

# Last 3000 Soviet Troops Slated to Leave Cuba

By John M. Hightower  
Associated Press

Johnson Administration officials expect the last large group of Soviet troops in Cuba to be withdrawn within the next two or three weeks. The number due to leave is authoritatively estimated at 3000 officers and men.

The withdrawal, officials here understand, will leave in Cuba only a Soviet military mission, with advisory and training duties. This would number several hundred officers and men—perhaps 600 to 800.

The Soviet forces have been whittled down slowly over 18 months from an estimated top strength of 22,000 at the time of the nuclear missile crisis in October 1962.

While cutting back their own forces the Russians have steadily built up Prime Minister Fidel Castro's military power. One of the final acts of the Soviet troop commands in Cuba, U.S. officials understand, will be to turn over to Castro's forces the operation of 24 anti-aircraft missile bases.

The surface-to-air missiles (SAM's) are capable of destroying even the high-altitude U.S. U-2 reconnaissance jets which regularly fly over Cuba to keep check on military installations.

## Complete Control Doubted

In taking them over, Castro would appear to gain the power to shoot down a U-2 but Washington officials doubt that Soviet Premier Krushchev will give the Cubans blank-check control of the weapons.

Supervision of the use of the weapons may be one of the tasks of the military mission remaining in Cuba.

President Johnson discussed the Cuban situation along with other Moscow-Washington problems in a meeting at the White House Friday with Soviet Ambassador Anatoly F. Dobrynin.

Mr. Johnson is understood

to have stressed that the United States would take an extremely serious view of any spread of communism beyond Cuba into another Latin American country.

The United States is reported also to be ready to inform the Organization of American States that it will not tolerate any new Cuban

*Castro, in interview, calls for concessions on both sides leading to new U.S.-Cuba ties. Page A17.*

interference through the shipment of arms—as in the case of Venezuela — into a Latin American country in an effort to promote revolution.

## Not a Direct Threat

The Johnson Administration does not regard Cuba as any direct military threat to the United States or to any other Latin American country. The danger is believed to lie in Cuba's operation of a base for subversion and propaganda.

The U. S. policy paper on Cuba recently developed in the State Department for use in talks with allied governments, says that Castro's military establishment is "by all odds the most powerful . . . in Latin America," but that its capacity is predominantly defensive.

The paper argues for economic measures against Cuba as offering the only practicable alternative to military action which under present circumstances the United States has ruled out.