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INTEL BRIEFING

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TUESDAY, OCTOBER 16, 1962

Carter: It would appear that with this type of missile, with the solid propellant and inertial guidance system, that they could well be operational within two weeks, as we look at the pictures now. And once operational they could fire on very little notice. They'll have a refire rate of from four to six hours, for each launcher.

President Kennedy: What about the vulnerability of such a missile to bullets?

Robert McNamara: Highly vulnerable, Mr. President.

Carter: They're vulnerable. They're not nearly as vulnerable as the oxygen propellant, but they are vulnerable to ordinary rifle fire.

We have no evidence whatsoever of any nuclear warhead storage near the field launchers. However, ever since last February we have been observing an unusual facility which now has automatic anti-aircraft weapon protection. This is at Bejucal. There are some similarities but also many points of dissimilarity between this particular facility and the national [nuclear] storage sites in the Soviet Union. It's the best candidate for a site, and we have that marked for further surveillance. However, there is really totally inadequate evidence to say that there is a nuclear storage capability now.



These are field-type launchers. They have mobile support, erection, and check-out equipment. And they have a four-in-line deployment pattern in launchers which is identical, complexes about five miles apart, representative of the deployments that we note in the Soviet Union for similar missiles.

President Kennedy: General, how long would you say we had before these, at least to the best of your ability for the ones we now know, will be ready to fire?

Carter: Well our people estimate that these could be fully operational within two weeks. This would be the total complex. If they're the oxygen type, we have no . . . it would be considerably longer, since we don't have any indication of oxygen refueling there, nor any radars.

Alexis Johnson: This wouldn't rule out the possibility that one of them might be operational very much sooner.

Carter: Well, one of them could be operational much sooner. Our people feel that this has been being put in since, probably, early September. We have had two visits of a Soviet ship that has an eight-foot hold capacity sideways. And this, about so far, is the only delivery vehicle that we would have any suspicion that they came in on. And that came in late August, and one in early September.

George Ball: Why would they have to be sideways though?

Carter: Well, it's just easier to get them in, I guess.