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**The Military Buildup in Cuba**

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## THE MILITARY BUILDUP IN CUBA

### THE PROBLEM

To assess the strategic and political significance of the recent military buildup in Cuba and of the possible future development of additional military capabilities there.

### CONCLUSIONS

A. We believe that the USSR values its position in Cuba primarily for the political advantages to be derived from it, and consequently that the main purpose of the present military buildup in Cuba is to strengthen the Communist regime there against what the Cubans and the Soviets conceive to be a danger that the US may attempt by one means or another to overthrow it. The Soviets evidently hope to deter any such attempt by enhancing Castro's defensive capabilities and by threatening Soviet military retaliation. At the same time, they evidently recognize that the development of an offensive military base in Cuba might provoke US military intervention and thus defeat their present purpose. ((Paras. 1-11))

B. In terms of military significance, the current Soviet deliveries are substantially improving air defense and coastal defense capabilities in Cuba. Their political significance is that, in conjunction with the Soviet statement of 11 September, they are likely to be regarded as ensuring the continuation of the Castro regime in power, with consequent discouragement to the opposition at home and in exile. The threat inherent in these developments is that, to the extent that the Castro regime thereby gains a sense of security at home,

it will be emboldened to become more aggressive in fomenting revolutionary activity in Latin America. (Paras. 18-21)

C. As the buildup continues, the USSR may be tempted to establish in Cuba other weapons represented to be defensive in purpose, but of a more "offensive" character: e.g., light bombers, submarines, and additional types of short-range surface-to-surface missiles (SSMs). A decision to provide such weapons will continue to depend heavily on the Soviet estimate as to whether they could be introduced without provoking a US military reaction. (Paras. 22-28)

D. The USSR could derive considerable military advantage from the establishment of Soviet medium and intermediate range ballistic missiles in Cuba, or from the establishment of a Soviet submarine base there. As between these two, the establishment of a submarine base would be the more likely. Either development, however, would be incompatible with Soviet practice to date and with Soviet policy as we presently estimate it. It would indicate a far greater willingness to increase the level of risk in US-Soviet relations than the USSR has displayed thus far, and consequently would have important policy implications with respect to other areas and other problems in East-West relations. (Paras. 29-33)

E. The Latin American reaction will be to the evidence of an increased Soviet commitment to Cuba, rather than to the technical implications of the military buildup. Many Latin Americans will fear and resent a Soviet military intrusion into the Hemisphere, but will regard the problem as one to be met by the US and not their responsibility. We estimate the chances are better now than they were at Punta del Este to obtain the necessary two-thirds OAS majority for sanctions and other steps short of direct military action aimed at Cuba. If it became clear that the USSR was establishing an "offensive" base in Cuba, most Latin American governments would expect the US to eliminate it, by whatever means were necessary, but many of them would still seek to avoid direct involvement. (Paras. 34-37)

ditional types of short-range missiles depends greatly on whether the Soviets estimate that these weapons can be introduced without precipitating a US intervention. They will realize that the nature of the US reaction will depend not only on types and numbers of weapons, but also on the offensive capability of the total military establishment in Cuba.

#### *Use of Cuba as a Soviet Strategic Missile Base*

29. The establishment on Cuban soil of Soviet nuclear striking forces which could be used against the US would be incompatible with Soviet policy as we presently estimate it. It would indicate a far greater willingness to increase the level of risk in US-Soviet relations than the USSR has displayed thus far, and this would have important policy implications in other areas. However, Soviet military planners have almost certainly considered the contribution which Cuban bases might make to the Soviet strategic posture and, in that connection, the feasibility and utility of deploying nuclear delivery systems to Cuba. Therefore this contingency must be examined carefully, even though it would run counter to current Soviet policy.

30. Soviet planners might see some utility in deploying MRBMs and IRBMs to Cuba in order to supplement the limited number of ICBMs now believed to be operational in the USSR and to reach targets beyond the range of submarine-launched missiles. Cuban-based MRBMs with a range of 1,100 n.m. could reach targets as far north as Philadelphia and Cleveland and as far west as Oklahoma City; the 2,200 n.m. IRBMs could reach all US targets except some points in the Pacific Northwest. All of these targets can now be covered by ICBMs launched from the USSR. However, MRBMs or IRBMs deployed in Cuba would permit nuclear blows at an increased number of targets and would increase the total weight of the attack which could be delivered against the US in the event of general war.

31. The establishment on Cuban soil of a significant strike capability with such weapons would represent a sharp departure from Soviet practice, since such weapons have so far not been installed even in Satellite territory. Serious problems of command and control would arise. There would also have to be a conspicuously larger number of Soviet personnel in Cuba, which, at least initially, would be a political liability in Latin America. The Soviets might think that the political effect of denying the US by stationing Soviet nuclear striking power in so menacing a position would be worth a good deal if they could get away with it. However, they would almost certainly estimate that this could not be done without provoking a dangerous US reaction.

32. A Soviet submarine base in Cuba could be of considerable military value to the USSR. Submarines operating from a Cuban base could be maintained on station off the US coast for much longer periods than can now be sustained in operations from Northern Fleet bases. Such a forward base would permit Soviet missile and torpedo attack submarines, both conventional and nuclear-powered, more readily to conduct routine patrols off the US coast. It is possible that the Soviets might seek to establish such a base in connection with the provision of some submarines to the Cubans. They might reason that even when Soviet use became apparent, the US, with naval bases at Holy Loch and Guantanamo, would be in a poor position to protest. In terms of both feasibility and utility, the establishment of a Soviet submarine base appears more likely than the deployment of Soviet nuclear-armed missile forces to Cuban soil. Even so, the Soviets would probably calculate the risk of US intervention as too great for such an undertaking at the present time.

33. Although the Soviets may see some military advantages in Cuba as a strategic strike base, the risks would be great and the political

implications would run counter to the kind of policy they are actually pursuing in Latin America. They do not propose to win the region for communism by military conquest. They count instead on a process of political action which will build a mass following for Communist or Communist-allied leaders who would then be capable of replacing existing governments.

#### IV. LATIN AMERICAN REACTION AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

34. Much of the Latin American public will react to the military buildup in Cuba and to evidences of Soviet intent to protect Castro without taking account of the particular weapons involved or of their capabilities and without reading between the lines of Soviet statements. Most of these Latin Americans will consider this intrusion of an extra-continental power to be a bad thing in itself, but at the same time will regard the problem as one to be met by the US and not their responsibility. Any disposition on the part of the Latin American governments to do something about it would depend greatly upon the lead given by the US, and this disposition would tend to fade if the US failed to come up with feasible courses of action. Some Latin Americans, of course, will be quick to note that the Soviets had intruded into the Hemisphere and will infer that the US had failed to rebuff this intrusion because it lacked the power or the will to do so.

35. In the Caribbean states there will be a much more pronounced tendency than elsewhere to interpret the military buildup in Cuba as a direct threat. They are not likely to expect that missiles will be fired at them, but that Soviet weapons and Soviet support will encourage Castro to intervene in their countries on behalf of radical revolutionists.

36. Among Latin American governments there are wide differences of opinion as to the role they as individual governments and as members of the OAS should play in the current situation. We estimate the chances are better now than they were at Punta del Este to obtain the two-thirds majority in the OAS required for sanctions and other steps short of direct military action aimed at Cuba. If it became clear that the Soviets were establishing an offensive base in Cuba most Latin American governments would expect the US to intervene and eliminate it, but many of them would still seek to avoid direct involvement.

37. In the longer run, if the Castro regime remains securely in power and the Cuban economy is developed substantially with Soviet help, the cohesion of the inter-American system will probably weaken further. Several countries would probably assume an "independent" position like that of Brazil. They would thereby position themselves for a closer accommodation with the Soviet Union when desired, and would attempt to obtain assistance from both sides, in the manner of India and Indonesia.