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Today's Washington Post story on the press conference at the end of the conference, under a headline based on the lead, which says that the US seriously underestimated the size of Soviet armed forces in Cuba, reports that "American participants now appear~~ed~~ to accept that one of Khrushchev's primary goals ~~xxxxxx~~ in unstalling missiles in Cuba was to defend the island against a possible U.S. invasion."

The size of the Soviet military contingent is now put at 40,000 or almost four times the U.S. estimate of the time.

That the US could have so seriously underestimated the number of Soviet military on the island indicates the poor quality of its human intelligence then, I think.

If defending Cuba was the objective, which I have always believed, as my contemporaneous analysis asked, how were missiles to be fired at the US going to prevent the invasion and desolation of Cuba?

There is no way they can if there are any hostilities. Hostilities would have ruined Cuba, whatever the ultimate outcome. Were Cuba to wind up devastated, whether or not still independent, it would hardly have been defended.

There was no way the missiles could have prevented the great destruction that such a war would have caused.

The size of the Soviet manpower in Cuba does reflect the belief that there would be an invasion, and, together with the Cuban forces of about 240,000, they could have been a very strong force against a US invasion, regardless of the size of the US forces.

I think it is apparent that the purpose of placing missiles in Cuba was to discourage any US invasion. No matter how overwhelming the size of the US missile arsenal was, and it was very much greater than that of the USSR, were there to be a war in which missiles with nuclear warheads were used, the US still would have been very severely damaged, with great losses in life and the probable total destruction of many of the most populous areas. With probably more such devastation in the USSR.

Regardless of the size of the Soviet military manpower in Cuba, which the US did not know, any rational intelligence appraisal of the presence of missiles there had to be that the Soviets were determined to prevent an invasion. Any other intelligence estimate is secondary and certainly meant no more than did our missiles in Turkey, on the USSR's border, and other close locations in Europe.

I believe that once again reporting from this conference confirms my contemporaneous analysis, that Khrushchev placed the missiles there for them not to be used but to be seen and for his meaning in placing there to be understood correctly: don't invade Cuba and don't compel the USSR to meet its military obligations under the "mutual assistance" Pact.

# U.S. Underestimated Soviet Force Size

## McNamara Says Communication Failures Fueled '62 Cuban Crisis

By Michael Dobbs  
Washington Post Foreign Service

MOSCOW, Jan. 29—The United States greatly underestimated the number of Soviet forces that would have been prepared to defend Cuba during the 1962 missile crisis, former defense secretary Robert S. McNamara said today.

Addressing a news conference here at the end of a two-day conference on the missile crisis, McNamara said he had assured Soviet and Cuban participants that the United States never had any intention of invading Cuba prior to the outbreak of the crisis. But he said he was convinced that the Cubans genuinely believed that an invasion was likely.

New revelations at the conference, the first-ever meeting of American, Soviet and Cuban officials to discuss the crisis, suggest that there were major failures of communication between Moscow, Washington and Havana. It has become apparent that both president Kennedy and former Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev lacked vital information about each other's motives and actions.

The American participants now appear to accept that one of Khrushchev's primary goals in installing missiles in Cuba was to defend the island against a possible U.S. invasion. When U.S. officials and academics met in Florida in 1987 to discuss the crisis, they speculated that Khrushchev may have been acting to shore up his domestic political position or strengthen his hand over Berlin.

At today's news conference, for-

mer Soviet ambassador to Washington Anatoliy Dobrynin said he was not informed of Khrushchev's decision to install missiles in Cuba until the crisis broke.

"See how great a secret it was," said Dobrynin, who played a key role in conveying messages between Washington and Moscow during the crisis and now serves as a foreign policy adviser to Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev.

Cuban Politburo member Jorge Risquet said that as many as 800,000 persons might have died if the United States had invaded the island at the height of the crisis. He revealed that there were 40,000 Soviet military personnel on the island at the time, supported by Cuba's 240,000-strong standing army.

"We thought there were only 10 or 12 [thousand Soviets]," said McNamara, the senior U.S. ex-official present.

The crisis erupted in mid-October 1962, about 18 months after the Bay of Pigs fiasco when U.S.-armed Cuban guerrillas launched an abortive invasion of the island. Khrushchev finally bowed to intense U.S. pressure and agreed to dismantle the Soviet missiles in return for an American pledge not to invade Cuba.

Cuban and Soviet speakers at the news conference said they had no information about yesterday's report from a knowledgeable Soviet source that Cuban leader Fidel Castro had urged Khrushchev to fire the missiles to forestall a U.S. invasion.