

U.S. Warns Castro on

Air Checks Says Cuba to Suffer Consequences If It Fires on Planes

By Murrey Marder
Staff Reporter

The United States publicly cautioned Premier Fidel Castro yesterday that it will continue to fly reconnaissance flights over Cuba, and if they are attacked Cuba must suffer the consequences.

Any interruption of the American surveillance flights to assure that there are no long-range offensive missiles on Cuba, would create "a highly dangerous situation," the State Department rewarned Castro.

What brought the warning was a new Castro protest that the United States is violating Cuban air space. His statement coincided with reports that the last large groups of Soviet troops in Cuba, 3000, are due to be withdrawn by May 1.

Presumably Downed U-2

Soviet surface-to-air missiles were installed in Cuba during the military buildup that culminated in the American-Soviet missile crisis of October, 1962. One of the 24 SAM installations presumably shot down an American U-2 reconnaissance plane on Oct. 27, 1962.

When long-range Soviet missiles and medium-range bombers were withdrawn upon United States demand, the SAM missiles remained as defensive weapons.

American officials long have been pondering whether Castro would get control of those missiles after Soviet military units departed, and if he would show less restraint in handling them.

Seen 'Trigger-Happy'

A high-ranking Administration official yesterday said the United States is concerned that Castro may get "trigger-happy" with the SAMs, precipitating a new Cuban crisis.

Officials here believe the Soviets are anxious to avoid that. But Castro's intentions are less clear.

In a speech Sunday night Castro called on his armed forces to speed up preparations for use of the anti-aircraft missiles. He charged the United States with violating Cuba's air space, and also accused U.S. Marines at the American Guantanamo Bay naval base of "provocations." Castro said he would protest to the United Nations.

There is no international law that permits the United States to fly over Cuba; it is a power that the United States is exerting for its own, and the Hemisphere's, defense.

State Department press

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spokesman Richard I. Phillips recalled yesterday that "overflights are a substitute for the on-site inspection agreed to by the Soviets in October, 1962, but which Fidel Castro refused to permit."

The flights are "thoroughly based on the resolution approved by the Organization of American States on Oct. 23, 1962" to take necessary steps against offensive weapons in Cuba, Phillips added.

Phillips recalled repeated statements by the late President Kennedy and Secretary of State Dean Rusk that made it "unmistakably clear that we regard overflights as a necessity to avoid the deception that was practiced against us in 1962.

Then he repeated Rusk's warning of March, 1963: "If there were any interruption of our surveillance" of Cuba, "... that could create a highly dangerous situation." Said Phillips: "Our publicly expressed position on this question remains unchanged."

The "outflow of (Soviet) troops" from Cuba "continues," said Phillips, "but I would prefer not to be specific as to how many remain." He said those remaining "appear to be primarily engaged in training activities." An estimated 22,000 Soviet troops were in Cuba at the height of the 1962 crisis.

According to current information, said Phillips, the Soviet military is "still in control of the SAM sites," while Cubans are being trained in their operation.

"It is possible" that the "operation and control" will be turned over to Cubans "in the near future," he said. The Soviets "have not made known their intentions in this respect," he added.