

Chronology of A Diplomatic Tragedy

On February 1 the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Cape Knox sighted four ~~unarmed~~
unarmed fishing
small Cuban boats trolling 19 miles west southwest of ~~the~~ Marquesas Key, off
the Florida south coast. This seemingly normal and innocent event was the
beginning of an incredible series of blunders, ~~and~~ *and* ~~and~~ ~~mistakes~~ ~~and~~ ~~outright~~
by
~~distortions~~ which in the following five days the United States Government
fashioned a diplomatic disaster of the first magnitude.

INSERT 1 →

It wasn't until February 8 that ~~there~~ were any signs of calm
thinking by responsible officials. By this time Castro had understood the
benefits he could derive and had dramatically turned off the water to our
Guantanamo Naval Base, Secretary of State Rusk had ~~issued~~ *made* a statement notable
for its display of poor judgement and ~~obvious~~ *both* lack of complete forthrightness *and*
less frankness,
and President Johnson had issued a ~~pathetic~~ *pitiful* statement threatening economic
retaliation against *individual workers* Cuban ~~employees~~ and coercion of our allies.

Insert 2

At every step ~~during the week in which~~ *while* the United States, alone and
unassisted, created this crisis, there were obvious warning flags that no one
needed.
~~was~~ Not until the situation was frozen, with no alternatives except

At 1:20 p.m. February 2, one and a half miles east of Southeast Key, the Coast Guard ordered the boats to anchor and stand by for boarding. The Cuban's complied, but weren't boarded until 7 p.m. Inspection, negative in results, took three hours. Not until the next day did the flotilla leave for Key West, arriving at 5:45 p.m. Two full days later, on the evening of February 5, the Federal Government turned men and boats over to the State of Florida, "for handling under State law." ^{Five} ~~Seven~~ minors were separated for repatriation, ^{two men defected,} and the remaining 29 ~~men~~ were jailed in a single cell in which there was not a single cot.

②

~~WORLDWIDE~~ Reaction was strong, world-wide, and not in favor of the action and position of the United States.

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submissiveness and

~~submissiveness~~ and humiliation, not until the prestige of the country, the President

necessity and

and the Secretary of State were irrevocably committed, did any responsible

official realize what every junior clerk in the State Department, ^{should} know, that

diplomats always leave themselves a way out and they never involve ^{unnecessarily} ~~the~~ ^{necessity} ~~their~~ country

or its ranking personalities ^{unnecessarily}.

At the very worst, the presence of these small Cuban boats in American waters, even if intended as a provocation, should have been a very minor affair.

Especially if there was reason to ^{suspect} believe provocation ~~should~~ should the

matter have been handled with great care and thoughtfulness. Instead, within a

few days, our major allies were involved, sensitive international issues were ^{raised}

~~being abused, respected~~ ^{Friendly foreign} ~~foreign~~ leaders and newspapers, ~~friendly to this country,~~

were placed in a position where they had to take public issue with us, even

condemn us as "^{"bullies"} ~~"bullies"~~ and the incident had been escalated into a major crisis,

with no possible benefit or credit to the United States, ^{its image} ~~standing~~ or the principles

for which it stands. Even British Prime Minister Home felt forced to ^{dispute} ~~take issue~~ with

^{publicly} us in the White ^{in and} ~~House~~, on its steps, and every place he was questioned ^{between}

London and Washington.

Rarely do preeminent leaders such as a President or a Secretary of State prepare their public declarations personally. How could those lower in authority

have led them into such a ~~big~~ fiasco- indeed, allowed it to happen?

Chronology of events- sighting, watching, searching of ships with negative results. Unusual delay in taking to port after ~~taking them over~~.
capture

Background of international events - ^{worldwide} major international problems of

United States at that moment- Panama, Cyprus, Vietnam, French recognition of ^{Ghana,} Communist China, etc.; ~~and known~~ ^{interference with} opposition of allies to ~~suppress~~ ^{artificially} non-military ^{another} trade with Cuba, ~~all military~~ ^{against} ~~acting~~ ^{crisis}

Predictable unfavorable reaction of rest of world;

No chance of diplomatic benefit to United States; no chance of harming Castro.

Recent fishing-rights
~~Previous~~ serious incidents involving United States against its allies - ~~and them against each other~~ Japan, Ecuador, Peru, ^{and also} Iceland vs Great Britain and Brazil vs France.

Continuing admitted United States violation of Cuban airspace and alleged violation of ^{its} waters.

Analysis of Rusk's statement- ~~mixes~~ distortions, half-truths, un-truths with respect to fact; turning foreign relations over to State of Florida for specified reasons of vindictiveness; abusive treatment of fishermen; loss of truth and righteousness as major American weapons.

LEONARD NICHOLS JR.

No protest to Cuba until February 4;

Other related circumstances- ~~ships~~ Cubans actually fishing and had fish in

holds; substantiation of their claim of taking shelter from threatening weather;

Coast Guard obviously unworried about contents of boats-no guards on three and

plenty of time ^{and opportunity} for destruction of incriminating evidence by Cubans.

Obvious value of incident to Castro-witness turning off water to Guantanamo

when he didn't during ^{grave} 1962 missile crisis; allowing him to legitimately appear

abused and persecuted; ^fintursion of domestic politics into international relations

(Goldwater, Rockefeller).

Why were President and Secretary of State involved? Analysis of President's

statement. How could their assistants ^{make such mistakes!} ~~permit?~~

What has happened since - second thoughts in US government; ^{unreasonable} reaction of

rest of world. Public action against our demands and ~~can~~ ^{our} ~~prayer~~ ^{prayer} and ~~law~~ ^{law}.

What it means- ^{danger to} Handwriting on wall- ~~loss of~~ United States' international leadership.

- Know opposition of friends and allies to proposals

X Castro's shield as diplomat

X Contact - Situation of US Diplomacy in rest of world - Panama, Vietnam, France, Austria, esp. Algeria, China, Latin trade of services - Spain as wish of loss of US aid, Ghana, Cyprus

X Presentable reaction of rest of world

Europe

GB - esp. those in DC

France

Spain

Australia

X No possible diplomatic benefit to us, not clear
esp. harm to Cuba

X Sensitivity of foreign media - Japan, Peru, Canada, GB, Holland, Belgium, France, etc

X Truth as our weapon - US R's statement

X Whether

Fish on boat

X no indications of Cuban air & water; passenger ships.

X Analysis of Kersh's statement - incomplete & false & deceptive.

X why Kersh & Johnson personally - they didn't prepare statements

X Hand-writing in wall - long ^{air} landing of the plane, etc.

~~Clearly not worried about contents, ships because I had
no US guards & could have airport on anything
with in vicinity~~

~~Also, no pretent to take more 2/4~~

~~First part of fresh ground - 2 in the case, no pencils~~

~~chronology of events~~

~~indications as to why state looking for ^{relations?} ~~real~~~~

~~Intrusion of office when - Gold, Paul,~~

~~What has Asia Kopper?~~