

Warheads Were Deployed In Cuba in '62, Soviets Say

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Special to The New York Times

1/29/89

MOSCOW, Jan. 28 — Soviet officials disclosed today for the first time that in the 1962 Cuban missile crisis, Soviet nuclear warheads had already been deployed in Cuba and could have been launched at American cities within a few hours.

The revelation by a senior Soviet military expert came in a conference that brought together for the first time the top-level Soviet, American and Cuban officials involved in the Caribbean showdown.

One of the participants, Sergei N. Khrushchev, son of the late Soviet leader Nikita S. Khrushchev, told reporters tonight that the 20 warheads in Cuba were never attached to the missiles, but that that could have been done very quickly.

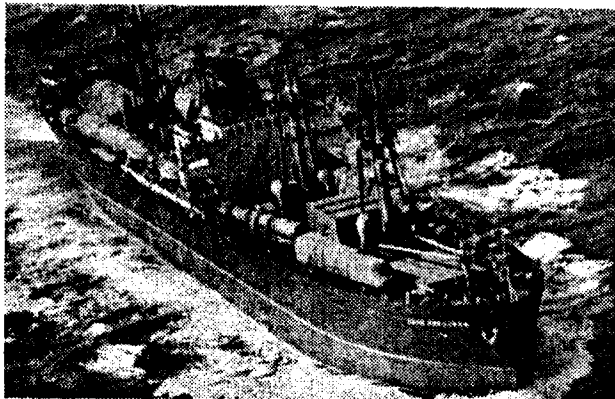
"Even in event of an American invasion or air strike, Soviet offi-

cers in Cuba had no orders to use the missiles," said Mr. Khrushchev, who at the time was an engineer specializing in Soviet rocketry.

The October 1962 showdown between President Kennedy and Khrushchev over the Soviet attempt to install a nuclear missile force in Cuba is widely regarded as the closest the world has come to nuclear war.

The two-day conference here, which was closed to reporters except for the last hour, was the first such encounter involving important figures in the crisis like former Foreign Minister Andrei A. Gromyko; Anatoly F. Dobrynin, the former Soviet Ambassador to the United States; former Defense Secretary Robert S. McNamara; the White House se-

Continued on Page 10, Column 4



United Press International

A Soviet freighter steaming away from Cuba on Nov. 10, 1962, loaded with what appeared to be missiles.

Soviet Warheads Reached Cuba in '62

Continued From Page 1

curity adviser, McGeorge Bundy, and members of the Cuban ruling Politburo.

In his book, "Danger and Survival: Choices About the Bomb in the First 50 Years," published by

Random House in 1988, Mr. Bundy says of himself and several other White House officials, "In the face of this uncertainty the only prudent course was to assume that warheads might be in place."

Participants said the unusually frank dialogue, while not fundamentally changing either side's view of the events, provided new details of the events and miscalculations that kept the three countries in the grip of nuclear fear for several days.

For the first time, for example, Americans heard Mr. Dobrynin's account of his meeting with Robert F. Kennedy on the evening of Oct. 27, in which the two men discussed the possibility that the Americans would remove Jupiter nuclear missiles from Turkey if the Soviets removed their missiles from Cuba.

Khrushchev's Obscure Motive

Robert Kennedy, the President's brother and Attorney General, wrote in his memoirs that the United States refused to publicly trade the Turkish missiles, although they were scheduled to be removed anyway. Mr. Dobrynin told the conference that he had understood that the two sides had an explicit deal to make such a trade.

The discussion did not resolve the hotly disputed question of why Khrushchev took the seemingly reckless step of sending nuclear weapons to Cuba. The former Soviet leader said in his memoirs, and many leading Soviets maintain, that he did it to prevent an American invasion of the island, which the Soviets feared was imminent.

Other Soviet and Western analysts say they believe Khrushchev was motivated more by the large American advantage in nuclear weapons, including those deployed in Turkey and other countries bordering the Eastern bloc.

Some American participants said the conference brought home more strongly than previous evidence the fact that the Soviets genuinely believed the Americans intended to invade Cuba.

Cuba and Intent to Invade

Recently declassified Government documents, made public at the outset of the meeting here, showed that top American officials made active plans for the overthrow of Castro, and seriously contemplated sending American troops to help.

Mr. McNamara tonight insisted firmly that those plans never reached the point of intent to invade, but he said he had told the gathering he now appreciated the Soviet perception.

"I said that I could understand, that it is perfectly clear now, that Cuban leaders and Soviet leaders at that time



Associated Press

Robert S. McNamara, right, former Defense Secretary, and Andrei A. Gromyko, left, former Soviet Foreign Minister, at a conference Friday in Moscow attended by top-level Soviet, American and Cuban officials who had been involved in the 1962 Cuban missile crisis. Behind them was Anatoly F. Dobrynin, former Soviet envoy to Washington.

U.S. suspicions are confirmed at missile-crisis symposium.

believed the U.S. was intending to invade Cuba," he said.

The disclosure that Soviet nuclear warheads reached Cuba before President Kennedy ordered a naval blockade of the island was made by Gen. Dmitri Volkogonov, head of the Moscow military history archives institute, who had been instructed to study documents from the period in preparation for the conference this weekend.

Americans have long debated inconclusively whether the Soviets had managed to deliver warheads to accompany the 42 medium-range missiles installed at sites in Cuba.

'Didn't I Tell You ... ?

Mr. Dobrynin reportedly told the conference today that as Soviet Ambassador to Washington, he had also been kept in the dark about the status of the missiles. According to one participant in the meeting, Mr. Gromyko then interrupted Mr. Dobrynin to say, "Didn't I tell you about that when you saw me off at the airport on my way back to Moscow?"

"No," Mr. Dobrynin reportedly replied, "You didn't."

"Oh," the taciturn Mr. Gromyko said with a slight smile. "It must have been a big secret."

According to participants, General

Volkogonov said that by the time of the Caribbean showdown, 20 warheads had arrived in Cuba, and 20 more were on the Soviet ship Poltava, which was stopped by the American blockade.

Sergei Khrushchev said tonight that the missiles would almost certainly have been aimed at major American cities rather than military objectives, because that was the standard practice of American and Soviet military planners at the time.

To the surprise of some American experts, General Volkogonov reportedly said that at the time, the Soviets only had about 20 intercontinental nuclear missiles aimed at the United States from Soviet territory, so the warheads in Cuba amounted to a doubling of their nuclear threat.

American intelligence experts estimated at the time that the Soviets had 75 long-range missiles pointed toward the United States from Soviet soil.

Soviet and American officials said they hoped the freewheeling discussion of the mishaps and miscalculations in October 1962 would result in lessons for avoiding a similar confrontation.