would get a copy of it; that it was basically the same list of weapons that had been listed in the President's Quarantine Proclamation.⁴ He replied he would obtain a copy from Kuznetsov.

During the middle of the conversation the President called and said that he had just received some preliminary information which indicated that several of our planes over Cuba had been fired upon. In ending my conversation with Dobrynin, therefore, I stressed the fact that any arrangements that were made were dependent upon there not being any incidents in the air above Cuba.

8. Message from Chairman Khrushchev to President Kennedy

Moscow, undated.¹

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT, I have just received information from Mr. V. Kuznetsov, our representative at the negotiations in New York for liquidation of the tense situation around Cuba, that Mr. Stevenson handed him a list of weapons which your side calls offensive.² I have studied the list and, I must confess, the approach of the American side to this matter has seriously worried me. In such a move, I will say frankly, I see a wish to complicate the situation, because it is impossible indeed to place into the category of "offensive" weapons such types of weapons which have always been referred to as defensive weapons even by a man uneducated militarily—by a common soldier, not to say of an officer.

¹See Document 8.

²On November 2 Stevenson dispatched to Mikoyan a letter listing those weapons considered offensive by the Kennedy administration.

³This represented a shift to some degree from the position on the IL-28s taken by JFK in the ExComm meeting on October 28. See Chapter 4, Document 34.

⁴Issued on October 23.

¹Received by the Kennedy administration on November 5.

²See Document 7, footnote 2.

It is hard for us to understand what aim is being pursued by the introduction of that list, by setting forth such a demand—in any case it must be some other aim, but not a desire for a speediest clearing of the atmosphere. And it is being done at a moment when we have already agreed with you on the main questions and when we on our part have already fulfilled what we agreed upon—have dismantled rocket weapons, are loading them now on ships and these weapons will be soon shipped from Cuba. That is why I feel greatly concerned with the advancing of such [a] demand by the American side, concerned with its possible consequences, if necessary reasonableness is not displayed.

The demand which has been set forth is evidently pursuing, as I have already said, some other aims and that—I would wish, Mr. President, that you understand me correctly—can lead not to the betterment of our relations but, on the contrary, to their new aggravation. We should understand the position each side is in and take it into consideration but not overburden, not complicate our relations, especially at such an important moment when measures are being taken to eliminate the acute tension and bring these relations to a normal state.

That is why I would ask you, Mr. President, to meet our anxiety with understanding, to take measures on your side in order not to complicate the situation and to give your representatives a directive to eliminate the existing tension on the basis upon which both of us have agreed by having exchanged public messages. You spoke to the effect that missiles which you called offensive should be removed from Cuba. We agreed to that. You in your turn gave assurances that the so-called “quarantine” would be promptly removed and that no invasion of Cuba would be made, not only by the U.S. but by other countries of the Western hemisphere either.

Let us then bring the achieved understanding to a completion, so that we could consider that each side has fulfilled its pledges and the question has been settled. If, however, additional demands are made, then that means only one thing—the danger that the difficulties on the way to eliminating tension created around Cuba will not be removed. But that may raise then new consequences.

I think that you will understand me correctly. For you and I will evidently have to deal not only with elimination of the remnants of the present tension—there lies ahead for you and me a great, serious talk on other questions. Why then start now complicating the situation by minor things. May be there exist some considerations, but they are beyond our comprehension. As for us, we view the introduction of additional demands as a wish to bring our relations back again into a heated state in which they were but several days ago.

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9. Telegram from the State Department to the U.S. Mission at the United Nations

JFK sends Stevenson and McCloy fresh instructions for negotiating with the Russians. These touch on such issues as verification and the American pledge not to invade Cuba.

Washington, November 5, 1962.

Eyes only Stevenson and McCloy from President. Your conversation with Kuznetsov¹ shows progress on one important point but raises a number of questions on which I wish to comment.

If we can see and count for ourselves departing missiles and associated equipment, that will be an important forward step and we see promise in the procedures Kuznetsov proposed² as long as it is clear that reliable observation, not Soviet photography alone, is essential.

One serious gap in Kuznetsov's proposal respecting missiles is the absence of any reference to nuclear warheads. Our interest in their absence is intense, and you should emphasize to all Soviets that since Khrushchev spoke to Knox of the presence of such warheads in Cuba,³ we need assurances on warheads as much as on missiles themselves. Moreover, we need to know about possible warheads for IL-28's and even MIG-21's.

This warhead problem highlights the general importance of post-removal verification in Cuba itself. Forty-two missiles is a plausible number and not inconsistent with our own reports, but Soviet figures, while genuinely useful, are not a wholly reliable basis for action. In this connection you should not hesitate to press home with Kuznetsov the fact that past Soviet deception remains a major element in our reaction to this whole episode. It may be true, as Kuznetsov argues, that the Soviets had no obligation to tell us exactly what they were doing in a country like Cuba, but what actually happened in this case was that they repeatedly gave us assurances of what they were not doing. These assurances came from highest levels, and proved absolutely false.

Your insistence on the removal of IL-28's, the unacceptability of any submarine support facility, and obvious Soviet involvement in SAM complex are all correct and worth repeating insistently. You are also right to resist guarantees on subversion and to keep Guantanamo out of it.

With respect to U.S. guarantees, we are not yet ready to give you more detailed instructions, but these general points may be helpful:

(1) No long-term arrangements can be settled until after we have reached

¹A conversation on November 4 between Kuznetsov and McCloy at the latter's Stamford, Connecticut, home.

²Kuznetsov had suggested, among other things, that American officials observe the Soviet ships departing from Cuba in order to count the missiles on board.

³Khrushchev and U.S. businessman William E. Knox had met on October 24.

clear understanding on verified removal of offensive weapons systems, including IL28's.

(2) OAS-approved right of surveillance will be kept intact. . . . In this connection you should report to Kuznetsov that today one of our low-level flights was harassed by MIG's apparently manned by Soviets.⁴ No damage was done, and it is not clear that MIG's fired, but episode provides good basis for you to drive home our view of critical importance of unimpeded surveillance unless and until better arrangements can be made. You should remind Kuznetsov that surveillance must and will continue, and that further interference will be sure to bring prompt reaction including armed action if necessary.⁵ . . .

10. Memorandum from President Kennedy to Secretary of Defense McNamara

Little more than a week after the missile crisis was defused, JFK moves to make sure that his contingency plans to attack Cuba are updated.

Washington, November 5, 1962.

As I have communicated to General Wheeler, through General Clifton, the plans for X¹ seem thin. Considering the size of the problem, the equipment that is involved on the other side, the nationalistic fervor which may be engendered, it seems to me we could end up bogged down.

I think we should keep constantly in mind the British in Boer War, the Russians in the last war with the Finnish and our own experience with the North Koreans. We are keeping, as I understand it, three divisions in reserve. I think we should plan to use them and call up any guard divisions we have available. This may require us to build additional divisions.

⁴An encounter occurred between MiG fighters and U.S. reconnaissance aircraft, though apparently no shots were fired.

⁵Rusk's name was placed at the end of this telegram, but it was drafted by McGeorge Bundy and cleared by George Ball.

¹JFK was referring here to CINCLANT OPLAN 316, a U.S. contingency plan to exploit various developments in Cuba, including an anti-Castro uprising, by launching a military assault on the island.

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11. Message from President Kennedy to Chairman Khrushchev

In correspondence with the Soviet premier, JFK focuses on what had by this time become a major bone of contention between the superpowers: the question of whether the Soviet IL-28 bombers, as well as the surface-to-surface nuclear missiles, would be removed from Cuba.

Washington, November 6, 1962.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: I am surprised that in your letter, which I received yesterday,¹ you suggest that in giving your representative in New York a list of the weapons we consider offensive there was any desire on our part to complicate the situation. Our intention was just the opposite: to stick to a well-known list, and not to introduce any new factors. But there is really only one major item on the list, beyond the missiles and their equipment, and that is the light bombers with their equipment. This item is indeed of great importance to us.

The solution of the Cuban affair was established by my letter to you of October twenty-seventh and your reply of October twenty-eighth.² You will recall that in my letter of October twenty-seventh, I referred to "all weapons systems in Cuba capable of offensive use." You will also recall that in my broadcast address of October twenty-second,³ in addition to medium-range ballistic missiles, I mentioned specifically "jet bombers capable of carrying nuclear weapons," as "an explicit threat to the peace and security of all the Americas." Finally, my proclamation of October twenty-third entitled "Interdiction of the Delivery of Offensive Weapons to Cuba"⁴ specifically listed bomber aircraft. These facts were all known at the time of our exchange of letters on Cuba, and so it seems clear to me that our exchange of letters covers the IL-28s, since your undertaking was to remove the weapons we described as offensive.

Your letter says—and I agree—that we should not complicate the situation by minor things. But I assure you that this matter of IL-28s is not a minor matter for us at all. It is true, of course, that these bombers are not the most modern of weapons, but they are distinctly capable of offensive use against the United States and other Western Hemispheric countries, and I am sure your own military men would inform you that the continued existence of such bombers in Cuba would require substantial measures of military defense in response by the United States. Thus, in simple logic these are weapons capable of offensive use. But there is more in it than that, Mr. Chairman. These bombers could carry nuclear weapons for long distances, and they are clearly not needed, any more than

¹See Document 8.

²See Chapter 4, Documents 29 and 33.

³See Chapter 4, Document 14.

⁴This proclamation formally established the quarantine.

missiles, for purely defensive purposes on the island of Cuba. Thus in the present context their continued presence would sustain the grave tension that has been created, and their removal, in my view, is necessary to a good start on ending the recent crisis.

I am not clear as to what items you object to on the list which Ambassador Stevenson handed to Mr. Kuznetsov. I can assure you I have no desire to cause you difficulties by any wide interpretation of the definitions of weapons which we consider offensive and I am instructing my representative in New York to confer promptly with Mr. Kuznetsov and to be as forthcoming as possible in order to meet any legitimate complaints you may have in order to reach a quick solution which would enable our agreement to be carried to completion. I entirely agree with your statement that we should wind up the immediate crisis promptly, and I assure you that on our side we are insisting only on what is immediately essential for progress in this matter. In order to make our position clear, I think I should go on to give you a full sense of the very strong feelings we have about this whole affair here in the United States.

These recent events have given a profound shock to relations between our two countries. . . . Not only did this action threaten the whole safety of this hemisphere, but it was, in a broader sense, a dangerous attempt to change the worldwide status quo. Secret action of this kind seems to me both hazardous and unjustified. But however one may judge that argument, what actually happened in this case was not simply that the action of your side was secret. Your Government repeatedly gave us assurances of what it was *not* doing; these assurances were announced as coming from the highest levels, and they proved inaccurate. . . .

We were specifically informed that no missiles would be placed in Cuba which would have a range capable of reaching the United States. In reliance upon these assurances I attempted, as you know, to restrain those who were giving warnings in this country about the trend of events in Cuba. Thus undeniable photographic evidence that offensive weapons were being installed was a deep and dangerous shock, first to this Government and then to our whole people.

In the aftermath of this shock, to which we replied with a measured but necessary response, I believe it is vital that we should re-establish some degree of confidence in communication between the two of us. If the leaders of the two great nuclear powers cannot judge with some accuracy the intentions of each other, we shall find ourselves in a period of gravely increasing danger—not only for our two countries but for the whole world.

I therefore hope that you will promptly recognize that when we speak of the need to remove missiles and bombers, with their immediate supporting equipment, we are not trying to complicate the situation but simply stating what was clearly included in our understanding of October twenty-seventh and twenty-eighth. I shall continue to abide fully by the undertakings in my letter of October twenty-seventh, and specifically, under the conditions stated in that letter I will hold to my undertaking "to give assurances against an invasion of Cuba." This undertaking has already come under attack here and is likely to become increasingly an object of criticism by a great many of my countrymen. And the very

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minimum that is necessary in regard to these assurances is, as we agreed, the verified removal of the missile and bomber systems, together with real safeguards against their reintroduction.

I should emphasize to you directly, Mr. Chairman, that in this respect there is another problem immediately ahead of us which could become very serious indeed, and that is the problem of continuing verification in Cuba. Your representatives have spoken as if this were entirely a problem for the Castro regime to settle, but the continuing verification of the absence of offensive weapons in Cuba is an essential safeguard for the United States and the other countries of this hemisphere, and is an explicit condition for the undertakings which we in our turn have agreed to. The need for this verification is, I regret to say, convincingly demonstrated by what happened in Cuba in the months of September and October.

For the present we are having to rely on our own methods of surveillance, and this surveillance will surely have to be continued unless, as we much prefer, a better and durable method can be found. We believe that it is a serious responsibility of your Government to insure that weapons which you have provided to Cuba are not employed to interfere with this surveillance which is so important to us all in obtaining reliable information on which improvements in the situation can be based. It was of great importance, for example, for me last week to be able to announce with confidence that dismantling of missiles has begun.

Finally, I would like to say a word about longer range matters. I think we must both recognize that it will be very difficult for any of us in this hemisphere to look forward to any real improvement in our relations with Cuba if it continues to be a military outpost of the Soviet Union. We have limited our action at present to the problem of offensive weapons, but I do think it may be important for you to consider whether a real normalization of the Cuba problem can be envisaged while there remains in Cuba large numbers of Soviet military technicians, and major weapons systems and communications complexes under Soviet control, all with the recurrent possibility that offensive weapons might be secretly and rapidly reintroduced. That is why I think there is much wisdom in the conclusion expressed in your letter of October 26th, that when our undertakings against invasion are effective the need for your military specialists in Cuba will disappear. That is the real path to progress in the Cuban problem. And in this connection in particular, I hope you will understand that we must attach the greatest importance to the personal assurances you have given that submarine bases will not be established in Cuba.

I believe that Cuba can never have normal relations with the other nations of this hemisphere unless it ceases to appear to be a foreign military base and adopts a peaceful course of non-interference in the affairs of its sister nations. These wider considerations may belong to a later phase of the problem, but I hope that you will give them careful thought.

In the immediate situation, however, I repeat that it is the withdrawal of the missiles and bombers, with their supporting equipment, under adequate verification, and with a proper system for continued safeguards in the future, that is

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essential. This is the first necessary step away from the crisis to open the door through which we can move to restore confidence and give attention to other problems which ought to be resolved in the interest of peace.

12. Telegram from Ambassador Dobrynin to the Soviet Foreign Ministry

Robert Kennedy offers a solution to the IL-28 bomber problem in another conversation with Dobrynin.

November 12, 1962.

Your instructions have been carried out. Robert Kennedy has familiarized himself attentively with the content of N. S. Khrushchev's confidential oral message to the President.¹ When he got to the place that spoke of Nixon's defeat in the elections,² he immediately grinned, saying: "Your chairman is a real master of colorful expression that expressed the true essence of the issue. Yes, we are quite satisfied with Nixon's defeat, and in general we are not complaining about the results of the election." It was felt that this portion of the message was received with definite satisfaction.

When Robert Kennedy had familiarized himself with the whole message, he said that for the President, for domestic policy considerations, it was very important to receive the Soviet Union's firm agreement to the removal of the IL-28 planes, especially now that there were essentially no inspections being conducted in Cuba itself. The correspondence between N. S. Khrushchev and President Kennedy of 27 and 28 October implied that an agreement between our countries had been reached. But we understand the difficulties in this area that have now arisen because of Premier Fidel Castro's position, and we are not insisting on this as an unalterable and fundamental condition. But the removal of the IL-28 planes—in an atmosphere of growing criticism within the USA—is a matter of great concern to the President. Let us reach an agreement, continued Robert Kennedy, on the following points: that the Soviet Union will remove its IL-28 planes by a definite date announced in advance, and that on that same day the USA will officially lift its quarantine. All this may be announced immediately.

I answered Robert Kennedy that his proposal is entirely unacceptable for the Soviet side. I then demonstrated the unacceptability of this proposal by using the

¹See Document 13.

²Richard Nixon had been defeated in the November 1962 elections in his race for the governorship of California.

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argument contained in N. S. Khrushchev's oral message that had been passed on to him. In conclusion I expressed my certainty that conveying his proposal to Moscow would prove fruitless.

Thinking a moment, Robert Kennedy said that he would like to confer with his brother the President, after which he would again contact me later the same day. I agreed.

After an hour and a half (all this happened in the evening), Robert Kennedy came to my residence. He said that now, after speaking with the President, he could formulate the American proposal in the following way:

N. S. Khrushchev and the President would reach an essential agreement that the IL-28 planes would be removed by a definite date. After such an agreement has been reached, the USA would, as early as the next day, lift any quarantine even before the removal of the planes had been completed. The Americans would of course prefer that the date agreed upon for the removal of the IL-28 planes be publicized. However, if the Soviets have any objections to the public disclosure of that date, then the President would not insist on it. For him a promise from N. S. Khrushchev would be entirely sufficient. As far as the date is concerned, it would be good if the planes were removed, let us say, within 30 days. We ask that N. S. Khrushchev be informed of this whole proposal.

Robert Kennedy was told that the President's proposal would of course be communicated to N. S. Khrushchev. As a personal opinion, however, I noted that it was unlikely that such an imminent date could be acceptable to us, all the more so since the fundamental USA obligations—guarantees of non-aggression against Cuba, and other obligations—remain, as before, unfulfilled; moreover, they themselves are pushing everything later and later. And this is happening in circumstances in which the Soviet government is sincerely fulfilling, and essentially has already fulfilled, its own obligations for the removal of the missiles. It is now the Americans' turn.

Robert Kennedy said that the time-frame he had referred to—30 days—is not in any way definitive. That time-frame had been "given to him," but he thought that there was room for negotiation here as long as the period was not too great, and as long as N. S. Khrushchev generally found the President's proposal acceptable. I want now to make note of one more condition, Robert Kennedy continued. After such an agreement has been reached, especially if it is not publicized, it would be important for us that, even if the end of the agreed-upon period for the removal of the IL-28 planes has not yet been reached, at least some planes will have been disassembled by this time, or if they have just been taken out of containers, that a portion of them be returned to their containers. We need all of this, Robert Kennedy remarked, so that we can satisfy our domestic public opinion by reporting that there has been some progress in the removal of the IL-28 planes. This is necessary, since even [West German Chancellor Konrad] Adenauer is starting now to criticize us publicly for trusting the word of the Soviet Union without inspections in Cuban territory—not to mention the Cuban emigres in certain . . . [states] who are making similar accusations. But the President, Robert Kennedy emphasized, has faith in N. S. Khrushchev's word, and is willing to lift the quarantine immediately if the agree-

ment mentioned above can be reached, even though we really do not have any guarantees with regard to inspections in Cuban territory.

I answered Robert Kennedy that it would be much better if Adenauer kept his nose out of everyone else's business, and if the USA government told him so directly (here Robert Kennedy energetically nodded his head in a gesture of agreement). I then said that in the proposal that he had advanced, the issue is once again raised of a full elimination of all the tension that has existed, that is, beyond the immediate lifting of the blockade, the obligations of all the parties should be fixed in appropriate UN documents, and non-aggression against Cuba and a strict observation of its sovereignty should be guaranteed; there would also be UN posts established in the countries of the Caribbean region as guarantees against unexpected actions harming another state.

Robert Kennedy said that he believed that an agreement could be reached on all these points. It is important, from the point of view of American public opinion, to have some inspection conducted in Cuba, even in the form of several UN posts. Castro will scarcely go for this unless a similar procedure is imposed on the other countries of the Caribbean basin. But it is possible to resolve this too. . . . I can repeat the firm assurances of the President not to invade Cuba. He authorized me once again to say this now. He was grateful to N. S. Khrushchev for the latter's clarification that the IL-28 planes are manned by Soviet rather than Cuban pilots, but nevertheless the issue of the removal of these planes remains a very important one for the President, and he asks that we consider his proposal.

Further discussion came down to a reiteration of the positions of the parties. Robert Kennedy said in conclusion that he was flying now to New York on personal business, and that he would be willing to meet with me at any time.

When he left, he glimpsed a crowd of dancing couples in the embassy's parlor. Realizing that this was a friendly welcome party arranged by the embassy community for the Bolshoi Theater troupe that had just arrived in Washington, he said that he would like to meet with the troupe. Mingling with and greeting almost all the members of the troupe, he delivered a welcome speech in which he said that the President was preparing to attend their premier the following evening. At the end, he kissed Maya Plisetskaya when he found out that he and she had been born in the same year, month, and day, and said they would celebrate their birthdays in a week. None of this needs to be mentioned especially, but all in all the behavior of Robert Kennedy, who is ordinarily quite a reserved and glum man, reflects to some degree the calmer and more normal mood in the White House after the tense days that shook Washington, even though this fact is concealed in various ways by American propaganda.

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13. Message from Chairman Khrushchev to President Kennedy¹

From November 5 to 9 several vessels left Cuba with the nuclear missiles on board. Soviet personnel removed the tarpaulins covering the missiles, allowing U.S. officials to verify the withdrawal of the nuclear weapons. Here, in correspondence with JFK, Khrushchev makes the case that as the missiles were now out of Cuba, the American blockade of the island should cease. On the issue of the IL-28s the Soviet premier tried to fudge, saying that they will be removed in due course.

Moscow, November 12, 1962.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT, I would like to express my satisfaction that the mutual obligations taken in accordance with the exchange of messages between us are being carried out both by your side and our side. One can say that certain favourable results are already seen at this time. We appreciate your understanding of the situation and your cooperation in carrying out the obligations taken by [y]our side. We, on our part, will as always honor our obligations. And I would like to inform you that our obligations with regard to dismantling and removal of both missiles and warheads have already been fulfilled.

We appreciate that we must come to an agreement with you regarding the mutually acceptable means for your side to ascertain that we really carry out our obligations. What has already been achieved in the course of negotiations between our representatives—Kuznetsov, McCloy and Stevenson—and the cooperation reached in the process of these negotiations is a good thing. The same should be said about the cooperation between captains of our ships, which were taking our missiles from Cuba, and corresponding U.S. ships. This is very good, this has created an impression that your side also wishes to cooperate, eliminating the remnants of the tension which only yesterday were very dangerous both for our two peoples and for the peoples of the whole world. Thus, if we proceed from our understanding which was expressed in your message of October 27² and in our reply of October 28,³ then we, the Soviet side, have carried out our obligations and thereby have created possibility for complete elimination of tension in the Caribbean. Consequently, now it is your turn, it is for your side to carry out precisely your obligations. We have in mind that apart from the long term obligations that the United States itself will not attack Cuba and will restrain other countries of the Western Hemisphere from doing that, the most important thing which is required today is to give moral satisfaction to world public opinion and tranquility to peoples. And what is required from your side to that

¹This message was first delivered orally by Ambassador Dobrynin to Robert Kennedy. See Document 12.

²See Chapter 4, Document 29.

³See Chapter 4, Document 33.

end is to lift the so-called quarantine and of course to stop violating the territorial waters and air space of Cuba. If this continues confidence in your obligations will thus be undermined which can only grieve world public and throw us back to the positions to which we must not return after the liquidation of such a dangerous situation. To say nothing of the fact that it would hamper us in the future.

At present, we must—and we are convinced in that—look forward and draw necessary conclusions from what has happened up till now and from the good which followed due to the efforts of both sides. Therefore, we believe that conditions are emerging now for reaching an agreement on the prohibition of nuclear weapons, cessation of all types of nuclear weapons tests and on all other questions which are ripe and require solution. You have already ended your tests and we shall probably also end our tests in November or at least before the end of this year. . . .

Now about the matter that, as you state, worries you today—about the IL-28 planes which you call an offensive weapon. We have already given you our clarification on this point and I think you can not but agree with us. However, if you do not agree—and this is your right—ask your intelligence after all and let it give you an answer based not on guesswork but on facts. . . .

If your intelligence is objective it must give a correct appraisal of these 12-year-old planes and report to you that they are incapable of offensive actions. We brought them to Cuba only because they can be used as a mobile means of coastal defense under the cover of anti-aircraft fire from their own territory. . . .

Nevertheless we regard your concern with understanding, though on our part we share the desire of the Government of Cuba to possess defensive weapons which would permit [it] to defend the territorial integrity of its country.

Therefore if you meet this with understanding and if we agreed with you on solving other questions in implementing the mutually assumed obligations then the question of IL-28 bombers would be solved without difficulties.

In what way should this cooperation, in our understanding, find its expression and what would facilitate the solution of this question?

We state to you that these bombers are piloted solely by our fliers. Consequently you should not have any fears that they can be used to do harm to the United States or other neighboring countries in Western Hemisphere. And since you and your allies in Western Hemisphere have taken an obligation not to invade Cuba then it would seem this weapon should not pose any threat for you. Moreover, we are aware of what military means are in your possession. If the enemy were threatening us with such weapon we would ignore that threat completely for it would cause us no anxiety whatsoever.

But because you express apprehension that this weapon can be some sort of a threat to the US or other countries of Western Hemisphere which do not possess adequate defensive means we state to you as a guarantee that those planes are piloted by our fliers and therefore there should be no misgivings that they could be used to the detriment of any state.

As you ascertained yourself we have removed the missiles, we also removed everything else related to missiles, all the equipment necessary for their use and recalled the personnel manning those missiles. Now that the missiles are re-

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moved the question of IL-28's is an incomprehensible argument because that weapon as I have already said is of no value as a combat weapon at present, to say nothing of the future. Let us come to an agreement on this question as well, let us do away with tension, let us fulfill the mutual pledges made in our messages. We will not insist on permanently keeping those planes on Cuba. We have our difficulties in this question. Therefore we give a gentleman's word that we will remove the IL-28 planes with all the personnel and equipment related to those planes, although not now but later. We would like to do that some time later when we determine that the conditions are ripe to remove them. We will advise you of that.

I think that an agreement on such basis will enable us to complete the elimination of all the tension that existed and will create conditions for life to resume its normal course, that is the blockade would be immediately removed; the pledges of the sides would be registered in the appropriate documents in the United Nations Organization; non-invasion of Cuba and strict observance of her sovereignty guaranteed; the UN posts established in the countries of the Caribbean so that neither one nor the other side would indeed undertake any unexpected actions to the detriment of another state.

This would be the best solution which can be anticipated especially having in mind the tension that we lived through and the abyss we came to. And I believe, Mr. President, that you yourself understand that we were very close to that abyss. But you and we soberly and wisely appraised the situation and maintained self-control. Let us now give a complete satisfaction to the public.

What happened should now prompt us to make new great efforts so that no repetition of such events should be allowed because if we succeeded in finding a way out of a dangerous situation this time, next time we might not safely untie the tightly made knot. And the knot that we are now untying has been tied rather tightly, almost to the limit.

We displayed an understanding with regard to the positions of each other and came out of a critical situation through mutual concessions to the satisfaction of all peoples of the world. Let us now give joy to all peoples of the world and show that this conflict really became a matter of yesterday, let us normalize the situation. And it would be good if on your part efforts were made to make the normalization a complete, real normalization and it is necessary to do this in the interests of all peoples and this is within our power.

14. Telegram from Ambassador Dobrynin to the Soviet Foreign Ministry

The next two documents relate to a message from Khrushchev to Kennedy, transmitted in person by Dobrynin to Robert Kennedy. The Soviet leader now

seeks to tie Soviet cooperation on the IL-28 issue to American concessions in other areas, including termination of the blockade around Cuba.

November 14, 1962.

Having familiarized himself with our response,¹ Robert Kennedy said that he would pass it on to the President today. Then, saying that he would like to express a little of his own views provisionally, Robert Kennedy stated the following.

The President—he, Robert Kennedy, expects—will be disappointed by the answer when he receives it. The President's proposal was very simple: the USA would immediately and officially lift the blockade in exchange for assurances—public or not—that before some definite date the IL-28 planes would be removed. The President believes that this proposal of his serves the interests of both countries, and opens the way towards a resolution of the remaining aspects of the Cuban problem, creating a significantly less tense situation than the one that would arise if his proposal was approved² by the Soviets. The President intends to fulfill his obligations, which were stipulated by the correspondence between the heads of the two governments. But for this there must be a certain time in which all the details of the future agreement can be worked out. The President's proposal referred to above could be carried out immediately, without any delay. The insistence of the USA government in this matter of the IL-28 planes has been provoked by the growing pressure that has been brought to bear on the President by representatives of Congress, the press, and so on. It is important that this aspect be properly understood in Moscow, since the President himself has great difficulties in dealing with this issue (Robert Kennedy twice emphasized the "difficulties for the President").

I carried out the discussion with Robert Kennedy of these difficulties using the arguments advanced by N. S. Khrushchev's response. It was especially emphasized that we have removed from Cuba the missiles and warheads, in other words that we have fulfilled the obligations we assumed, while the USA is not fulfilling its own obligations; for this reason, in order to conduct assurance inspections [of Cuba] after the missiles and warheads have been removed, the quarantine should have already been lifted by now, the flights by American planes over the territory of Cuba should have already ceased, and the mutual obligations assumed by the parties should have been formalized in appropriate documents under the auspices of the UN.

Robert Kennedy stated that the USA government would not cease its flights over Cuba in circumstances in which he had no other guarantees that the government of Cuba would carry out its end of the agreement. Mr. Mikoyan's long stay in Cuba³ shows—or at least this conviction has been created in us—that Premier Castro does not want to approve the agreement reached between the President and the head of the Soviet government on such guarantees. We understand

¹Presumably a reference to Khrushchev's November 14 message to JFK. See Document 15.

²Dobrynin must have meant "rejected," not "approved," or else this is an error in translation from the Russian.

³See Document 5, footnote 2.

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the circumstances that have been created, but this does not relieve the difficulties of our position, said Robert Kennedy. The issue of UN guarantees,⁴ in the form of UN posts or something like them, would require a significant amount of time before concrete approval of the agreement could be reached. Let us take for example the issue of UN posts in the area of the Caribbean basin. Here Robert Kennedy asked, would the Soviet Union itself really agree to some foreign posts on its own territory? . . .

[Robert Kennedy added that the] President has put forth a proposal that he believes serves the interests of both parties, but that proposal is being rejected now by the Soviets, which can lead only to an extension, or perhaps even a complication, of the present situation which clearly does not satisfy us or, we believe, you. Both parties are equally uninterested in that. We hope nonetheless that Chairman N. S. Khrushchev will be able to approve the proposal put forth by the President, who himself had great confidence in it when he sent it to Khrushchev.

I told Robert Kennedy that the position of the Soviet government has been clearly laid out in today's response by N. S. Khrushchev. The Soviet Union has fulfilled its obligations. Now it is simply the USA government's turn to do the same, so that the situation of tension that has been created in the Caribbean Sea can be eased. For this it is necessary: to lift the quarantine without delay, to cease all flights by USA planes over Cuba, and to fix the mutual obligations deriving from the correspondence between the heads of both governments on 27 and 28 October. If corresponding instructions were given by the President to McCloy and Stevenson on the issue of UN posts in the Caribbean Sea area and the parts of the USA that border it—and the Soviet representatives already have such instructions—and if they could reach an agreement, then of course the issue of the time-frame for the removal of the IL-28 planes would not be any complex problem.

Since Robert Kennedy, who often refers to the President's opinion, has been stubbornly continuing to assert the necessity of first resolving the issue of the IL-28 planes' removal, connecting the lifting of the quarantine with that removal, he was directly asked, after mutually reiterating our arguments to each other, whether this meant that the President had already authorized him to give an answer, and that such an answer should be communicated to Moscow?

Robert Kennedy immediately answered that the views he had been expressing, although based on the opinions of the President, with whom he had just that evening discussed all these issues, are nonetheless exclusively his own, Robert Kennedy's, personal thoughts, and that there would be an answer to N. S. Khrushchev's address today from the President himself. Robert Kennedy promised to provide information on that answer immediately.

Towards the end, the conversation started to have a formalized and official

⁴In his October 27 message to Khrushchev, JFK had written of the need for UN observation of the withdrawal of the missiles from Cuba. By mid-November the idea of having UN posts throughout the Caribbean, including Cuban and American territory, had emerged—as a way of ensuring stability in the region.

air connected with the President's invitation, passed on to me via Robert Kennedy, to visit the White House on the following day along with the Bolshoi Theater troupe.

15. Message from Chairman Khrushchev to President Kennedy

Moscow, November 14, 1962.

I have read with great satisfaction the reply of the President of the United States¹ and I agree with the considerations expressed by the President. It is of particular pleasure to me that we seem to have the same desire to liquidate as soon as possible the state of tension and normalize the situation so that to untie our hands for normal work and for solving those questions that are awaiting their solution. And this depends in the main on agreement between us—the two greatest powers in the world with whom special responsibility for ensuring peace lies to a greater degree than with other countries.

The question of the withdrawal of the IL-28's within mentioned 30 days does not constitute any complicated question. Yet this period will probably not be sufficient. As I already said in my oral message² I can assure the President that those planes will be removed from Cuba with all the equipment and flying personnel. It can be done in 2-3 months. But for me, for our country, it would be a great relief if the state of tension that evolved in the Caribbean were liquidated as soon as possible. I have in mind what I have already said, namely: to lift immediately the quarantine, that is, blockade; to stop the flights of the US planes over Cuba; to write down the mutual commitments ensuing from the messages of the President and mine of October 27 and 28³ to which end your representatives and ours have to prepare with the participation of the UN acting Secretary General U Thant an appropriate document. This is the main thing now.

You understand that when we say that it is necessary to announce now the withdrawal of the IL-28's at the time when your planes are flying over Cuba it creates for us no small difficulties. I have no doubt that you will understand—and the Cuban Government understands this—that such actions constitute violation of sovereignty of the Cuban state. Therefore it would be a reasonable step to create in this respect also conditions for the normalization of the situation and this in a great degree would make it easier to meet your wish of expediting the withdrawal of the IL-28 planes from Cuba.

If we attained all that now and if this were announced, then more favourable

¹Apparently a reference to Document 11.

²See Document 13.

³See Chapter 4, Documents 29 and 33.

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conditions would be created for our country to solve the question of time table for the withdrawal of IL-28 planes.

Now our main difficulties lie precisely in the fact that, as it is well known to everybody and it is being rightfully pointed out to us, we have removed from Cuba missiles and warheads, that is, we have fulfilled our commitments while the US is not carrying out its commitments—the quarantine continues, the US planes continue to fly over Cuba and there is no agreement that would register the pledges of the US. And all this finds ears that are listening and listening attentively. It is difficult for us to give explanations to [for] such [an] unjustifiable state of affairs. Therefore to carry out the final procedure after the missiles and warheads have been removed, already now the quarantine must be lifted, the flights of the American planes over Cuba must be stopped and mutual commitments of the sides must be written down in an appropriate document with the participation of the UN.

It is hard to say for me what specific agreement is possible on the question of UN observation posts. But we as well as the Government of Cuba have already expressed a desire to come to terms on this question. If the question of the observation posts is of interest to the US—and I think it must be of interest—then I consider it wise to come to an agreement on this. I think that the Government of Cuba will not object to the UN posts, of course on the condition of respect for the sovereignty of Cuba, on the condition of treating her as equal which must mean that on the territory of other countries of the Caribbean and in a corresponding region of the US there will be also set up similar UN posts, that is on the condition that reciprocity will be observed in this question.

You understand, Mr. President, that no country can assume unilateral commitments, and it would be wise to make them mutual. . . .

If you would give your representatives—McCloy, Stevenson and others—appropriate instructions on the question of UN posts in the Caribbean region and adjoining regions of the US—and our representatives have such instructions—and if they would come to an agreement then all this could be made public. Then there would be removed the difficulties connected with making a public announcement on the withdrawal of IL-28 planes and we would name then specific dates. These dates will be probably much closer than those which I name and maybe even closer than those which were named by you.

That is why we should make a final step in this direction. Then we would really cut the knot which was tied tightly enough and having cut it we would create normal relations between our countries to which our people aspire and which your people, we are sure of that, also want.

I will allow myself to express some other considerations and I believe you will not take offense and will not consider that I intrude too much into the sphere of [y]our internal affairs. Voting in the elections to the Senate, the House of Representatives and in gubernatorial elections which just took place has resulted in the defeat of your former rival* who was clearly preparing again for the next presidential elections. It is significant that as a result of the elections precisely those

*See Document 12, footnote 2.

candidates were defeated who, if I may use such an expression, were making most frenzied bellicose speeches.

This indicates that the American people began to feel that if the arms race continues further, if a reasonable solution is not found and an understanding is not achieved between our countries then our peoples will feel still more strongly the threat of the dreadful catastrophe of a thermo-nuclear war.

Let us then not keep people of peace all over the world in suspense, let us give them joyous satisfaction. Having cut the knot in the Caribbean we would thereby immediately create better conditions and would reinforce people's hope for coping with other questions which are now awaiting their solution. Peoples expect wisdom from us, first of all from our two states. Of course our two states can not do everything, but all that depends on us in the sense of reaching an understanding will be of decisive importance. Needless to prove that other states would be also satisfied. And he who was especially displeased will have to agree after this understanding is reached that there is no other way of meeting the aspirations of all states, all peoples.

16. Message from President Kennedy to Chairman Khrushchev

JFK continues to seek Khrushchev's acceptance of his proposed method for removing the IL-28s: the Soviet leader should order their withdrawal, after which the president will announce the ending of the blockade. (The IL-28s would leave Cuba within thirty days of Khrushchev's order.)

Washington, November 15, 1962.

I am glad to learn of your assurance of agreement that the IL-28s should be withdrawn.¹ All that remains is to reach understanding on the timing.

Let me review the undertakings in my letter of October twenty-seventh and your letter of October twenty-eighth.² You agreed to remove the weapons systems we described as offensive and with suitable safeguards to halt the further introduction of such weapons into Cuba. On our side, we undertook to agree to remove the quarantine measures in effect and to give assurances against an invasion of Cuba. There were two conditions attached to our undertaking. The first was that the weapons systems would be removed "under appropriate United Nations observation and supervision," and, second, that there would be established "adequate arrangements through the United Nations to ensure the carrying out and continuation of these commitments."

¹See Document 15.

²See Chapter 4, Documents 29 and 33.

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