



Dangers Coming From Watergate

— Joseph Alsop

AT THE MOMENT, Fidel Castro and his Cubans have thoughtfully prepared positions for the troops and artillery that would be needed to attack the historic American base in Cuba, Guantanamo Bay.

At the moment, again, it appears downright likely that the North Vietnamese will fairly soon tear up whatever remains of the truce agreement so painfully negotiated by Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, and Le Duc Tho. Hanoi's minimum objective, as indicated by massive military preparations in flat violation of the truce agreement, would appear to be tearing away from South Vietnam the northernmost quarter of the South's total territory, Military Region I.

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AT THE MOMENT, finally, there is still an all too serious chance of renewed war in the Middle East, with the Russians actively aiding in the destruction of Israel. In fact, the intelligence community is riven by an argument about why the Russians have greatly diminished their airlift of supplies for the Arabs in the last couple of days.

This could mean that the Kremlin has wished to cool off President Anwar El-Sadat and the Egyptian high command, so that they would negotiate more seriously with Kissinger. But it could also mean that the Kremlin wants to be ready for prompt intervention in a renewed Mid-Eastern war, with the Big Soviet air transports revved up on the south Russian airfields where the Soviet airborne forces are now on alert.

In sum, you may be careless of the most solemn U.S. commitments in South-east Asia; but you still have to begin your calculations with Israel's future, and to end at Guantanamo Bay. However, the Cubans are highly unlikely to use their prepared attack-positions, unless this country has other, large troubles somewhere else.

You may also be in a righteous fever for President Nixon's impeachment. But you still have to include in your calculations the Watergate horror's hideous effect on the U.S. world position. All the foregoing threats are unquestionably Watergate-connected.

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IN TRUTH, these ugly threats would either not exist, or they would not be such serious threats, if those making the threats had not begun to scent how badly Watergate has weakened the President, who has so often in the past proved his toughness and courage in threatening situations overseas. If you are in the currently fashionable fever of righteousness, you will of course say that if the President has been weakened, it is all his own fault. It is an arguable view.

But it is even more arguable that righteousness is less urgently important than the vital U.S. interests that are now threatened. So even the Congress and the famous media might well reflect a bit on what disasters may ensue for the American future, when you have public gloating in both Moscow and Hanoi because the President of the U.S. has been politically crippled.