
THE CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS

A CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS

SOURCE NOTES

This chronology describes key events relating to the Cuban missile crisis. It begins in 1959 and describes the evolution of relations between the United States, the Soviet Union, and Cuba in the period before the missile crisis, focusing particularly on the Soviet military buildup in Cuba during 1962. The chronology also provides a day-by-day (in some cases, hour-by-hour) account of the October missile crisis and the continuing crisis over Soviet IL-28 bombers in Cuba, which extended well into November 1962. Additional entries in the chronology trace the aftermath of the missile crisis with regard to U.S.-Cuban relations.

All times cited in the chronology are Eastern Daylight Time, unless otherwise noted. Square brackets in quoted

text indicate either editorial clarifications or sections excised by government declassification reviewers.

*Each entry is followed by a citation for its sources. Documents that are included in this reader are cited by number. Documents that appear in the National Security Archive's microfiche collection, *The Cuban Missile Crisis, 1962: The Making of U.S. Policy*, are cited by document title and date. Books and periodicals are cited in an abbreviated form, often with references to specific sections or pages. A few unpublished sources and documents that do not appear in the document collection are also cited in this manner. For a listing of the abbreviated titles used in this chronology, see the "Abbreviations" section on pages 399-400.*

January 1, 1959: Fidel Castro assumes power in Cuba, the culmination of the six-year revolution that toppled the government of General Fulgencio Batista.

October 28, 1959: Turkey and the United States sign an agreement for the deployment of fifteen nuclear-tipped Jupiter missiles in Turkey. June 1, 1961, is tentatively set as a target installation date for the first launch site. (*Jupiters in Italy and Turkey*, 10/22/62)

February 4-13, 1960: Soviet First Deputy Prime Minister Anastas Mikoyan visits Cuba and attends the opening of a Soviet trade exhibit in Havana. During

his trip, Mikoyan negotiates economic and trade agreements that help Fidel Castro wean Cuba away from economic dependence on the United States. (*The Military Buildup in Cuba*, 7/11/61)

May 7, 1960: The Soviet Union and Cuba establish diplomatic relations. (Halperin, p. 77)

July 8, 1960: The United States suspends the Cuban sugar quota, effectively cutting off 80 percent of Cuban exports to the United States. The following day, the Soviet Union agrees to buy sugar previously destined for the U.S. market. On October 6, citing the suspension of the sugar quota, Cuba nationalizes ap-

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proximately one billion dollars in U.S. private investments on the island. (*NYT*, 8/7/60; Brenner, p. 528)

August 16, 1960: The first assassination plot by the United States against Fidel Castro is initiated when a CIA official is given a box of Castro's favorite cigars and told to poison them. It is unknown whether any attempt was later made to pass the cigars on to Castro. The plan becomes one of at least eight assassination plots against the Cuban leader devised by the U.S. government between 1960 and 1965, according to a 1975 Senate investigation. (*Alleged Assassination Plots Involving Foreign Leaders*, 11/20/75, p. 73)

August 28, 1960: The United States imposes an embargo on trade with Cuba. (Brenner, p. 528)

September 1960: The first large Soviet Bloc arms shipment arrives in Cuba. Soon afterward, Czech and Soviet technicians are reportedly assisting the Cuban military in assembling equipment and installing weapons such as anti-aircraft batteries. Soviet Bloc personnel also begin to be employed as military instructors, advisers, and technicians. (*The Military Buildup in Cuba*, 7/11/61)

December 19, 1960: Cuba and the Soviet Union issue a joint communiqué in which Cuba openly aligns itself with the domestic and foreign policies of the Soviet Union and indicates its solidarity with the Sino-Soviet Bloc. (*NYT*, 12/20/60)

January 2, 1961: Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev tells a gathering at the Cuban embassy in Moscow: "Alarming news is coming from Cuba at present, news that the most aggressive American monopolists are preparing a direct attack on Cuba. What is more, they are trying to present the case as though rocket bases of the Soviet Union are being set up or are already established in Cuba. It is well known that this is a foul slander. There is no Soviet military base in Cuba." (Abel, p. 15)

January 3, 1961: The United States and Cuba sever diplomatic and consular relations. The United States turns over the handling of its affairs to the Swiss embassy, and the Cuban government refers its affairs to the embassy of Czechoslovakia. (*NYT*, 1/4/61)

January 20, 1961: John F. Kennedy is inaugurated as the thirty-fifth president of the United States.

April 12, 1961: On the eve of the invasion of Cuba at the Bay of Pigs, President Kennedy decides that U.S. armed forces will not take part in the operation. Any conflict that takes place, Kennedy tells his aides in private, will be "between the Cubans themselves." (Sorensen, p. 298)

April 14, 1961: Early in the morning, a group of B-26 bombers piloted by Cuban exiles attack air bases in Cuba. The raid, coordinated by the CIA, is designed to destroy as much of Castro's air power as possible before the scheduled landing of a force of U.S.-trained Cuban exiles. However, to keep the U.S. connection from becoming public, an additional set of airstrikes on Cuban airfields is canceled. (Sorensen, pp. 300-302)

April 17-18, 1961: With U.S. direction, training, and support, a group of about fourteen hundred Cuban émigrés attempt an invasion of Cuba at the Bay of Pigs. Cuban government aircraft that survived the earlier airstrikes are able to pin the invasion force on the beachhead, and without additional supplies of ammunition, the invaders are quickly crushed by Cuban ground forces. Of the anti-Castro émigrés, 114 are killed and 1,189 are captured. In response to the invasion, Fidel Castro orders the arrest of some two hundred thousand suspected dissidents to prevent internal uprisings. (Wyden, p. 303)

April 19, 1961: In a memo for the president, Attorney General Robert Kennedy warns, "if we don't want Russia to set up missile bases in Cuba, we had better decide now what we are willing to do to stop it." Robert Kennedy identifies three possible courses of action: (1) sending American troops into Cuba, a proposal "you [President Kennedy] have rejected...for good and sufficient reasons (although this might have to be reconsidered)"; (2) placing a strict blockade around Cuba; or (3) calling on the Organization of American States (OAS) to prohibit the shipment to Cuba of arms from any outside source. He concludes

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that "something forceful and determined must be done....The time has come for a showdown for in a year or two years the situation will be vastly worse." (Schlesinger, p. 471)

April 19, 1961: In continuing correspondence with President Kennedy after the Bay of Pigs invasion, Premier Khrushchev assures Kennedy that the Soviet Union "does not seek any advantages or privileges in Cuba. We do not have any bases in Cuba, and we do not intend to establish any." Khrushchev, however, also warns against arming Cuban émigrés for future attacks on Cuba. Such a policy of "unreasonable actions," he writes, "is a slippery and dangerous road which can lead the world to a new global war." (*Soviet Public Statements with Respect to Cuban Security*, 9/10/62)

April 27-28, 1961: While at a Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) meeting in Ankara, Turkey, Secretary of State Dean Rusk privately raises the possibility of withdrawing the U.S. Jupiter missiles from Turkey with Turkish Foreign Minister Salim Sarper. Sarper objects to Rusk's suggestion, pointing out that the Turkish Parliament has just approved appropriations for the missiles and that it would be embarrassing for the Turkish government to inform Parliament that the Jupiters now are to be withdrawn. Upon returning to Washington, D.C., Rusk briefs President Kennedy on his discussion with Sarper, and Kennedy accepts the idea of some delay in removing the Jupiters. (*Recollection by Dean Rusk of Negotiating Channel through Andrew Cordier and Details of Negotiations To Remove Jupiters Prior to Crisis*, 2/25/87)

June 3-4, 1961: President Kennedy meets with Premier Khrushchev in Vienna. On the second day of the summit, Khrushchev delivers an ultimatum on the status of Berlin, a continuing source of tension between the two superpowers. Khrushchev threatens to "normalize" the situation in Berlin (and consequently cut Allied access to West Berlin) if the city's status is not resolved within six months. Kennedy tells reporters after the meeting that Khrushchev's demands had made the prospects for war "very real." (Sorensen, p. 549)

June 13, 1961: General Maxwell Taylor submits a report on U.S. limited war programs that President Kennedy had ordered following the Bay of Pigs invasion. Concluding that there is "no long term living with Castro as a neighbor" and that Cuban subversion "constitutes a real menace" to Latin American nations, Taylor calls for the creation of a new program of action against Cuba, possibly employing the full range of political, military, economic, and psychological tactics. (*The Taylor Report on Limited War Programs*, 6/13/61)

August 12-13, 1961: Soviet forces aid the East Germans in erecting the Berlin Wall. U.S.-Soviet tensions over the Berlin situation flare up throughout this period, culminating in a sixteen-hour confrontation between U.S. and Soviet tanks at the Berlin border on October 27-28. However, the construction of the Berlin Wall staunches the destabilizing flow of East Germans to the West, and Nikita Khrushchev allows his "deadlines" on resolving the Berlin question to pass without further incident. (Betts, pp. 255-57)

September 21, 1961: An interagency report on Soviet nuclear capabilities, National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) 11-8/1-61, is disseminated within the government. The NIE and later intelligence reports show for the first time that the Soviet ICBM program is far behind previous U.S. estimates. Only some ten to twenty-five Soviet ICBMs on launchers are believed to exist, with no major increase in Soviet ICBM strength expected in the near future. (*But Where Did the Missile Gap Go?*, 5/31/63, p. 15)

October 21, 1961: In a major speech cleared by Rusk, Bundy, and President Kennedy, Deputy Secretary of Defense Roswell Gilpatric publicly deflates the "missile gap" hypothesis—the theory that the United States is dangerously behind the Soviet Union in its nuclear capabilities. Gilpatric tells his audience in Hot Springs, Virginia, that the United States actually possessed a substantially larger nuclear arsenal than the Soviet Union. (*Address by Roswell Gilpatric, Deputy Secretary of Defense before the Business Council at the Homestead, Hot Springs, Virginia*, 10/21/61; Hilsman, p. 163)

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November 30, 1961: President Kennedy authorizes a major new covert action program aimed at overthrowing the Cuban government. The new program, code-named OPERATION MONGOOSE, will be directed by counterinsurgency specialist Edward G. Lansdale under the guidance of Attorney General Robert Kennedy. A high-level interagency group, the Special Group Augmented (SGA), is created with the sole purpose of overseeing Mongoose. (*The Cuba Project*, 3/2/62; *Alleged Assassination Plots Involving Foreign Leaders*, 11/20/75, pp. 139, 144)

Late 1961 or early 1962: William K. Harvey is put in charge of Task Force W, the CIA unit for OPERATION MONGOOSE. Task Force W operates under guidance from the SGA and subsequently will involve approximately four hundred Americans at CIA headquarters and its Miami station, in addition to about two thousand Cubans, a private navy of speedboats, and an annual budget of some \$50 million. Task Force W carries out a wide range of activities, mostly against Cuban ships and aircraft outside Cuba (and non-Cuban ships engaged in Cuban trade), such as contaminating shipments of sugar from Cuba and tampering with industrial products imported into the country. (*Alleged Assassination Plots Involving Foreign Leaders*, 11/20/75, p. 140; Branch)

January 1, 1962: The New Year's Day parade in Cuba provides U.S. intelligence sources with the first reliable intelligence on the extent of Soviet Bloc arms deliveries to Cuba. Aircraft in the possession of the Cuban Revolutionary Air Force are estimated to include around sixty Soviet-built jet fighters, primarily MiG-15 and MiG-17 aircraft with a limited number of somewhat more advanced MiG-19 planes. Small numbers of helicopters and light transport aircraft are also believed to have been provided to Cuba. (*CINCLANT Historical Account of Cuban Crisis*, 4/29/63, pp. 6-8)

January 18, 1962: Edward Lansdale outlines "The Cuba Project," a program under OPERATION MONGOOSE aimed at the overthrow of the Castro govern-

ment. Thirty-two planning tasks, ranging from sabotage actions to intelligence activities, are assigned to the agencies involved in Mongoose. The program is designed to develop a "strongly motivated political action movement" within Cuba capable of generating a revolt eventually leading to the downfall of the Castro government. Lansdale envisioned that the United States would provide overt support in the final stages of an uprising, including, if necessary, using military force. (*The Cuba Project*, 1/18/62; *Alleged Assassination Plots Involving Foreign Leaders*, 11/20/75, p. 142)

January 19, 1962: A meeting of the SGA is held in Robert Kennedy's office. Notes taken by CIA representative George McManus contain the following passages: "Conclusion Overthrow of Castro is Possible... a solution to the Cuban problem today carried top priority in U.S. Gov[ernment]. No time, money, effort—or manpower is to be spared. Yesterday... the president indicated to [Robert Kennedy] that the final chapter had not been written—it's got to be done and will be done." McManus attributes the phrase "top priority in the U.S. government—no time, money... to be spared" to Attorney General Kennedy. (*Alleged Assassination Plots Involving Foreign Leaders*, 11/20/75, p. 141)

January 22-30, 1962: A conference of the OAS is held in Punta del Este, Uruguay. At the close of the conference on October 30, the foreign ministers from the twenty-one American republics vote to exclude Cuba "from participation in the inter-American system." The measure is approved fourteen-to-one, with six abstentions. Another resolution is also adopted prohibiting OAS members from selling arms to Cuba and setting measures for collective defense against Cuban activities in the hemisphere. (*U.S. Policy toward Cuba and Related Events 1 November 1961 - 15 March 1963*, 3/16/63, pp. 9-10; Sorensen, p. 669-70)

February 1962: The Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) establishes a "first priority basis" for the completion of all contingency plans for military action against Cuba. (*USCONARC Participation in the Cuban Crisis*, 10/63, p. 17)

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February 20, 1962: Edward Lansdale presents a six-phase schedule for OPERATION MONGOOSE designed to culminate in October 1962 with an "open revolt and overthrow of the Communist regime." The basic plan includes political, psychological, military, sabotage, and intelligence operations as well as proposed "attacks on the cadre of the regime, including key leaders." Lansdale notes that a "vital decision" has not yet been made regarding possible U.S. military actions in support of plans to overthrow Fidel Castro. (*Alleged Assassination Plots Involving Foreign Leaders*, 11/20/75, pp. 143-44)

February 26, 1962: At a meeting of the SGA, the scale of Lansdale's "Cuba Project" is sharply reduced, and Lansdale is directed to develop a detailed plan for an intelligence-gathering program only. On March 1, the SGA confirms that the immediate objective of the program would be intelligence collection and that all other actions would be inconspicuous and consistent with the U.S. overt policy of isolating Castro and neutralizing Cuban influence in the hemisphere. (*Document 6, Guidelines for Operation Mongoose*, 3/14/62; *Alleged Assassination Plots Involving Foreign Leaders*, 11/20/75, p. 145)

March 14, 1962: Guidelines for OPERATION MONGOOSE are approved by the SGA. Drafted by Maxwell Taylor, they note that the United States would attempt to "make maximum use of indigenous resources" in trying to overthrow Fidel Castro but recognize that "final success will require decisive U.S. military intervention." Indigenous resources would act to "prepare and justify this intervention, and thereafter to facilitate and support it." Kennedy is briefed on the guidelines on March 16. (*Document 6, Guidelines for Operation Mongoose*, 3/14/62; *Alleged Assassination Plots Involving Foreign Leaders*, 11/20/75, pp. 145-47, 159)

April 1962: U.S. Jupiter missiles in Turkey become operational. All positions are reported "ready and manned" by U.S. personnel. (*History of the Jupiter Missile System*, 7/27/62)

Late April 1962: While vacationing in the Crimea, across the Black sea from Turkey, Khrushchev reflects on the Turkish missiles and reportedly conceives the idea of deploying similar weapons in Cuba. Soviet sources have identified three reasons that might have led Khrushchev to pursue the idea seriously. The deployment of missiles in Cuba would: (1) perhaps most important, increase Soviet nuclear striking power, which lagged far behind that of the United States; (2) deter the United States from invading Cuba; and (3) psychologically end the double standard by which the United States stationed missiles on the Soviet perimeter but denied the Soviets a reciprocal right.

Upon returning to Moscow, Khrushchev discusses the idea with First Deputy Prime Minister Anastas Mikoyan. Although Mikoyan is opposed, Khrushchev asks a group of his closest advisers, including Frol Kozlov, Commander of the Strategic Rocket Forces (SRF) Sergei Biryuzov, Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko, and Marshal Malinovsky to evaluate the idea. The group proposes that a mission be sent to Cuba to see if Fidel Castro would agree to the proposed deployment and to determine whether the deployment could be undertaken without being detected by the United States. (Garthoff 1, p. 13)

May 1962: Deliberations regarding the possible installation of missiles in Cuba continue in Moscow. In early May, Khrushchev informs the newly designated ambassador to Cuba, Aleksandr Alekseyev, of the plan. Although Alekseyev expresses concern over the idea (as did Gromyko and Mikoyan at different times), it is decided that Alekseyev and Marshal Biryuzov should secretly travel to Cuba to explore the question with Castro. (See May 30, 1962, entry.)

Following further discussions in May and June, Khrushchev authorizes Soviet military officials to decide independently on the exact composition of nuclear forces to be deployed in Cuba. The military proposes a force of twenty-four medium-range ballistic missile (MRBM) launchers and sixteen intermediate-range (IRBM) launchers; each of the launchers would be equipped with two missiles (one serving as a spare) and a nuclear warhead. Soviet officials also decide that a large contingent of Soviet combat forces should be

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sent to Cuba. The proposed Soviet contingent includes four elite combat regiments, twenty-four advanced SA-2 surface-to-air missile (SAM) batteries, forty-two MiG-21 interceptors, forty-two IL-28 bombers, twelve Komar-class missile boats, and coastal defense cruise missiles. (Garthoff 1, pp. 12-18)

May 8, 1962: A multiservice military exercise designed to test contingency planning for Cuba begins. The operation, codenamed Whip Lash, concludes on May 18. Another U.S. military exercise in the Caribbean known as Jupiter Springs is planned for sometime in the spring or summer. Soviet and Cuban sources have suggested that the series of U.S. military exercises conducted in the region throughout the year are perceived as additional evidence of U.S. intentions to invade Cuba. (*operation mongoose, 4-10 May, 5/10/62; Garthoff 1, p. 31*)

May 29, 1962: Sharif Rashidov, an alternate member of the Soviet Presidium, arrives in Cuba with a delegation, ostensibly on a ten-day mission to study irrigation problems. The presence of the ambassador-designate in Cuba, Aleksandr Alekseyev, Marshal Biryuzov, and two or three military experts is not known to the United States. Shortly before the departure of the delegation, Premier Khrushchev informs all Presidium members that the Soviet Union plans to deploy nuclear missiles in Cuba and that Biryuzov and Alekseyev will broach the idea with the Cuban government.

On the evening of its arrival, the Soviet delegation meets with Fidel Castro and his brother Raúl, the Cuban minister of defense. Expressing their concern over the possibility of a new U.S. invasion of Cuba, the Soviet officials state that the Soviet Union is prepared to assist Cuba in fortifying its defenses, even to the extent of deploying nuclear missiles on Cuban soil. Castro responds by calling the idea "interesting," but tells the group that he will need to consult with his colleagues before providing a final answer. (Alekseyev, pp. 7-8)

May 30, 1962: After conferring with Raúl Castro, Che Guevara, Osvaldo Dorticos and Blas Roca, Fidel Cas-

tro informs the visiting Soviet officials that Cuba will accept the deployment of nuclear weapons. Since the crisis, Castro and other Cuban sources have suggested that this decision was made not only because the missiles would serve to deter a U.S. invasion but also because the Cuban government wished to shift the "correlation of forces" in favor of socialism. In addition, Havana felt indebted to the Soviet Union for its support of the Cuban revolution.

July 2, 1962: Raúl Castro and a high-level Cuban military delegation arrive in Moscow, where they are met at the airport by Marshal Rodion Malinovsky and Anastas Mikoyan. Nikita Khrushchev subsequently meets with Raúl Castro on July 3 and 8. During these discussions, detailed arrangements are made for the missile deployment. According to the formal agreement, which is renewable every five years, the missiles and their servicing will be completely under the jurisdiction of the Soviet military command. Raúl Castro spends a total of two weeks consulting with Soviet officials before returning to Cuba on July 17. (Alekseyev, p. 9; Medvedev, p. 184; Garthoff 2, p. 67)

July 15, 1962: Around this time, Soviet cargo ships begin moving out of the Black Sea for Cuba with false declarations of their destinations and reporting tonnages well below their capacities. Aerial reconnaissance of the ships in the following months showing them "riding high in the water" would confirm that the vessels carried unusually light cargo, typically a sign that military equipment is being transported. (*The Soviet Bloc Armed Forces and the Cuban Crisis: A Chronology July-November 1962, 6/18/63, p. 1*)

July 17, 1962: Raúl Castro leaves Moscow after two weeks of secret talks with Nikita Khrushchev and other high-ranking Soviet officials on the scheduled deployment of Soviet nuclear missiles in Cuba. (See entry for July 2, 1962, above.) Although aware of the military makeup of the Cuban delegation, the fact that no public communiqué is issued after the visit leads the U.S. intelligence community at first to believe that the mission had failed. Upon his return to Cuba, Raúl Castro tells a gathering that neither internal uprisings

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nor exile landings are a threat, only a U.S. invasion, which, he said, "we can now repel." (*Forwarding of and Comments on CIA Memo on Soviet Aid to Cuba*, 8/22/62; Allison, p. 48; Garthoff 2, p. 67)

July 25, 1962: Edward Lansdale provides the SGA an assessment of Phase One of OPERATION MONGOOSE. Some successes are reported, such as the infiltration of eleven CIA guerrilla teams into Cuba, including one team in Pinar del Río Province that has grown to as many as 250 men. Nonetheless, Lansdale warns that "time is running out for the U.S. to make a free choice on Cuba." (Document 7, Brig. Gen. Edward Lansdale, *Review of operation mongoose*, 7/25/62)

July 26, 1962: On the ninth anniversary of the 26th of July Movement, Fidel Castro states that "mercenaries" no longer pose a threat to Cuba: President Kennedy had already "made up his mind" to invade Cuba, he asserts, but Cuba has acquired new arms to beat back such a direct attack. (Draper, p. 39; CR, 1/30/63)

August 1962: U.S. intelligence receive several reports of Soviet missiles in Cuba during the month, all of which are either linked to SAM or cruise missiles or shown to be incorrect. After late August, numbers of such reports increase, as do reported sightings of MiG-21s and IL-28s. (*The Cuban Crisis, 1962, ca. 8/22/63*, pp. 10-11)

August 10, 1962: After examining CIA reports on the movement of cargo ships from the Black and Baltic seas to Cuba, CIA Director John McCone dictates a memorandum for the president expressing the belief that Soviet MRBMs are destined for Cuba. McCone's memorandum is sent over the objections of subordinates concerned that McCone has no hard evidence to back up his suspicions. (*Chronology of John McCone's Suspicions on the Military Build-up in Cuba Prior to Kennedy's October 22 Speech*, 11/30/62; *Recollection of Intelligence Prior to the Discovery of Soviet Missiles and of Penkovsky Affair*, n.d.)

August 13, 1962: Aleksandr Alekseyev arrives in Havana to take up his post as the Soviet ambassador to

Cuba. Alekseyev delivers to Fidel Castro the text of the agreement governing the missile deployment that Raúl Castro had worked out during his June visit to Moscow. Castro makes a few corrections in the text and gives it to Che Guevara to take to Moscow in late August. The text calls for "taking measures to assure the mutual defense in the face of possible aggression against the Republic of Cuba" (see August 27, entry). (*The Soviet Bloc Armed Forces and the Cuban Crisis: A Chronology July-November 1962*, 6/18/63, p. 6; Alekseyev, p. 10; *Draft Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Cuba and the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on military cooperation for the defense of the national territory of Cuba in the event of aggression*)

August 17, 1962: On the basis of additional information, CIA Director John McCone states at a high-level meeting that circumstantial evidence suggests that the Soviet Union is constructing offensive missile installations in Cuba. Dean Rusk and Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara disagree with McCone, arguing that the buildup is purely defensive. (*Chronology of John McCone's Suspicions on the Military Build-up in Cuba Prior to Kennedy's October 22 Speech*, 11/30/62)

August 20, 1962: Maxwell Taylor, the chairman of the SGA, informs President Kennedy in a memo that the SGA sees no likelihood that the Castro government can be overthrown without direct U.S. military intervention. Taylor reports that the SGA recommends a more aggressive OPERATION MONGOOSE program. Kennedy authorizes the development of aggressive plans aimed at ousting Castro, but specifies that no overt U.S. military involvement should be made part of those plans (see entry for August 23, 1962, below). (*Alleged Assassination Plots Involving Foreign Leaders*, 11/20/75, p. 147)

August 23, 1962: President Kennedy calls a meeting of the National Security Council (NSC) to air John McCone's concerns that Soviet missiles were in the process of being introduced into Cuba. Although Dean Rusk and Robert McNamara argue against Mc-

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Cone's interpretation of the military buildup in Cuba, Kennedy concludes the meeting by saying that a contingency plan to deal with a situation in which Soviet nuclear missiles are deployed in Cuba should be drawn up.

Kennedy's instructions are formalized in National Security Action Memorandum (NSAM) 181, issued that same day. Kennedy directs that several additional actions and studies to be undertaken "in light of the evidence of new bloc activity in Cuba." Papers are to consider the pros and cons of a statement warning against the deployment of any nuclear weapons in Cuba; the psychological, political, and military effect of such a deployment; and the military options that might be exercised by the United States to eliminate such a threat. In addition, Kennedy requests that the Defense Department investigate what actions could be taken to remove U.S. Jupiter nuclear missiles from Turkey. With regard to Mongoose, Kennedy orders that "Plan B Plus," a program aimed at overthrowing Castro without overtly employing the U.S. military, be developed "with all possible speed." (*Document 12, National Security Action Memorandum 181, on Actions and Studies in Response to New Soviet Bloc Activity in Cuba, 8/23/62; Recollection of Intelligence Prior to the Discovery of Soviet Missiles and of Penkovsky Affair, n.d.; Chronology of John McCone's Suspicions on the Military Build-up in Cuba Prior to Kennedy's October 22 Speech, 11/30/62*)

August 26, 1962: Che Guevara, Cuba's Minister of Industries, and Emilio Aragonés Navarro, a close associate of Fidel Castro, arrive in the Soviet Union. On August 30, Guevara and Aragonés meet with Nikita Khrushchev at his dacha in the Crimea, where Guevara delivers Castro's amendments to the Soviet-Cuban agreement governing the deployment of missiles in Cuba. Although Guevara urges Khrushchev to announce the missile deployment publicly, the Soviet premier declines to do so. The agreement is never signed by Khrushchev, possibly to preclude the Cuban government from leaking it. Following additional talks in Prague, Guevara and Aragonés return to Cuba on September 6. (*Evidence of Soviet Military Commitment To Defend Cuba, 10/19/62; Visit to the*

Soviet Union by Che Guevara and Emilio Aragonés, 8/31/62; Alekseyev, pp. 9-10; Garthoff 1, p. 25)

August 29, 1962: A high-altitude U-2 surveillance flight provides conclusive evidence of the existence of SA-2 SAM missile sites at eight different locations in Cuba. Additional reconnaissance shortly thereafter also positively identifies coastal defense cruise missile installations for the first time. However, U-2 photography of the area around San Cristóbal, Cuba, where the first nuclear missile sites are later detected, reveals no evidence of construction at this time. (*CINCLANT Historical Account of Cuban Crisis, 4/29/63, pp. 7-8; Interim Report by the Preparedness Investigating Subcommittee on the Cuban Military Buildup, 5/9/63, p. 6; The Soviet Bloc Armed Forces and the Cuban Crisis: A Chronology July-November 1962, 6/18/63, p. 7*)

August 29, 1962: At a news conference, President Kennedy tells reporters: "I'm not for invading Cuba at this time...an action like that...could lead to very serious consequences for many people." Kennedy repeats that he has seen no evidence that Soviet troops were stationed in Cuba and stated that there was "no information as yet" regarding the possible presence of air defense missiles in Cuba. (*President's News Conference of August 29, 1962, 8/29/62*)

August 31, 1962: President Kennedy is informed that the August 29 U-2 mission has confirmed the presence of SAM batteries in Cuba. (Sorensen, p. 670)

August 31, 1962: Senator Kenneth Keating tells the U.S. Senate that there is evidence of Soviet "rocket installations in Cuba." Keating urges President Kennedy to take action and proposes that the OAS send an investigative team to Cuba. Although Keating's sources of information remain unclear, it appears that he simply made firm declarations based on rumors and reports that U.S. intelligence officials consider too "soft" to be definitive. (*Soviet Activities in Cuba, 8/31/62; Paterson 1, p. 98*)

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First week of September 1962: Soviet troops belonging to four elite armored brigades are believed to have begun arriving in Cuba at this time. Troops belonging to the combat groups continue to embark through the second week of October. However, U.S. intelligence does not recognize the existence of the organized combat units until the middle of the missile crisis, on October 25 (see entry for that date). (*The Soviet Bloc Armed Forces and the Cuban Crisis: A Chronology July–November 1962*, 6/18/63, p. 13)

September 3, 1962: At President Kennedy's request, senior State Department official Walt Rostow submits his assessment of the Soviet military buildup. According to Rostow, while the SAMs do not pose a threat to U.S. national security, a "line should be drawn at the installation in Cuba or in Cuban waters of nuclear weapons or delivery vehicles...." Rostow recommends that current OPERATION MONGOOSE activities be intensified but also suggests studying the possibility of having independent anti-Castro groups oust Castro with minimal U.S. assistance. (Document 14, *W. W. Rostow's Memorandum to the President, Assessing Soviet Military Aid to Cuba*, 9/3/62)

September 4, 1962: Following a discussion between President Kennedy, Dean Rusk, and Robert McNamara, during which they review evidence that SAM sites and possibly a submarine base are under construction in Cuba, Attorney General Robert Kennedy meets with Soviet Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin. Dobrynin tells the attorney general that he has been instructed by Premier Khrushchev to assure President Kennedy that there would be no surface-to-surface missiles or offensive weapons placed in Cuba. After his meeting with Dobrynin, Robert Kennedy relates the conversation to the president and suggests issuing a statement making it clear that the United States will not tolerate the introduction of offensive weapons into Cuba. (Kennedy, pp. 24–26)

September 4, 1962: President Kennedy releases a statement revealing that SAMs and substantially more military personnel than previously estimated have been detected in Cuba. Kennedy also declares:

"There is no evidence of any organized combat force in Cuba from any Soviet Bloc country; of military bases provided to Russia; of a violation of the 1934 treaty relating to Guantánamo; of the presence of offensive ground-to-ground missiles; or of other significant offensive capability....Were it otherwise the gravest issues would arise." (*President Kennedy's Statement on Soviet Military Shipments to Cuba*, 9/4/62)

September 7, 1962: Soviet Ambassador Dobrynin assures U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Adlai Stevenson that "only defensive weapons are being supplied" to Cuba. (*The Soviet Bloc Armed Forces and the Cuban Crisis: A Chronology July–November 1962*, 6/18/63, p. 13)

September 7, 1962: The U.S. Tactical Air Command (TAC) establishes a working group to begin developing plans for a coordinated air attack against Cuba to be launched well before an airborne assault and amphibious landing. Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) military planners have, until then, made no provision for such an operation. (*The Air Force Response to the Cuban Crisis 14 October–November 1962*, 1/63)

September 11, 1962: TASS releases an authorized Soviet government statement condemning U.S. overseas bases and denying any intention of introducing offensive weapons into Cuba. The statement declares: "The arms and military equipment sent to Cuba are intended solely for defensive purposes.... [T]here is no need for the Soviet Union to set up in any other country—Cuba for instance—the weapons it has for repelling aggression, for a retaliatory blow." (*Soviet Statement on U.S. Provocations*, 9/11/62)

September 13, 1962: President Kennedy, speaking at a news conference, states that Fidel Castro, "in a frantic effort to bolster his regime," is attempting to "arouse the Cuban people by charges of an imminent American invasion." The president reiterates that new movements of Soviet technical and military personnel to Cuba do not constitute a serious threat and that "unilateral military intervention on the part of the

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United States cannot currently be either required or justified." Nevertheless, he again warns that if Cuba "should ever attempt to export its aggressive purposes by force...or become an offensive military base of significant capacity for the Soviet Union, then this country will do whatever must be done to protect its own security and that of its allies." (*The President's News Conference of September 13, 1962, 9/13/62*)

September 15, 1962: The *Poltava*, a Soviet large-hatch cargo ship, docks at the port of Mariel, Cuba, apparently carrying the first MRBMs to be deployed. U.S. intelligence sources report what appears to be unloading of MRBMs at that port September 15-17 and the movement of a convoy of at least eight MRBMs to San Cristóbal, where the first missile site is constructed. (*The Soviet Bloc Armed Forces and the Cuban Crisis: A Chronology July-November 1962, 6/18/63, p. 15; Allyn, p. 152*)

September 19, 1962: The United States Intelligence Board (USIB) approves a report on the Soviet arms buildup in Cuba. Its assessment, Special National Intelligence Estimate (SNIE) 85-3-62, states that some intelligence indicates the ongoing deployment of nuclear missiles to Cuba. In particular, the report notes: (1) two large-hatch Soviet lumber ships, the *Omsk* and the *Poltava*, had been sighted "riding high in the water," suggesting that they carried military cargo; (2) intelligence accounts of sightings of missiles and a report that Fidel Castro's private pilot, after a night of drinking in Havana, had boasted, "We will fight to the death and perhaps we can win because we have everything, including atomic weapons"; and (3) evidence of the ongoing construction of elaborate SA-2 air defense systems.

The report asserts that the Soviet Union "could derive considerable military advantage from the establishment of Soviet medium and intermediate range ballistic missiles in Cuba...." However, it concludes that "the establishment on Cuban soil of Soviet nuclear striking forces which could be used against the U.S. would be incompatible with Soviet policy as we presently estimate it...[and the Soviets] would almost certainly estimate that this could not be done without

provoking a dangerous U.S. reaction." (Document 13, *CIA National Intelligence Estimate, The Military Buildup in Cuba, 9/19/62*)

September 20, 1962: A Senate resolution on Cuba sanctioning the use of force, if necessary, to curb Cuban aggression and subversion in the western hemisphere, passes the Senate by a vote of eighty-six to one. The resolution states that the United States is determined "to prevent the creation or use of an externally supported offensive military capability endangering the security of the U.S." and to "support the aspirations of the Cuban people for a return to self-determination."

In the House of Representatives, a foreign aid appropriations bill is approved with three amendments designed to cut off aid to any country permitting the use of its merchant ships to transport arms or goods of any kind to Cuba. (*Joint [Congressional] Resolution Expressing the Determination of the United States with respect to the Situation in Cuba, 10/3/62; CR, 1/31/63*)

September 21, 1962: In a speech to the U.N. General Assembly, Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko charges the United States with whipping up "war hysteria" and threatening to invade Cuba. Gromyko states that "any sober-minded man knows that Cuba is not...building up her forces to such a degree that she can pose a threat to the United States or...to any state of the Western Hemisphere." Gromyko further warns that any U.S. attack on Cuba or on Cuba-bound shipping would mean war. (*Statement by Andrei Gromyko before the U.N. General Assembly Including Comments on U.S. Policy toward Cuba, 9/21/62*)

September 27, 1962: The plan for a coordinated tactical air attack on Cuba in advance of an airborne assault and amphibious landing is presented to Curtis LeMay, the Air Force chief of staff. The concept is approved and October 20, is set as the date when all preparations needed to implement such an attack should be completed. (*The Air Force Response to the Cuban Crisis 14 October-24 November 1962, 1/63, Tab B-2*)