

U.S. Officials Say Soviet Has Given Assurances That Nuclear Arms Will Be Kept Out of Hemisphere

By BENJAMIN WELLES

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Nov. 17 — State Department officials said today that the United States had received private assurances from the Soviet Union that it would not introduce offensive weapons into the Western Hemisphere or establish bases for the use of such weapons. It was understood that "offensive weapons" in this

context was synonymous with nuclear weapons.

The officials said that the assurances reinforced the Oct. 13 statement by the Soviet press agency, Tass, denying United States allegations that the Russians were building their own military base in Cuba. The officials declined to specify where, when or in what form the assurances had been received.

They refrained, however,

from challenging reports of personal meetings in New York last month by Henry A. Kissinger, President Nixon's advisor on national security affairs, with the Soviet Foreign Minister, Andreis Gromyko, and Anatoly F. Dobrynin, the Soviet Ambassador.

They also reiterated the statement that the Nixon Administration was confident that it had an understanding with

the Soviet Union on the issue although they said there was no document of record to affirm the understanding.

Commitment Not to Invade

The United States portion of the understanding described as a commitment not to invade Cuba. The officials cited President John F. Kennedy's pledge to that effect at his news conference on Nov. 20, 1962, following the removal of Soviet

nuclear weapons from Cuba on Nikita S. Khrushchev's orders.

Asked whether the Russians still regarded that commitment as valid, Robert J. McCloskey, the State Department spokesman, replied, "I would assume so."

Mr. McCloskey said that Soviet naval craft—including a submarine tender and two barges used to collect radioactive effluent from nuclear submarines' reactors—were still at Cienfuegos. Their con-

tinuing presence, he said, would not be construed as a violation of the unwritten understanding.

However, he said, they will require close and careful scrutiny. He sidestepped a direct answer when asked whether continuing construction of Soviet shore facilities at Cienfuegos would, in itself, be viewed as a violation of the agreement.

Asked whether it was understood between Washington and Moscow that the Soviet Union

would neither build its own military base, as specified in the Tass statement, or a base for Cuba or for any other country to which the Soviet Union would have access, Mr. McCloskey replied, "Yes."

He added that the understanding on the part of the Nixon Administration covered the entire Western Hemisphere.

He said that the Communist Government headed by Premier Fidel Castro had not been a party to the private exchange

of assurances between United States and Soviet officials.

A Defense Department source said that there had been no reports of Soviet ship movements in or out of Cienfuegos in the last 24 hours. Last week well-placed sources said that they expected the 9,000-ton submarine tender to leave Cienfuegos within the next few days.

"I think they're playing cat and mouse with us," one official commented privately.