

Ex-Officials Meet in Moscow To Match Notes on Cuba Crisis

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MOSCOW, Jan. 27—Many of the top-level participants in the Cuban missile crisis confronted each other eyeball to eyeball across a conference table today for the first time since they stepped back from the edge of nuclear apocalypse in October 1962.

In messages to an unprecedented U.S.-Soviet-Cuban conference that opened here today, both Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev and President Bush said that the missile crisis contained important and en-

during lessons. Today marked the first time that ranking Soviet and Cuban officials have agreed to discuss their roles in the crisis with U.S. officials.

Soviet participants include long-time foreign minister Andrei Gromyko, former ambassador to Washington Anatoliy Dobrynin and Sergei Khrushchev, whose father, Nikita, ordered the stationing of nuclear missiles on Cuba and later agreed to withdraw them under intense American pressure. The Cuban delegation is headed by Politburo member Jorge Risquet.

The U.S. delegation was to have

been headed by Sen. Edward M. Kennedy, but he and John F. Kennedy Jr. both backed out at a late date. American participants include former defense secretary Robert S. McNamara, former national security adviser McGeorge Bundy and former White House special counsel Theodore C. Sorensen.

American participants in today's opening session said that they got a much stronger sense than ever before of Cuban and Soviet fears of an imminent U.S. invasion of Cuba. In his memoirs, Khrushchev insisted that his primary motivation for deploying missiles in Cuba was to deter a U.S. invasion.

McNamara was reported by other participants to have acknowledged that if he had been in the shoes of the Soviet and Cuban officials across the room, he would

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have feared an American attack. He continued to insist, however, that the Kennedy administration had no intention of invading Cuba prior to the missile crisis.

According to recently declassified U.S. papers, the United States had prepared contingency plans for the overthrow of Fidel Castro's pro-Soviet regime by October 1962. The documents make clear that, while encouraging a revolt by disaffected Cubans was the preferred means of deposing Castro, some administration officials favored direct military intervention.

The opening session revealed a dramatic asymmetry in the historical record that will complicate the

task of historians in getting to the truth about the crisis. Participants were able to draw on two trunkloads of U.S. documentation acquired under the Freedom of Information Act, but no Soviet or Cuban documents at all.

Soviet officials did, however, reveal that Washington's nuclear superiority in 1962 was even greater than the 15:1 ratio previously thought. At the time of the crisis, two-thirds of the Soviets' entire missile stock of about 60 launchers was deployed in Cuba.

"I suddenly had the feeling that what Khrushchev was up to was to make Americans have a taste of what it meant to have an enemy's nuclear weapons right on their borders. Since the Soviets were vastly

outnumbered, installing missiles in Cuba was the only way he could achieve this," said Scott Armstrong, director of Washington's nongovernmental National Security Archive and one of the participants in the conference.

In his message to the conference, Gorbachev said that the lesson of the crisis was that "the sharpest conflict could be extinguished thanks to the responsible approach and good sense" exhibited by Khrushchev, Kennedy and Castro.

In his message, Bush described the conference as an example of the "new openness of the Soviet Union" under Gorbachev. He said it could only "improve our mutual understanding of just the sort of episode we must avoid in the nuclear age."