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PAPERS OF JOHN F. KENNEDY
PRESIDENTIAL PAPERS
PRESIDENT'S OFFICE FILES

Presidential Recordings

Transcripts

Cuban Missile Crisis Meetings
October 16, 1962



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FOREWORD

TRANSCRIPT WARNING. All written transcripts are imperfect abstracts of spoken conversation. Variations in sound quality and in the aural acuity of listeners can and do produce wide variations in what is heard. Even though transcripts may be prepared at great effort and with great care, many points of ambiguity are inevitable, and erroneous interpretations from transcripts are always possible. Therefore, to ensure full confidence in any and all quotations from the presidential recordings, users are strongly urged to check all transcript renditions against the actual tape recordings before publication.

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PUNCTUATION. The following conventions are used throughout the transcripts:

* * * To indicate a pause in the recording while the speaker listens to the person speaking at the other end of the telephone. Used when only one side of a telephone conversation is recorded.

[?] When the transcriber is not certain of what is said on the recording.

. . . . To indicate a sentence which the speaker trails off without completing it.

. . . When a speaker is interrupted before a sentence is completed.

_____ To indicate the speaker's emphasis.

[] Used to enclose editorial comments of the transcriber such as [Meeting appears to be breaking up.] or [Several speakers speak at once and none of the words are intelligible.].

NAMES. The first time a name is mentioned, the full name is provided whenever it is known. "JFK" and "RFK" are used for President Kennedy and Robert Kennedy, respectively. When the identity of a speaker is unknown, "Speaker?" is used; when the identification of a speaker is uncertain, a question mark follows the name. The Tables of Contents list only the participants who have been at least tentatively identified as speakers. The heading of each transcript gives the names of all participants listed in the President's Appointment Books as scheduled to attend the meeting.

PAPERS OF JOHN F. KENNEDY
PRESIDENTIAL PAPERS
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Presidential Recordings

Transcript

This transcript is from audiotape 28.1.

There are 35 pages of transcript representing 69
minutes of recorded conversation. See transcript heading
for further information.

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AUDIO RECORDINGS BEFORE PUBLICATION

OFF-THE-RECORD MEETING ON CUBA
October 16, 1962
11:50 A.M. - 12:57 P.M.

Caroline:

JFK:

Caroline:

JFK:

Caroline:

JFK:

[Laughter]

Speaker ?:

[Words unintelligible]

JFK?:

Okay.

Lundahl:

This is a result of the photography taken Sunday, sir.

JFK:

Yeah.

Lundahl:

There's a medium-range ballistic missile launch site and two new military encampments on the southern edge of Sierra del Rosario in west central Cuba.

JFK:

Where would that be?

Lundahl:

Uh, west central, sir. That. . . .

Speaker ?:

South of [word unintelligible], south. . . .

Speaker ?:

I think this [other?] [gray or grade?] represents your three dots, we're talking about. Industrial.

JFK:

Yeah.

Lundahl?:

Have you got the [word unintelligible]?

Speaker ?:

Yes, sir.

Lundahl?:

The president would like to see those.

Lundahl:

Well, on site on one of the encampments contains a total of at least fourteen canvas-covered missile trailers measuring 67 feet in length, 9 feet in width. The overall length of the trailers plus the tow-bars is approximately 80 feet. The other encampment contains vehicles and tents but with no missile trailers.

Speaker ?:

These are the launchers here. These are missile bases up the

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[words unintelligible].

Lundahl?: In this instance, the missile trailer is backing up to the launch point. The launching of this particular [word unintelligible] is here. The missile [can?]/[words unintelligible] hasn't been done.

Speaker ?: Okay.

Lundahl: The site that you have there contains at least 8 canvas-covered missile trailers. Four deployed probable missile erector launches. They are unrevetted. The probable launch positions as indicated are approximately 850 feet, 700 feet, 450 feet, for a total distance of about 2,000 feet. In Area II, there are at least 6 missile covered, missile, uh, canvas-covered missile trailers, about 75 vehicles, about 18 tents. And in Area number III, we have 35 vehicles, 15 large tents, 8 small tents, 7 buildings, and one building under construction. The critical one--Do you see what I mean?--is this one. There's [moonshine?] right there, see?

Speaker ?: [Uh-huh.]

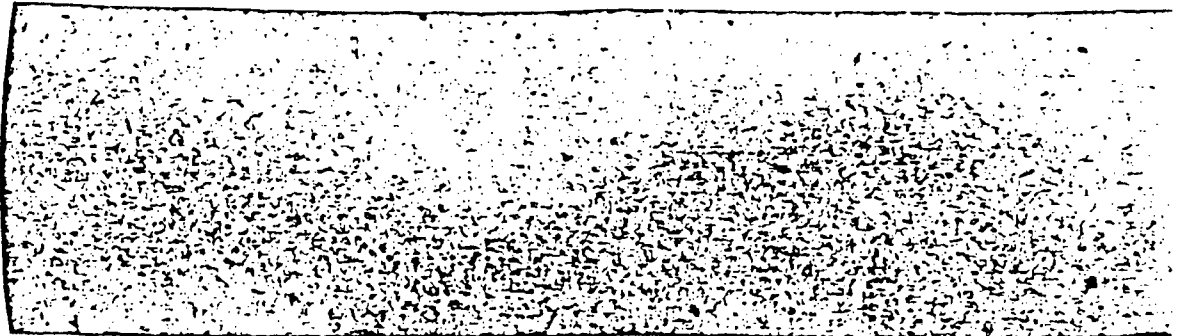
Lundahl?: The missile trailer's backing up to it at the moment. It's got to be. And, uh, the missile trailer's here. [Seven?]/[words unintelligible] have been enlarged here. Those canvas-covered objects on the trailers were 67 feet long, and, uh, there's a small [hillock?] between the two of them. The gate on the, on that side protects the trailer ramps so that [words unintelligible]. That looks like the most advanced one. Then the other area's about 5 miles away. There are no launcher erectors over there, just missiles, uh . . .

JFK: How far advanced is this?

Lundahl:

JFK or RFK::

Lundahl:



JFK: How do you know this is a medium-range ballistic missile? --

Lundahl: The length, sir.

JFK: The what? The length?

Lundahl: The length of it. Yes.

JFK: The length of the missile? Which part? I mean which . . .

Lundahl: . . . the missile [word unintelligible] indicates which one is

[Words unintelligible]. This is still . . .

Speaker ? : [Words unintelligible]

Lundahl: Yes. Uh, Mr. Graybeal, our missile, uh, man, has some pictures of the equivalent Soviet equipment that has been dragged through the streets of Moscow, that can give you some . . .

Graybeal: There are two missiles involved. One of them is our SS-3, which is 630 mile and on up to 700. It's about 68 feet long. These missiles measure out to be, uh, 68 foot long. The other missile, the 1,100 one, uh, is 73 foot long. The question we have in the photography is the nose itself. If the nose cone is not on that missile and it measures 67 feet--the nose cone would be 4 to 5 feet longer, sir; and with this extra length we could have a missile that'd have a range of 1,100 miles, sir. The missile that was drawn through the Moscow parade was [Words unintelligible] but . . .

JFK: Is this ready to be fired?

Graybeal: No, sir.

JFK: How long have we got. . . . We can't tell, I take it . . .

Graybeal: No, sir.

JFK: . . . how long before it can be fired?

Graybeal: That depends on how ready the [GSC?]/[how or hous-?] . . .

JFK: But, what does it have to be fired from?

Graybeal: It would have to be fired from a stable hard surface. This could be packed dirt; it could be concrete or, or asphalt. The surface has to be hard, then you put a flame deflect-, a deflector plate on there to direct the missile.

McNamara: Would you care to comment on the position of nuclear warheads--this is in relation to the question from the president--explain when these can be fired?

Graybeal?: Sir, we've looked very hard. We can find nothing that would spell nuclear warhead in term of any isolated area or unique security in this particular area. The mating of the nuclear warhead to the missile from some of the other short range missiles there would take about, uh, a couple of hours to do this.

McNamara: This is not defended, I believe, at the moment?

Lundahl: Not yet, sir.

McNamara: This is important as it relates to whether these, today, are ready to fire, Mr. President. It seems almost impossible to me that they

would be ready to fire with nuclear warheads on the site without even a fence around it. It may not take long to k-, to place them there, to erect a fence, but at least at the moment there is some reason to believe the warheads aren't present and hence they are not ready to fire.

Graybeal: Yes, sir, we do not believe they are ready to fire . . .

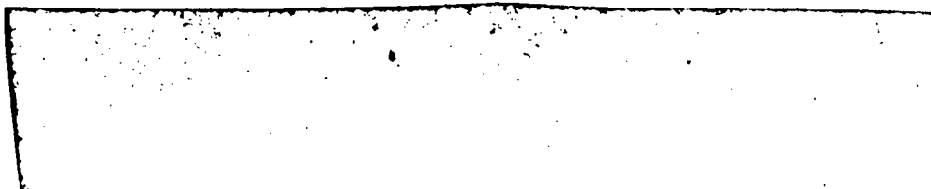
Taylor?: However, there is no feeling that they can't fire from this kind of field position very quickly, isn't that true? It's not a question of waiting for extensive concrete, uh, pads and that sort of thing?

Graybeal?: The unknown factor here, sir, is the degree to which the equipment has been checked out after it's been shipped from the Soviet Union here. It's the readiness of the equipment. If the equipment is checked out, the site has to be accurately surveyed, the position as is known. Once this is known, then you're talking a matter of hours.

Taylor?: Well, could this be an operational site except perhaps for the fact that at this point there are no fence? Could this be operational now?

Graybeal?: There is only one missile there, sir, and it's, uh, at the actual, apparently, launching area. It would take them. . . . If everything were checked out, it would still take them in the order of two to three hours before they could get that one missile up and ready to go, sir.

Lundahl or
Carter?:



Taylor?: You say there's only one missile there?

Graybeal?: There, uhm, are 8 missiles there. One of them is in what appears to be the position from which they're launched--in the horizontal. Apparently near an erector to be erected in vertical position.

Rusk: You have [erected one?] You mean something has to be built, or is that something that can be done in a couple of hours?

Speaker ? : [Word unintelligible] . . .

Lundahl: Mobile piece of equipment, sir. We haven't any specifics yet on this but here is the way we believe that it could actually be lifted. Something of this nature. Now that, this would be the erectors, helping to raise the missile from this transporter up into a vertical position [words unintelligible] on the ground.

McNamara: Am I correct in saying that we have not located any nuclear storage sites with certainty as yet? This is one of the most important thoughts we face in properly interpreting the readiness of, of these missiles. It's inconceivable to me that the Soviets would deploy nuclear warheads on an unfenced piece of ground. There's, there must be some storage site there. It should be one of our important objectives to find that storage site.

Lundahl or Carter?: May I report, sir, that two additional SAC*missions were executed yesterday? They were taken to Washington area last night. They're currently being chemically processed at the Naval Center at Suitland, and they're due to reach us at the National PI** Center around 8 o'clock tonight. Both of these missions go from one end of Cuba to the other--one along the north coast and one along the south--so additional data on activities or these storage sites which we consider critical may be in our grasp if we can find them.

McNamara: And, is it correct that there is outside of Havana, uh, an installation that appears to be hardened that might be the type of installation they would use for nuclear warheads, uh, and therefore is a, a, prospective source of such warheads?

Lundahl: Sir, I couldn't put my finger on that. Uh, the Joint Atomic Energy people may be looking at that and forming a judgment, but from photos alone I cannot attest to that.

Carter?: There would appear to be little need for putting this type of missile in there, however, unless it were associated with nuclear warheads.

Rusk: [Word unintelligible] don't you have to assume these are nuclear?

McNamara: Oh, I think . . .

Speaker?: [Words unintelligible]

McNamara: There's no question about that. The question is one of readiness of the, to fire and--and this is highly critical in forming our plans--that the time between today and the time when the readiness to fire capability develops is a very important thing. To estimate that we need to know where these warheads are, and we have not yet found any probable storage of warheads and hence it seems extremely unlikely that they are now ready to fire or may be ready to fire within a matter of hours or even a day or two.

Lundahl:

[REDACTED]

Taylor?: When will those be ready? Some time today?

Lundahl: They're supposed to be in, sir; I think that's right, isn't it, General Carter?

Carter: Yes, it is.

Speaker ?: [Words unintelligible]

Carter: Radar from Sunday's should be available now. We have done some . . .

Taylor?: Weren't there flights yesterday as well, too?

Carter?: Two flights yesterday.

Taylor?: You have those results . . .

Carter?: . . . results from those now. Yeah.

JFK: Thank you.

Lundahl: Yes, sir.

JFK?: Well, when's there any further flights scheduled?

Speaker ?: [Words unintelligible]

Lundahl: There are no more scheduled, sir.

JFK: These flights yesterday, I presume, cover the . . .

Carter?: [Words unintelligible]

Bundy?: We hope so, sir, because the weather won't have been clear all along the island, so we can't claim that we will have been. . . . Certainly [words unintelligible] surely do not have up-to-date photographic coverage on the whole island. I should think one of our first questions is to . . .

Speaker ?: Or [words unintelligible].

Bundy?: . . . consider whether we should not authorize more flights on the basis of COMOR* priorities. There's a specific question of whether we want a closer and sharper look at this, this area. That, however, I think should be looked at in the context of the question whether we wish to give tactical warning, any other possible activities.

*Committee on Overhead Reconnaissance.

McNamara: I would recommend, Mr. President, that you authorize such flights as are considered necessary to obtain complete coverage of the island. Now, this seems to be ill-defined, but I purposely define it that way because we're running into cloud cover on some of these flights, and I would suggest that we simply repeat the flight if we have cloud cover and repeat it sufficiently often to, to obtain the coverage we require.

JFK: [Are your thoughts good?] on that?

Carter?: Yes, sir.

Fusk?: Interestingly . . .

McNamara: Now, this is X, this is U-2 flying . . .

Carter: U-2, sir.

McNamara: . . . specifically excludes the question that Mac-raised of low-level flying which I think that we ought to take up later . . .

Speaker ?: [Words unintelligible]

McNamara: . . . after our further discussions on . . .

Speaker ?: I agree.

McNamara: . . . these possibilities here.

Lundahl: I have one additional note, sir, if I may offer it.



JFK: In other words, the only missile base . . .

Speaker ?: Inter-, intermediate-range missile . . .

JFK: . . . missile base that we now know about is this one?

Lundahl or
Carter?: Correct.

JFK or Taylor?: Is this one or two? This is one . . .

Carter?: There's three of them.

Lundahl: Three, sir.

Speaker ?: Three that are associated.

Speaker ?: [Words unintelligible]

Bundy: Do I understand that this is a batallion, as you estimate it, Mr. Graybeal?

Graybeal: Yes, sir. We estimate that four missiles make up a battalion, uh, so that in this one that you're looking at, Mr. President, has eight missiles. That'd be two battalions [of?] [word unintelligible] size. This one in front of the table is a second separate installation from which we can see six missiles. So there are probably two more battalions there. The other missiles may be under the tree. The third installation has the tents, but there are no missiles identified anywhere in that area.

Speaker ?: Okay.

JFK: These are the only ones we now know about?

Graybeal: Yes, sir.

Speaker ?: Other than those cruise missiles . . .

Speaker ?: [Words unintelligible] [thanks?].

Speaker ?: . . . that you're familiar with, those costal pens and the surface to air missiles.

Speaker ?: Any intelligence on that thing?

Speaker ?: [Words unintelligible]

JFK: Secretary Rusk?

Rusk: Yes. [Well?], Mr. President, this is a, of course, a [widely?] serious development. It's one that we, all of us, had not really believed the Soviets could, uh, carry this far. Uh, they, uh, seemed to be denying that they were going to establish bases of their own [in the same?] [words unintelligible] with a Soviet base, thus making it [essential to or essentially?] Cuban point of view. The Cubans couldn't [word unintelligible] with it anyhow, so. . . . Now, uhm, I do think we have to set in motion a chain of events that will eliminate this base. I don't think we [can?] sit still. The questioning becomes whether we do it by sudden, unannounced strike of some sort, or we, uh, build up the crisis to the point where the other side has to consider very seriously about giving in, or, or even the Cubans themselves, uh, take some, take some action on this. The thing that I'm, of course, very conscious of is that there is no such thing, I think, as unilateral action by the United States. It's so [eminently or heavily?] involved with 42 allies and confrontation in many places, that any action that we take, uh, will greatly increase the risks of direct action involving, uh, our other alliances and our other forces in other parts of the world. Uhm, so I think we, we have to think very hard about two major, uh, courses of action as alternatives. One is the quick strike. The point where we [make or think?], that is

the, uh, overwhelming, overriding necessity to take all the risks that are involved doing that. I don't think this in itself would require an invasion of Cuba. I think that with or without such an invasion, in other words if we make it clear that, uh, what we're doing is eliminating this particular base or any other such base that is established. We ourselves are not moved to general war, we're simply doing what we said we would do if they took certain action. Uh, or we're going to decide that this is the time to eliminate the Cuban problem by actual eliminate the island.

The other would be, if we have a few days--from the military point of view, if we have the whole time--uh, then I would think that, uh, there would be another course of action, a combination of things that, uh, we might wish to consider. Uh, first, uh, that we, uh, stimulate the OAS* procedure immediately for prompt action to make it quite clear that the entire hemisphere considers that the Rio Pact has been violated [and actually?] what acts should [we take or be taken?] in, under the terms of the Rio Pact. The OAS could constitute itself an organ of consultation promptly, although maybe, it may take two or three days to get, uh, instructions from governments and things of that sort. The OAS could, I suppose, at any moment, uh, take action to insist to the Cubans that an OAS inspection, uh, team be permitted to come and, itself, look directly at these sites, provide assurance[s?] to the hemisphere. That will undoubtedly be turned down, but it will be another step in building up the, uh, building a position.

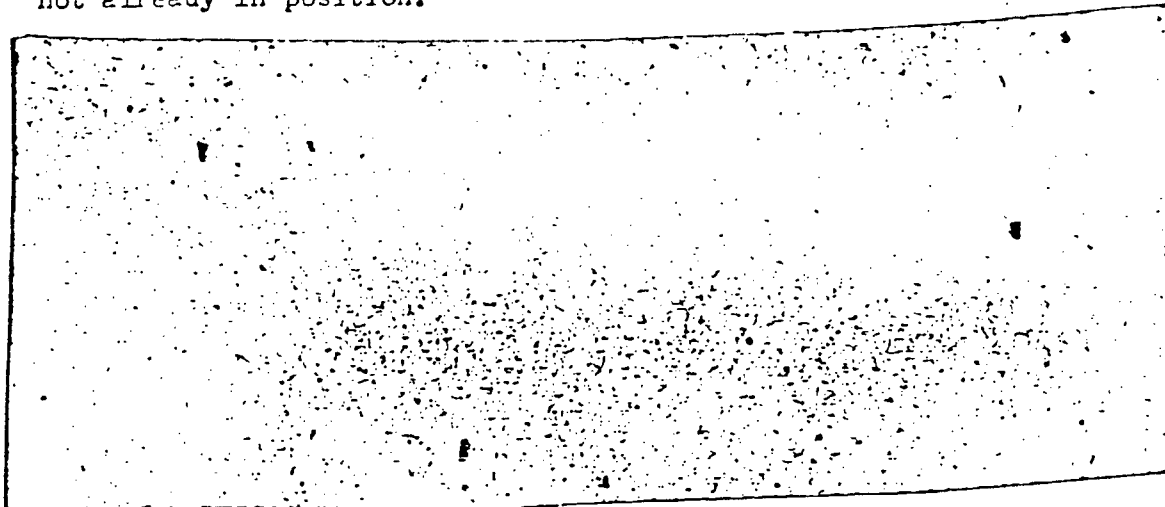
I think also that we ought to consider getting some word to Castro, perhaps through the Canadian ambassador in Havana or through, uh, his representative at the U.N. Uh, I think perhaps the Canadian ambassador would be the best, the better channel to get to Castro [apart?] privately and tell him that, uh, this is no longer support for Cuba, that Cuba is being victimized here, and that, uh, the Soviets are preparing Cuba for destruction or betrayal.

You saw the Times** story yesterday morning that high Soviet officials were saying, "We'll trade Cuba for Berlin." This ought to be brought to Castro's attention. It ought to be said to Castro that, uh, uh, this kind of a base is intolerable and not acceptable. The time has now come when he must take the interests of the Cuban people, must now break clearly with the Soviet Union, prevent this missile base from becoming operational.

And I think there are certain military, uhm, uh, actions that we could, we might well want to take straight away. First, to, uh, to call up, uh, highly selective units [no more than?] 150,000. Unless we feel that it's better, more desirable to go to a general national emergency so that we have complete freedom of action. If we announce, at the time that we announce this development--and I think we do have to announce this development some time this week--

*Organization of American States. **New York Times.

uh, we announce that, uh, we are conducting a surveillance of Cuba, over Cuba, and we will enforce our right to do so. We reject the mission of secrecy in this hemisphere in any matters of this sort. We, we reinforce our forces in Guantanamo. We reinforce our forces in the southeastern part of the United States--whatever is necessary from the military point of view to be able to give, to deliver an overwhelming strike at any of these installations, including the SAM sites. And, uh, also, to take care of any, uh, MIGs or bombers that might make a pass at Miami or at the United States. Build up heavy forces, uh, if those are not already in position.



I think also that we need a few days, uhm, to alert our other allies, for consultation with NATO. I'll assume that we can move on this line at the same time to interrupt all air traffic from free world countries going into Cuba, insist to the Mexicans, the Dutch, that they stop their planes from coming in. Tell the British, who, and anyone else who's involved at this point, that, uh, if they're interested in peace, they've got to stop their ships from Cuban trade at this point. Uh, in other words, isolate Cuba completely without at this particular moment a, uh, a forceful blockade.

I think it would be important to use the, uh, consider, uh, calling in General Eisenhower,* giving him a full briefing before a public announcement is made as to the situation and the [forcible?] action which you might determine upon.

But I think that, by and large, there are, there are these two broad alternatives: one, the quick strike; the other, to alert our allies and Mr. Khrushchev** that there is utterly serious crisis in the making here, and that, uh. . . . Mr. Khrushchev may not himself really understand that or believe that at this point. I think we'll be facing a situation that could well lead to general war; that we have an obligation to do what has to be done but do it in a way that gives, uh, everybody a chance to, uh, put the [word unintelligible] down before it gets too hard. Those are my, my reactions of this morning, Mr. President. I naturally need to

*Dwight D. Eisenhower. **Nikita S. Khrushchev.

think about this very hard for the next several hours, uh, what I and what my colleagues at the State Department can do about it.

McNamara:

Mr. President, there are a number of unknowns in this situation I want to comment upon, and, in relation to them, I would like to outline very briefly some possible military alternatives and ask General Taylor to expand upon them.

But before commenting on either the unknowns or outlining some military alternatives, there are two propositions I would suggest that we ought to accept as, uh, foundations for our further thinking. My first is that if we are to conduct an air strike against these installations, or against any part of Cuba, we must agree now that we will schedule that prior to the time these missile sites become operational. I'm not prepared to say when that will be, but I think it is extremely important that our talk and our discussion be founded on this premise: that any air strike will be planned to take place prior to the time they become operational. Because, if they become operational before the air strike, I do not believe we can state we can knock them out before they can be launched; and if they're launched there is almost certain to be, uh, chaos in part of the east coast or the area, uh, in a radius of six hundred to a thousand miles from Cuba.

Uh, secondly, I, I would submit the proposition that any air strike must be directed not solely against the missile sites, but against the missile sites plus the airfields plus the aircraft which may not be on the airfields but hidden by that time plus all potential nuclear storage sites. Now, this is a fairly extensive air strike. It is not just a strike against the missile sites; and there would be associated with it potential casualties of Cubans, not of U.S. citizens, but potential casualties of Cubans in, at least in the hundreds, more likely in the low thousands, say two or three thousand. It seems to me these two propositions, uh, should underlie our, our discussion.

Now, what kinds of military action are we capable of carrying out and what may be some of the consequences? Uh, we could carry out an air strike within a matter of days. We would be ready for the start of such an air strike within, within a matter of days. If it were absolutely essential, it could be done almost literally within a matter of hours. I believe the chiefs would prefer that it be deferred for a matter of days, but we are prepared for that quickly. The air strike could continue for a matter of days following the initial day, if necessary. Uh, presumably there would be some political discussions taking place either just before the air strike or both before and during. In any event, we would be prepared, following the air strike, for an air, invasion, both by air and by sea. ~~_____~~ after the start of the air strike, that would be possible if the political environment made it desirable or necessary at that time. [Fine?] Associated with this air strike undoubtedly should be some degree of mobilization. Uh, I would think of the mobilization coming not before the air

strike but either concurrently with or somewhat following, say possibly five days afterwards, depending upon the possible invasion requirements. The character of the mobilization would be such that it could be carried out in its first phase at least within the limits of the authority granted by Congress. There might have to be a second phase, and then it would require a declaration of a national emergency.

Now, this is very sketchily the military, uh, capabilities, and I think you may wish to hear General Taylor, uh, outline his choice.

Speaker ? : Almost too [words unintelligible] to Cuba.

Speaker ? : Yes.

Taylor: Uh, we're impressed, Mr. President, with the great importance of getting a, a strike with all the benefit of surprise, uh, which would mean ideally that we would have all the missiles that are in Cuba above ground where we can take them out. Uh, that, that desire runs counter to the strong point the secretary made if the other optimum would be to get every missile before it could, becomes operational. Uh, practically, I think the, our knowledge of the timing of the readiness is going to be so, so, uh, difficult that we'll never have the, the exact permanent, uh, the perfect timing. What we'd like to do is to look at this new photography, I think--and take any additional--and try to get the, the layout of the targets in as near an optimum, uh, position as possible, and then take 'em out without any warning whatsoever. That does not preclude, I don't think, Mr. Secretary, some of the things you've been talking about. It's a little hard to say in terms of time how much I'm discussing. But we must do a good job the first time we go in there, uh, pushing a 100 percent just as far, as closely as we can with our, with our strike. I'm having all the responsible planners in this afternoon, Mr. President, at four o'clock, to talk this out with 'em and get their best judgment.,

I would also mention among the, the military actions we should take that once we have destroyed as many of these offensive weapons as possible, we should, should prevent any more coming in, which means a naval blockade. So I suppose that all. . . . And also a reinforcement of Guantanamo and evacuation of dependents. So, really, the, in point of time, I'm, I'm thinking in terms of three phases.

One, a, an initial pause of some sort while we get completely ready and get, get the right posture on the part of the target, so we can do the best job. Then, virtually concurrently, a air strike against, as the secretary said, missiles, airfields, uh, nuclear sites that we know of. At the same time, naval blockade. At the same time, reinforce Guantanamo and evacuate the dependents. I'd then start this continuous reconnaissance, the list that you had, continue over Cuba.

Then, then the decision can be made as we, as we're mobilizing, uh, with the air strike as to whether we invade or not. I think that's the hardest question militarily in the whole business--one which we should look at very closely before we get our feet in that deep mud in Cuba.

Rusk: There are st-, one or two things, Mr. President, uh. Gromyko* asked to see you Thursday. Uh, it may be of some interest to know what he says about this, if he says anything. He may be bringing a message on this subject. Uh, but that. . . . I just want to remind you that you are seeing him and that may be relevant to this [topic?]. I might say incidently, sir, that you delay anything else you have to do at this point.

Secondly, I don't believe, myself, that the critical question is whether you get a particular missile before it goes off because if they shoot those missiles we are in general nuclear war. In other words, the Soviet Union has got quite a different decision to make. If they, if they shoot those missiles, want to shoot 'em off before they get knocked out by aircraft. . . . So, I'm not sure that this is, uh, necessarily the precise [critical?] element, Bob.

McNamara: Well, I would strongly emphasize that I think our time should be based on the assumption it is, Dean. We don't know what kinds of communications the Soviets have with those sites. We don't know what kinds of control they have over the warheads.

Rusk: Yes, [words unintelligible]. . .

McNamara: If we saw a warhead on the site and we knew that that launcher was capable of launching that warhead, I would. . . . Frankly, I would strongly urge against the air attack, to be quite frank about it, because I think the danger to this country in relation to the gain that would accrue with the excessive [time?]. . . . This is why I suggest that if we're talking about an air attack, I believe we should consider it only on the assumption that we can carry it off before these become operational.

JFK: What is the, uh, advant-. . . . Must be some major reason for the Russians to, uh, set this up as a. . . . Must be that they're not satisfied with their ICBMs. What'd be the reason that they would, uh. . . .

Taylor: What it'd give 'em is primary, it makes the launching base, uh, for short range missiles against the United States to supplement their rather [deceptive?] ICBM system, for example. There's one reason.

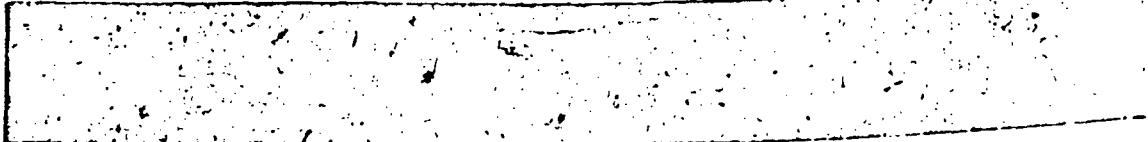
JFK: Of course, I don't see how we could prevent further ones from coming in by submarine.

*Andrei A. Gromyko.

Taylor: Well, I think that that thing is all over . . .

JFK: I mean if we let 'em blockade the thing, they come in by submarine.

McNamara: Well, I think the only way to prevent them coming in, quite frankly, is to say you'll take them out the moment they come in. You'll take them out and you'll carry on open surveillance and you'll have a policy to take them out if they come in.

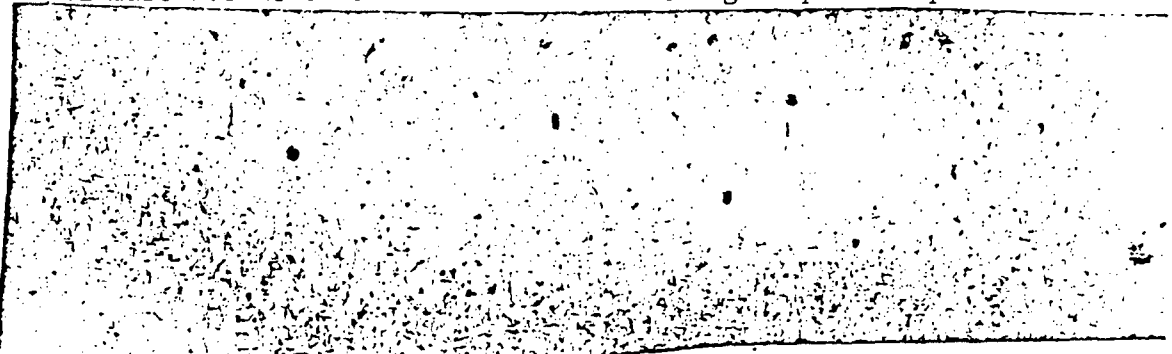


Bundy: Are you absolutely clear of your premise that an air strike must go to the whole air complex?

McNamara: Well, we are, Mac . . .

Bundy: . . . air complex? [Appears to be a repeat of the words above.]

McNamara: . . . because we are fearful of these MIG 21s. We don't know where they are. We don't know what they're capable of. If there are nuclear warheads associated with the launchers, you must assume there will be nuclear warheads associated with aircraft. Even if there are not nuclear warheads associated with aircraft, you must assume that those aircraft have high explosive potential.



Rusk: Still, about why the Soviets are doing this, uhm, Mr. McCone* suggested some weeks ago that one thing Mr. Khrushchev may have in mind is that, uh, uh, he knows that we have a substantial nuclear superiority, but he also knows that we don't really live under fear of his nuclear weapons to the extent that, uh, he has to live under fear of ours. Also we have nuclear weapons nearby, in Turkey and places like that. Uhm. . . .

JFK: How many weapons do we have in Turkey?

Taylor?: We have Jupiter missiles . . .

Bundy?: Yeah. We have how many?

*John A. McCone.

McNamara?: About fifteen, I believe it is.

Bundy?: I think that's right. I think that's right.

Speaker ?: [Words unintelligible]

Rusk: But then there are also delivery vehicles that are, could easily
. . . .

McNamara: Aircraft.

Rusk: . . . be moved through the air, aircraft and so forth.

Speaker ?: Route 'em through Turkey.

Rusk: Uhm, and that Mr. McCone expresses the view that Khrushchev may feel that it's important for us to learn about living under medium-range missiles, and he's doing that to sort of balance that, uh, that political, psychological [plank?]. I think also that, uh, Berlin is, uh, very much involved in this. Uhm, for the first time, I'm beginning really to wonder whether maybe Mr. Khrushchev is entirely rational about Berlin. We've [hardly?] talked about his obsession with it. And I think we have to, uh, keep our eye on that element. But, uh, they may be thinking that they can either bargain Berlin and Cuba against each other, or that they could provoke us into a kind of action in Cuba which would give an umbrella for them to take action with respect to Berlin. In other words like the Suez-Hungary combination. If they could provoke us into taking the first overt action, then the world would be confused and they would have, uh, what they would consider to be justification for making a move somewhere else. But, uh, I must say I don't really see the rationality of, uh, the Soviets' pushing it this far unless they grossly misunderstand the importance of Cuba to this country.

Bundy: It's important, I think, to recognize that they did make this decision, as far as our estimates now go, in early summer, and, this has been happening since August. Their Tass statement of September 12, which the experts, I think, attribute very strongly to Khrushchev himself, is all mixed up on this point. It has a rather explicit statement, "The harmless military equipment sent to Cuba designed exclusively for defense, defensive purposes. The president of the United States and the American military, the military of any country know what means of defense are. How can these means threaten United States?"

Now there, it's very hard to reconcile that with what has happened. The rest, as the secretary says, has many comparisons between Cuba and Italy, Turkey and Japan. We have other evidence that Khrushchev is, honestly believes, or, or at least affects to believe that we have nuclear weapons in, in Japan, that combination, [word unintelligible] . . .

Rusk: Gromyko stated that in his press conference the other day, too,

Bundy: Yeah. They may mean Okinawa.

Speaker ?: Right.

McNamara: It's not likely, but it's conceivable the nuclear warheads for these launchers are not yet on Cuban soil.

Bundy: Now that seems to me that's. . . . It's perfectly possible that this, that they are in that sense a bluff. That doesn't make them any less offensive to us

McNamara: No.

Bundy: . . . because we can't have proof about it.

McNamara: No, but it does possibly indicate a different course of action

Bundy: Yeah.

McNamara: . . . and therefore, while I'm not suggesting how we should handle this, I think this is one of the most important actions we should take: to ascertain the location of the nuclear warheads for these missiles. Later in the discussion we can revert back to this. There are several alternative ways of approaching it.

JFK: Doug, do you have any. . . .

Dillon: No. The only thing I'd, would say is that, uh, this alternative course of, of warning, getting, uh, public opinion, uh, OAS action and telling people in NATO and everything like that, would appear to me to have the danger of, uh, getting us wide out in the open and forcing the Russians to, uh, Soviets to take a, a position that if anything was done, uh, they would, uh, have to retaliate. Whereas, uh, a, a quick action, uh, with a statement at the same time saying this is all there is to it, might give them a chance to, uh, back off and not do anything. Meanwhile, I think that the chance of getting through this thing without a Russian reaction is greater under a quick, uh, strike than, uh, building the whole thing up to a, a climax then going through. . . . [It will be a lot of debate on it?]

Rusk: That is, of course, a possibility, but, uh. . . .

Bundy: The difficulties--I, I share the secretary of the treasury's feeling a little bit--the difficulties of organizing the OAS and NATO; the amount of noise we would get from our allies saying that, uh, they can live with Soviet MRBMs, why can't we; uh, the division in the alliance; the certainty that the Germans would feel that we were jeopardizing Berlin because of our concern over Cuba. The prospect of that pattern is not an appetizing one

Rusk: Yes, but you see

Bundy: [words unintelligible]

Rusk: . . . uh, uh, everything turns crucially on what happens.

Bundy: I agree, Mr. Secretary.

Rusk: And if we go with the quick strike, then, in fact, they do back it up, then you've exposed all of your allies [word unintelligible], ourselves to all these great dangers without . . .

Bundy: You get all these noises again.

Rusk: . . . without, uh, the slightest consultation or, or warning or preparation.

JFK: But, of course, warning them, uh, it seems to me, is warning everybody. And I, I, obviously you can't sort of announce that in four days from now you're going to take them out. They may announce within three days they're going to have warheads on 'em; if we come and attack, they're going to fire them. Then what'll, what'll we do? Then we don't take 'em out. Of course, we then announce, well, if they do that, then we're going to attack with nuclear weapons.

Dillon: Yes, sir, that's the question that nobody, I didn't understand, nobody had mentioned, is whether this s-, uh, "take-out," this mission, uh, was [word unintelligible] to deal with . . .

Speaker ?: I don't know.

Dillon: . . . high explosives?

Speaker ?: High explosives, yes.

JFK: How effective can the take-out be, do they think?

Taylor?: It'll never be a 100 percent, Mr. President, we know. Uh, we hope to take out a vast majority in the first strike, but this is not just one thing, one strike, one day, but continuous air attack for whenever necessary, whenever we di-, discover a target.

Bundy: They're now talking about taking out the air force as well. . . .

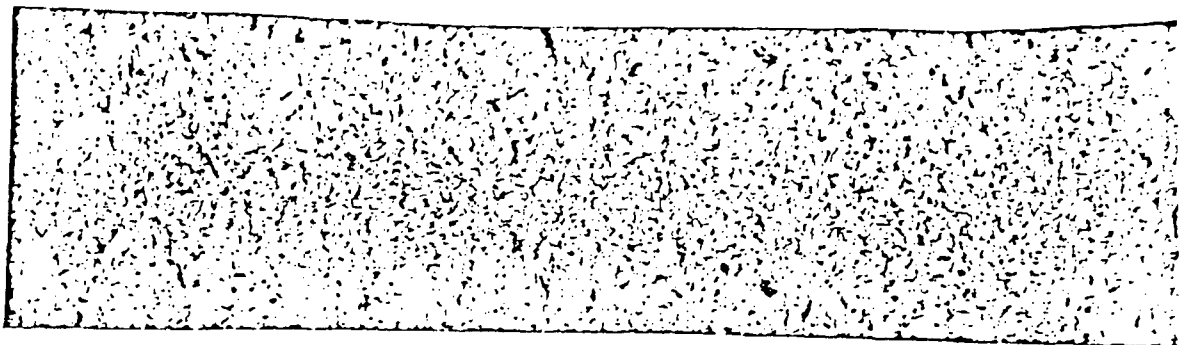
Speaker ?: I [could tell you that in the staff?].

Speaker ?: [Words unintelligible]

Bundy: I do raise again the question whether, uh, whether we [words unintelligible] the problem, military problem, but there is, I would think, a substantial political advantage in limiting the strike in surgical terms to the thing that is in fact the cause of action.

McNamara?:





Taylor: Well, I would think we would have, should be in a position to invade at any time if we so desired. Hence that, uh, in this preliminary, we should be, uh, it's all bonus if we are indeed taking out weapons [word unintelligible]

JFK: Well, let's say we just take out the missile bases, then, uh, they have some more there. Obviously they can get 'em in by submarine and so on, I don't know whether you, you just can't keep high strikes on.

Taylor: I suspect, Mr. President, we'd have to take out the surface-to-air missiles in order to get in, to get in, take some of them out. Maybe [words unintelligible].

JFK: How long will, do we estimate this will remain secure, this, uh, information, uh, people have it?

Bundy: In terms of the tightness of our intelligence control, Mr. President, I think we are in unusually and fortunately good position. We set up a, uh, new security classification governing precisely the field of offensive capability in Cuba just five days ago, four days ago, under General Carter. That, uh, limits this, uh, to people who have an immediate, operational necessity in intelligence terms to work on the data and the people who have

JFK: How many would that be, about?

Bundy: Oh, that will be a very large number, but that's not generally where leaks come from. Uh, the more [important?] limitation is that only officers with the policy responsibility for advice directly to you'll receive this

JFK: How many would get it over in the Defense Department, General, with your meeting this afternoon?

Taylor: Well, I was going to mention that. We'd have to ask for relaxation of the ground rules, uh, that, that Mac has just enunciated, so that I can, uh, give it to the senior commanders who are involved in the plans.

JFK: Would that be about fifty?

Taylor: By then. . . . No, sir. I would say that, uh, within, at this stage ten more.

McNamara: Well, Mr. President, I, I think, to be realistic, we should assume that this will become fairly widely known, if not in the newspapers, at least by political representatives of both parties within--I would, I'm just picking a figure--I'd say a week.

[Several speakers speak at once and none of the words are intelligible.]

McNamara: And I say that because we have, we have taken action already that is raising questions in people's minds. Normally, when a U-2 comes back, we duplicate the films. The duplicated copies go to a series of commands. A copy goes to SAC. A copy goes to CINCLANT.* A copy goes to CIA. And normally, uh, the photo interpreters and the, and the operational officers in these commands are looking forward to these. We have stopped all that, and this, this type of information is going on throughout the department. And I, I doubt very much that we can keep this out of the hands of, uh, of members of Congress, for example, for more than a week.

Rusk: Well, Senator Keating** has already, in effect, announced it on the floor of the Senate.

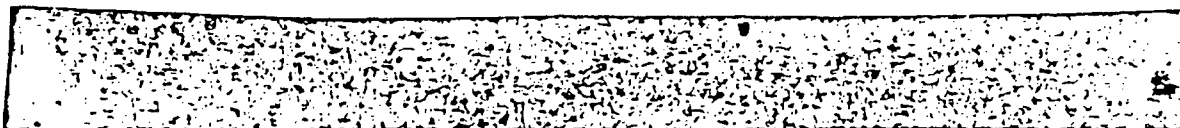
Bundy: Senator Keating said this on the floor of the Senate on the tenth of October

Rusk: [That's correct?]

Bundy: . . . "Construction has begun on at least a half-dozen launching sites for intermediate range tactical missiles."

Rusk: Well, that's, that's the way that [words unintelligible]. I think we can count on announcing it not later than Thursday or Friday of this week.

Taylor?:



JFK: Is he the one who's giving Keating his stuff?

Taylor?: We don't know.

Bundy: My question, Mr. President, is whether as a matter of, uh, tactics we ought not to interview Senator Keating and check out his data. Seem to me that that ought to be done in a routine sort of way by an open officer of the intelligence agency.

Speaker ?: I think that's [right?].

JFK: You have any thoughts, Mr. Vice President?

*Commander-in-chief, U.S. Forces Atlantic. **Kenneth B. Keating.

Johnson:

I agree with Mac that that ought to be done. I think that, uh, we're committed at any time that we feel that there's a build up that in any way endangers to take whatever action we must take to assure our security. I would think the secretary's evaluation of this thing being around all over the lot is a pretty accurate one, I would think it'd take a week to do it. Maybe a little before then.

I would, uh, like to hear what the responsible commanders have to say this afternoon. I think the question with the base is whether we take it out or whether we talk about it, and, uh, both, either alternative is a very distressing one, but of the two, I would take it out.

JFK:

Well, uh, the, uh . . .

Johnson:

Assuming these commanders felt that way. I'm fearful if we. . . . I spent the weekend with the ambassadors of the Organization of American States. I think this organization is fine, but I don't think, I don't rely on 'em much for any strength in anything like this. And, I, the fact that we're talking about our other allies, uh, I take the position that Mr. Bundy says, We ought to be living all these years with [words unintelligible] get your blood pressure up. But the fact is the country's blood pressure is up and they are fearful, and they're insecure, and we're getting divided, and, uh, I don't think that, uh. . . . I take this little State Department Bulletin that you sent out to all the congressmen. One, one of the points you make--that any time the build up endangers or threatens our security in any way, we're going to do whatever must be done immediately to protect our own security. And when you say that, why the, give unanimous support. People are really concerned about this, in my opinion. Uh, I think we have to be prudent and cautious, talk to the commanders and see what they say, what they're. . . . [I'm] not much for circularizing it over the Hill or our allies, even though I realize it's a breach of faith. It's the one not to confer with them. We're not going to get much help out of them.

Bundy:

There is an intermediate position. There are perhaps two or three of our principal allies or heads of government we could communicate, at least on a 24-hour notice basis. Certainly ease, ease the . . .

Johnson:

[Take a large?] [words unintelligible] [to?] stop the planes, stop the ships, stop the submarines and everything else from [sending?]. Just not going to permit it. And then stop them from coming in.

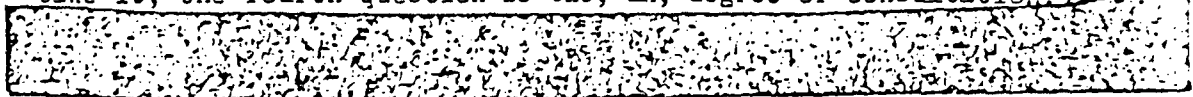
Speaker ?:

Yeah.

JFK:

Uh, eh, well, this, which. . . . What you're really talking about are two or three different, uh, [tense?] operations. One is the strike just on this, these three bases. One, the second is the broader one that Secretary McNamara was talking about, which is on the airfields and on the SAM sites and on anything else connecte

with, uh, missiles. Third is doing both of those things and also at the same time launching a blockade, which requires really the, uh, the, uh, third and which is a larger step. And then, as I take it, the fourth question is the, uh, degree of consultation.



Speaker ?:

Uhm.

JFK:

Just have to [words unintelligible] and do it. Probably ought to tell them, though, the night before.

RFK:

Mr. President.

JFK:

Yes.

RFK:

We have the fifth one, really, which is the invasion. I would say that, uh, you're dropping bombs all over Cuba if you do the second, uh, air, the airports, knocking out their planes, dropping it on all their missiles. You're covering most of Cuba. You're going to kill an awful lot of people, and, uh, we're going to take an awful lot of heat on it . . .

Speaker ?:

Yeah.

RFK:

. . . and, uh, and then, uh, you know, the heat, you're going to announce the reason that you're doing it is because, uh, they're sending in these kind of missiles. Well, I would think it's almost incumbent upon the Russians, then, to say, Well, we're going to send them in again, and if you do it again, we're going to do, we're going to do the same thing to Turkey, or We're going to do the same thing to Iran.

Speaker ?:

Do they have the . . .

JFK:

I don't believe it takes us, at least, uh. . . . How long did it take to get in a position where we can invade Cuba? Almost a month? Two months?

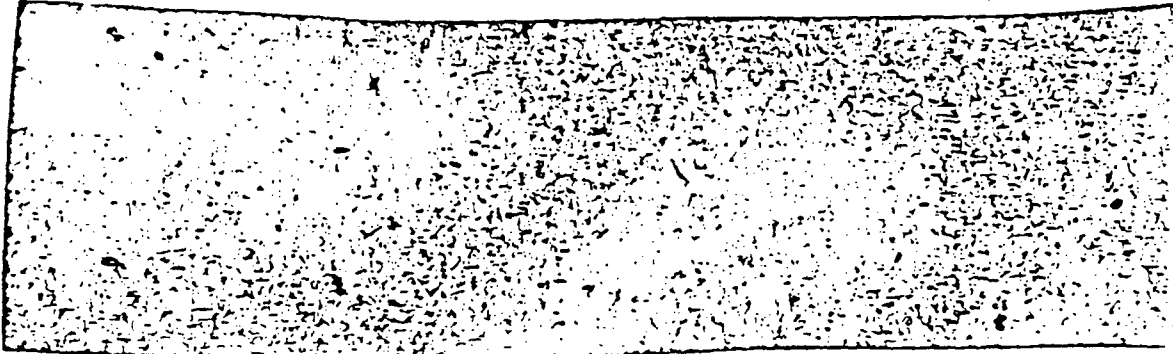
McNamara:

No, sir.

Speaker ?:

Right on the beach . . .

McNamara:



JFK:

Taylor:

JFK:

Speaker ?:

Taylor:

McNamara:

JFK:

Taylor:

Uh, at least it's enough to start the thing going. And I would say it would be, who. . . . It ought to be enough.

McNamara:

Particularly if it isn't directed initially on Havana, the Havana area. Uh, this is a variant. General Taylor and, uh . . .

JFK:

We haven't any real report on what the state of the popular reaction would be to all this, do we? We don't know whether . . .

Taylor:

They'd be greatly confused, don't you think?

JFK:

What?

Taylor:

Great, great confusion and panic, do you think . . .

Carter?:

Well, it's very hard to evaluate the effect [words unintelligible].

Speaker ?:

Right, right.

McNamara:

Sometime today, I think, [at?] the State Department, we will want to consider that. There's a real possibility you'd have to invade. If you carried out an air strike, this might lead to an uprising such that in order to prevent the slaughter of, of, uh, of the free Cubans, we would have to invade to, to, uh, reintroduce order into the country. And we would be prepared to do that.

Rusk:

I would rather think if there were a, a complete air strike against all air forces, you might as well do it, do the whole job.

JFK:

Well, let's, uh, decide what we ought to be doing . . .

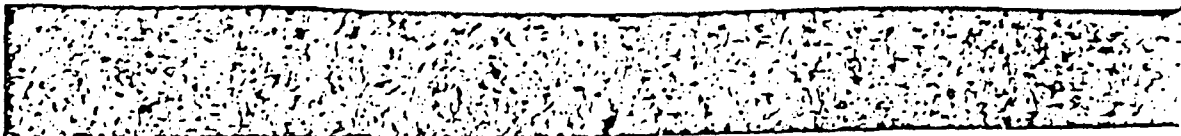
RFK:

Could I raise one more question?

JFK:

Yeah.

RFK:



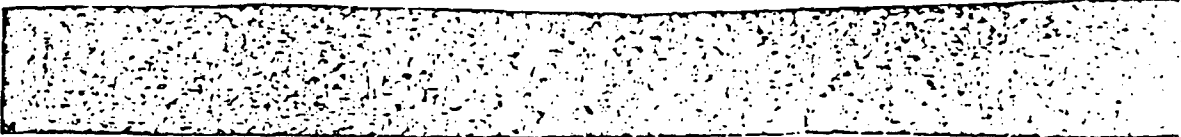
Taylor:

If you give less, you, you run the risk of, of giving up surprise. If you start moving your troops around in order to, to reduce that [words unintelligible] . . .

RFK:

Yeah. The only thing is, there, there's been so much attention on Berlin in the last. . . . Would you have to move them so that everybody would know it was Cubans?

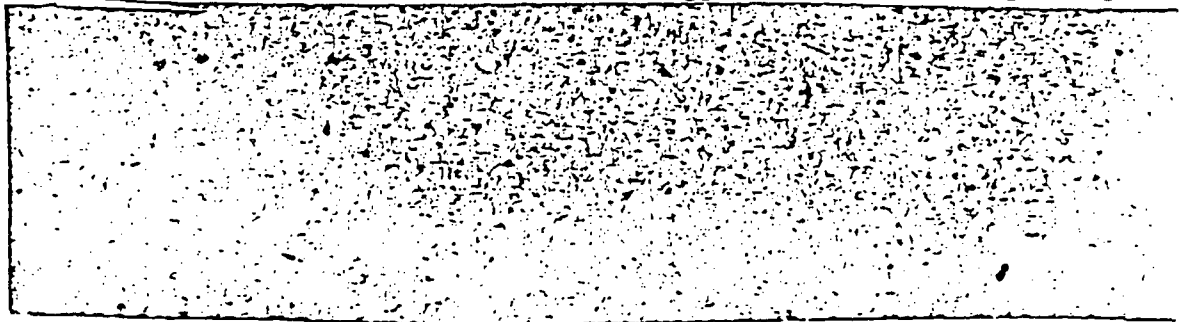
Taylor:



McNamara:

Uh, may I suggest the fact that we, we mentioned this other plan was talked about. We should be prepared for a series of eventualities after the air strike starts. I think it's not probable, but it's conceivable that the air strike would trigger a nation-wide uprising.

Taylor:

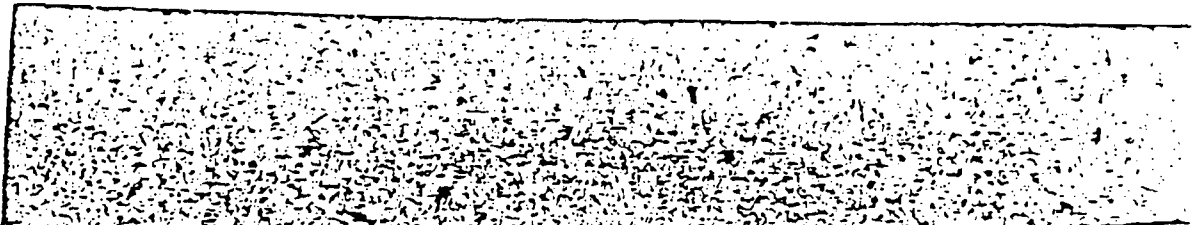


McNamara:

Speaker ?:

Well . . .

RFK:



JFK:

But und-. . . . The, the problem is, as I understand it. . . . You've got two problems. One is how much time we've got on these particular missiles before they're ready to go.

McNamara?:

Right.

JFK:

Do we have two weeks? If we had two weeks, we could lay on all this and have it all ready to go, but un-, the question really is is whether we can wait two weeks.

Speaker ?:

Yeah.

Taylor:

I don't think we'll ever know, Mr. President, these operational

questions because, uh, this type of missile, uh, can be launched very quickly with a concealed expedience.

Bundy: Do we have any . . .

Taylor: So that . . .

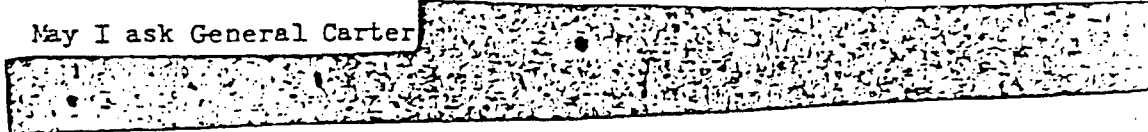
Bundy: . . . intelligence, uh . . .

Taylor: . . . even today, this, this one, uh, area, might be operational. I can see that it's, it's highly [words unintelligible] . . .

Bundy: One very important question is whether there are other areas which conceivably might be even more operational that we have not identified.

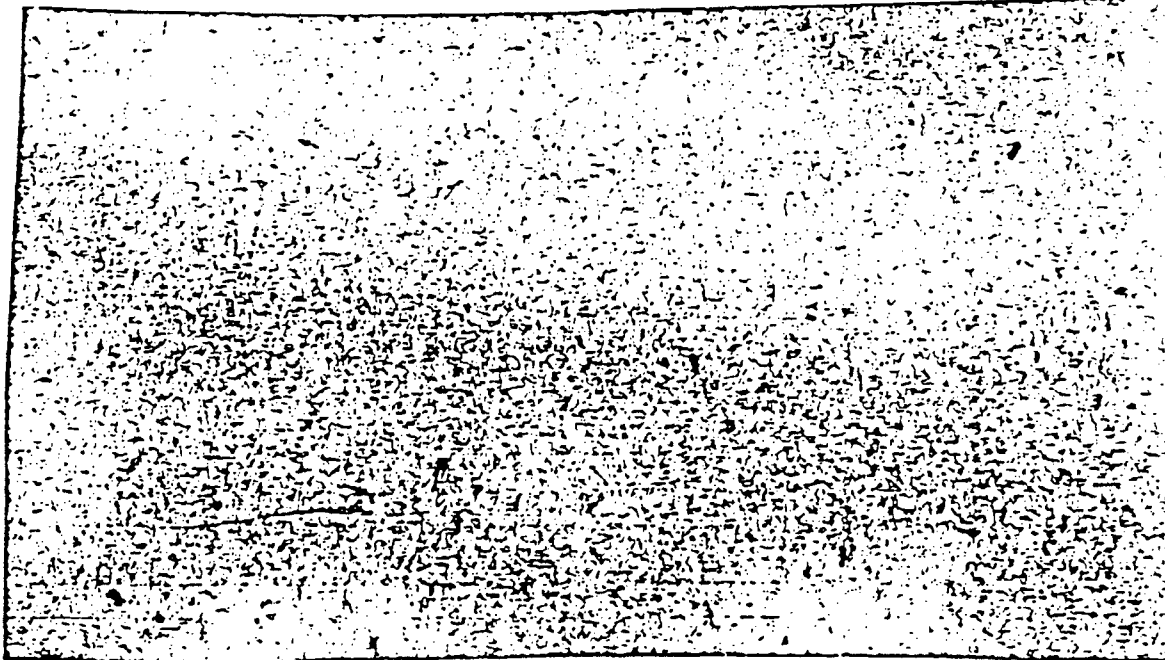
McNamara: This is why I think the moment we leave here, Mac, we just have to take this new authority we have and put it . . .

Bundy: May I ask General Carter



Carter: That's right. That's why we specifically covered this area on the one Sunday because the [words unintelligible], you see . . .

McNamara:



JFK:

McNamara:

Taylor: It would take place after the air strike.

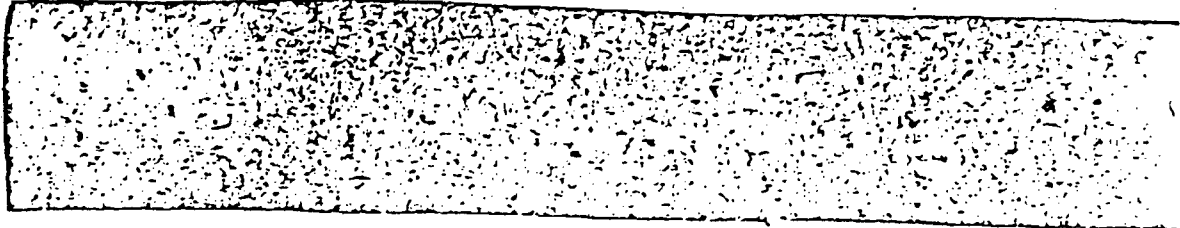
McNamara: We, we, we have been moving already, on a very quiet basis, munitions and POL. We will have by the twentieth, which is Friday, I guess, we will have stocks of munitions, stocks of POL pre-positioned in the southeast part of this country. So that kind of movement is beginning . . .

JFK: What's POL, uh?

McNamara: Petroleum, oil, lubricants. So that kind of movement has already been taking place and it's been possible to do it quietly.

JFK: What about armor and so on? What about all the . . .

McNamara:



Taylor: I think our point of view may change somewhat because of an adjustment here. The decision would take out only the known missile sites and not the airfields. There is a great danger of, of equipment dispersal of all the, the interesting aircraft. Uh, you'd be in surprise, there's [words unintelligible].

Speaker ?: [Words unintelligible]

Taylor: Missiles can't run off quite, quite as readily.

JFK: The advant-, what is. . . . The advantage of taking out these airplanes would be to protect us against a reprisal . . .

Taylor: Yes.

JFK: . . . by them. I would think you'd have to pre-, assume they'd be using, uh, iron bombs and not nuclear weapons because obviously why would the Soviets permit nuclear war to begin under that sort of half-arsed way?

McNamara: I think that's reasonable.

Speaker ?: But they still . . .

Speaker ?: But they have . . .

Speaker ?: . . . have ten II-28s and twenty . . .

Speaker ?: Yes. Yes. They may carry out [words unintelligible]. Yes.

Speaker ?: . . . twenty-five big ones.

JFK: So you think that if we're going to take out the, uh, missile sites you'd want to take out these planes at the same time?

Carter?: There are eight airfields that are capable of mounting these jets. Eight [words unintelligible] . . .

Bundy: But politically, if you're trying to get him to understand the limit and the non-limit and make it as easy for him as possible,

there's an enormous premium on having a small, as small and clear-cut an action as possible, against the hazard of, uh, going after all the operational airfields becomes a kind of . . .

JFK: General.

Taylor?: I wonder if we could get, uh . . .

Bundy: . . . [words unintelligible] nuclear war.

Taylor?: . . . the number of hours required for each type of air strike, if we were just going for . . .

Carter?: Yeah, sure, sure.

JFK: Well, now, what is it, uh, we have, what is it we want to, we need to do in the next 24 hours to prepare for any of these three? It seems to me that we want to do more or less the same things no matter what we finally decide [words unintelligible] . . .

Bundy: We've authorized, Mr. President, we have a decision for additional intelligence reconnaissance, a minor decision that we'll talk to Keating. Seems [like?] . . .

JFK: I don't think Keating . . .

Bundy: No.

JFK: . . . will be that helpful.

Bundy: Leave that out.

JFK: Yeah.

RFK: I think that'll, then he'll be saying afterwards that we tried to . . .

Bundy: All right, the next, uh. . .

RFK: . . . dun him.

Bundy: I should think we need to know the, the earliest readiness for the various sizes of air strike and how long they would take to execute.

Speaker ? : [Words unintelligible]

JFK: [The medium?] probability . . .

Dillon: One other question is What, if anything, has to be done, uh, to be prepared for, uh, eventuality of a Soviet action?

JFK?: And then I think what we ought to do . . .

McNamara?: What sort of alert to do . . .

JFK?: . . . is to figure out what are the minimum number of people that we really have to tell. [REDACTED]

Bundy: Right. [REDACTED]
You've got to tell, it seems to me you're going to have to tell SACEUR*** . . .

JFK: Uhm.

Bundy: . . . and, uh, and the commandant.

Dillon: I would think this business about the Soviet reaction, that there, that might be helpful, uh, if we could maybe take some, uh, general war preparation type of action that would show them that we're ready if they want to start anything, without what you might, with starting anything.

Bundy: One. . . .

Dillon: You just don't know.

Bundy: On this track, one obvious element on the political side is do we say something simultaneously or, uh, to the Cubans, to the Soviets, or do we let the action speak for itself?

Rusk: This point whether we say something to the Cubans and the Soviets before any, before . . .

JFK: I think we ought to, what we ought to do is, is, uh, after this meeting this afternoon, we ought to meet tonight again at six, consider these various, uh, proposals. In the meanwhile, we'll go ahead with this maximum, whatever is needed from the flights, and, in addition, we will. . . . I don't think we got much time on these missiles. They may be. . . . So it may be that we just have to, we can't wait two weeks while we're getting ready to, to roll. Maybe just have to just take them out, and continue our other preparations if we decide to do that. That may be where we end up. I think we ought to, beginning right now, be preparing to. . . . Because that's what we're going to do anyway. We're certainly going to do number one; we're going to take out these, uh, missiles. Uh, the questions will be whether, which, what I would describe as number two, which would be a general air strike. That we're not ready to say, but we should be in preparation for it. The third is the, is the, uh, the general invasion. At least we're going to do number one, so it seems to me that we don't have to wait very long. We, we ought to be making those preparations.

Bundy: You want to be clear, Mr. President, whether we have definitely decided against a political track. I, myself, think we ought . . .

***Supreme Allied Commander, Europe.

Taylor?: Well, we'll have . . .

Bundy: . . . to work out a contingency on that.

Taylor?: We, we'll develop both tracks.

JFK:

[REDACTED] We ought to just decide who we talk to and how long ahead and how many people, really, in the government. There's going to be a difference between those who know that--this will leak out in the next few days--there are these, uh, uh, bases, until we say or the Pentagon or State won't be harsh. We've already said it on the [words unintelligible]. So we, let's say, we've got two or three days.

Bundy: Well, let's play it, shall we play it still harder and, uh, simply say that there's no evidence and that we have to . . .

JFK: We ought to stick the battle till we want to do something.

Bundy: . . . [words unintelligible] [REDACTED] [words unintelligible].

JFK: Otherwise we give ourselves away, so let's . . .

Bundy: May I make one other cover plan suggestion . . .

JFK: Yes.

Bundy: . . . Mr. President? There will be meetings in the White House. I think the best we can do is to keep the people with a specific Latin American business black and describe the rest as "intensive budget review sessions," but I haven't been able to think of any other . . .

JFK: Nobody, it seems to me, in the State Department. I discussed the matter with, uh, Bohlen* of the Soviet bloc and told him he could talk to Thompson.** So that's those two. It seems to me that there's no one else in the State Department that ought to be talked to about it . . .

Speaker ?: [Words unintelligible] in the department.

JFK: . . . in any level at all, and, uh, until we know a little more. And then, as I say, in Defense we've got to keep it as tight as possible . . .

Speaker ?: [Words unintelligible]

JFK: . . . particularly what we're going to do about it. Maybe a lot of people know about what's there, but what we're going to do about it really ought to be, you know, the tightest of all because otherwise we bitch it up.

*Charles E. Bohlen. **Llewellyn E. Thompson.

McNamara: Mr. President, may I suggest that we come back this afternoon prepared to, to answer three questions. First, should we surface our surveillance? I think this is a very important . . .

Speaker ?: Very important point.

McNamara: . . . question at the moment. We ought to try to decide today either yes or no.

JFK: By "surface our". . .

McNamara: I mean should we state publicly . . .

JFK?: Oh.

McNamara: . . . that, that you have stated we will, we'll act to take out any offensive weapons. In order to be certain as to whether there are or are not offensive weapons, we are scheduling U-2 flights or other surveillance . . .

Carter?: What's the [skull number, commissar?]. [Laughs]

McNamara: . . . or reconnaissance flights to, uh, to obtain this information. We'll make the information, uh, public.

JFK: There may not be one. All right, why not?

McNamara: This is one question. A second question is Should we precede the military action with political action? If so, on what, uh, timing? I would think the answer's almost certainly yes. And I wouldn't, I would think particularly of the contacts with Khrushchev. And I would think that if these are to be done, they must be scheduled in terms of time very, very carefully in relation to a potential military action. There must be a very, very precise series of, of contacts with him, and indications of what we'll do at certain times following that. And, thirdly, we should be prepared to answer your questions regarding the, the effect of these strikes and the time required to carry them off. I think . . .

JFK: How long it would take to get 'em organized.

McNamara: E-, e-, exactly. We'll be prepared . . .

JFK: In other words, how many days from tomorrow morning would it. . . . How many mornings from tomorrow morning would it take to get the, to take out just these missile . . .

McNamara: Missile sites, right.

JFK: . . . sites which we, [well?] we need to know now? How long before we get the information about the rest of the island, do you figure, General?

Carter: Could take weeks, Mr. President.

JFK: Weeks?

Speaker ?: Uh . . .

Carter: For complete coverage of a cloud-covered island.

Bundy or
McNamara?: Depending on weather.

Taylor: Well, we, we've got about 80 percent now, don't we [word
unintelligible]?

Lundahl: Yes, sir. It depends much on what we get out of yesterday's
flight, sir. They won't be [words unintelligible] . . .

Carter: There are clouded areas, Mr. President . . .

Speaker ?: Right, but there are areas . . .

Carter: . . . as I understand it and there are . . .

Speaker ?: [Words unintelligible]

Carter: . . . areas that are very substantial . . .

Speaker ?: We'll have a report on those . . .

Carter: . . . in permanent [helium?].

Speaker ?: . . . covered with clouds over it.

Lundahl: We'll have preliminaries by six o'clock tomorrow morning.

JFK: Well, the [top?] there is the . . .

Speaker ?: [Words unintelligible]

JFK: . . . the part of the island that isn't covered by, uh, this
flight we're, uh, by tomorrow morning. What about, uh, doing
that, uh, tomorrow plus the clouded part doing low level? Have
we got a plane that goes . . .

Bundy: We can certainly go low level . . .

Speaker ?: Go low level, lower level [words unintelligible] . . .

Bundy: . . . and we have been reluctant to do that. The, the one thing
to worry about on low level is that that will create a sense of
tactical alert in the island, and I'm not sure we want to do that.
Our guess is that the high level ones have not, in fact, been
detected.

Taylor: I think that's correct.

Bundy?: No reactions.

JFK: I would think that if we are going to go in and take out this and any others we find that we would, uh, at the same time do a general low level . . .

Bundy: You could at the same time do a low level of [all?] that we have not seen.

JFK: . . . photographic reconnaissance.

Speaker ?: Associated with.

Bundy: That would certainly be sensible.

JFK: Then we would be prepared . . .

Bundy: As a matter of fact . . .

JFK: . . . almost any day to take those out.

Bundy: . . . for evidentiary purposes, uh, someone has made the point this morning, that if we go in on a quick strike, we ought to have a photographic plane take shots of the [hits?].

Speaker ?: [Words unintelligible]

Taylor?: I think that's right, that's [words unintelligible].

JFK: All right, well, now, I think we've got to, uh, [word unintelligible] for this for us to be doing anything quickly and quietly and completely that's what we've got to be doing the next two or three days. So we'll meet at six?

Speaker ?: Do you think . . .

RFK: How long. . . . Excuse me. I just wondered how long it would take if you took it and [had? or added?] an invasion?

Taylor: To mount an invasion?

RFK: No, how long would it take to . . .

Speaker ?: What is that . . .

RFK: . . . uh, take over the island?

Taylor: Very hard to estimate, Bobby . . .

Speaker ?: [Words unintelligible]

[There are several conversations going on and only portions of each are intelligible.]

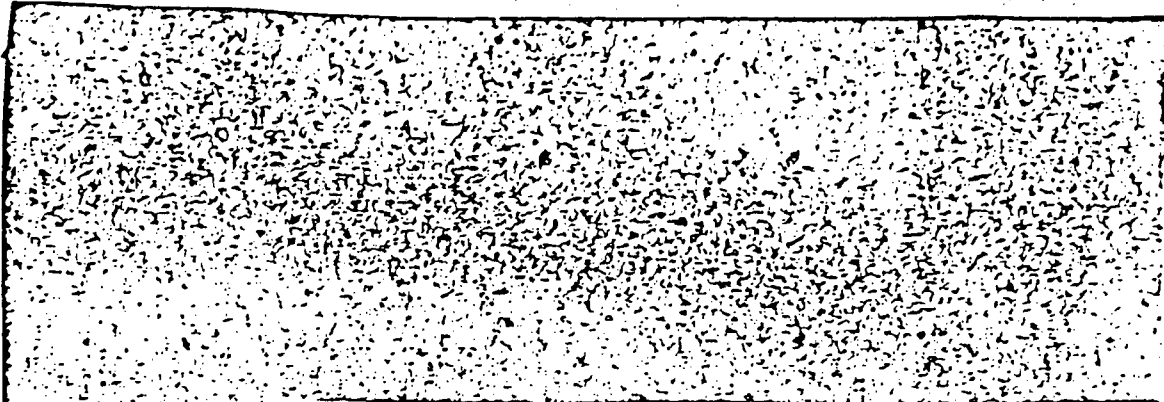
Taylor:

Speaker ?:

McNamara:

Speaker ?:

JFK:



Yeah, so we get some idea about our reception there. I just hate to even waste these six hours, so it may be that we will want to be, uh, doing some movements, uh, in the next six hours, uh . . .

Speaker ?: About the execution of the [launching?]/[words unintelligible]?

JFK: Yeah.

[Several speakers speak at once and none of the words are intelligible.]

JFK: I want to, uh, add [words unintelligible] better also. [I don't know?] about you, are you coming to lunch?

Speaker ?: Yeah. Both of us were.

JFK: Who else is supposed to come to lunch?

Rusk: I was supposed to, but, um, [word unintelligible] . . .

JFK: George, are you supposed to come?

Speaker ?: No, no. [He's?], see if they've got the [word unintelligible].

JFK: Do you want to take [out that?]?

Speaker ?: [Words unintelligible], are you supposed to go now?

JFK: Six o'clock tonight?

Speaker ?: Six o'clock.

JFK: All right. Seven o'clock.

Bundy?: Seven, seven is better actually for you, Mr. President. Is six-thirty manageable? That would be still better because you're supposed to be out there at eight.

JFK: Well, that's all right. That's, that's [words unintelligible] then, uh, seven. Between six-thirty and seven. As close to six-thirty as you can be here. How many would there be? I'd like to have, if you add the members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff here . . .

Speaker ? : [Words unintelligible]

JFK: Well, then you bring who you think ought to be brought.

Bundy: May I urge everybody to use the East Gates rather than the West Gates?

JFK: I think we ought to get. . . . What's Mr. McCone* doing up here, General?

Carter: He's, uh, [burying?] his stepson tomorrow morning back . . .

Speaker ? : He just [threw me?], I just talked with him on the phone. I think he'd rather decide.

JFK: So why don't you, you discussed [words unintelligible]? Is he familiar with this information?

Carter: Yes, sir, he's aware of what has happened.

RFK: I talked with him about an hour ago. [Words unintelligible] here tomorrow morning [words unintelligible]. They're burying the child today, his son.

JFK: . . . is he going to give judgment tonight?

RFK: Well, he asked me to [words unintelligible]. I think we might tell him [words unintelligible]. He said he was going to talk after the meeting, maybe just tell him we had a meeting [words unintelligible].

JFK: All right, now the other question is on, uh, the [words unintelligible] Eisenhower. Where is the General, now?

Speaker ? : Eisenhower. . . .

JFK: I'll take care of that. I'll have [words unintelligible].

Speaker ? : I want to get say a list of the [words unintelligible] of the [words unintelligible] the president [words unintelligible].

Speaker ? : It's too complicated to . . .

Rusk: George.

Speaker ? : George.

Rusk: The president wants you to take my place at lunch.

Ball: All right, but I've got, I'm working on [words unintelligible], no, but I've got a, want to see about a speech, that's all.

*John A. McCone.

Rusk?: Well, well, but maybe they could just get [words unintelligible].

Speaker?: Oh, well, we'll see how he's [words unintelligible] at the conference [words unintelligible].

Speaker?: Yes, yes.

Speaker?: They can reschedule that, that's fine.

Speaker?: [Words unintelligible] the military [words unintelligible].

JFK: Well, as I say, [I say?] you're familiar with [words unintelligible].

Speaker?: Well, uh, [words unintelligible] the SAC bombers.

JFK: No, no, no. We'd get [words unintelligible] out of [words unintelligible].

Speaker?: [Words unintelligible] make a decision here [words unintelligible].

Speaker?: What about [words unintelligible], I'll call him about this thing tomorrow.

Speaker?: [Words unintelligible] right person [words unintelligible] [two or to?] low level reconnaissance.

Speaker?: Yeah.

[End of reel 1.]

[Beginning of reel 2. Reel 2 repeats some of the conversation from the end of reel 1. Several conversations are going on at the same time and very little is intelligible.]

Speaker?: Yeah.

Speaker?: [Words unintelligible] tomorrow [words unintelligible].

Speaker?: [Words unintelligible] right person now [to do?] low level reconnaissance.

Bundy: Yeah. I was just talking to [Heinz?]. He'll get there right now. [Words unintelligible] What I think [words unintelligible]. Everybody else will sit down at the table [words unintelligible] and consider what gaps there are.

Speaker?: This is the point I want [words unintelligible] on this [words unintelligible].

Speaker?: I'm trying to find out [words unintelligible].

Speaker?: I know.

Bundy?: Why don't you drive? Pick up your car and you drive over to this, the Pentagon and have lunch with [words unintelligible]. Here,

why don't you call from here and . . .

Speaker ?: This one still [words unintelligible].

Bundy?: . . . come over.

Speaker ?: This could be [words unintelligible]. Anybody else you choose.

Bundy: One, two. . . . [Words unintelligible] then you can sit down. . . .

Speaker ?: Are you [words unintelligible]?

Speaker ?: [Words unintelligible] the [words unintelligible].

Speaker ?: See what we really [need?] .

Johnson: I have, I have leased a [words unintelligible]. I have kept that [relationship?]. Uh, the only thing that we should lose some money [words unintelligible] which make sense. If you had, uh, [immediate?]/[words unintelligible] that's something else. I have a Grumman "Gulfstream" that I've leased and I want you to lease it for [MATS?] after the election. Let me use it for the ["Jetstar"?]. It's a helluva lot better for these small airfields and I think about [words unintelligible] get that more people. Well, anyway, I had a lease now and I'd, what I'd like to have is, uh, the [best?]/[words unintelligible] that you have there. If it can be done.

McNamara?: Oh, sure.

Speaker ?: As it is, my [words unintelligible] when I get 100, 200 miles [from Washington?]/[words unintelligible] but the highest it will go [words unintelligible].

Speaker ?: Things like this [words unintelligible].

Speaker ?: Let me just check [before?] I ask him?

Speaker ?: What will it be around here about [words unintelligible]?

Bundy: Well, he's going to telephone [words unintelligible].

Speaker ?: Low, low level. If you think that [words unintelligible].

Bundy: He ought to just come over and [words unintelligible].

Speaker ?: Oh, thank you. Would you just then take the call into [words unintelligible]? Have [words unintelligible] just sit down and you're right, they're great at that.

Speaker ?: [Words unintelligible], too.

Speaker ?: Yes, sir.

PAPERS OF JOHN F. KENNEDY
PRESIDENTIAL PAPERS
PRESIDENT'S OFFICE FILES

Presidential Recordings

Transcript

This transcript is from audiotapes 28.2 and 28A.1 .

There are 52 pages of transcript representing 89
minutes of recorded conversation. See transcript heading
for further information.

READERS ARE CAUTIONED TO CHECK ALL QUOTATIONS AGAINST
AUDIO RECORDINGS BEFORE PUBLICATION

OFF-THE-RECORD MEETING ON CUBA
October 16, 1962
6:30 - 7:55 P.M.

JFK: Uh, anything in 'em?

Carter: Nothing on the additional film, sir. We have a much better read-out on what we had initially. There's good evidence of their back-up missiles for each of the four launchers at each of the three sites, so that there would be twice the number for a total of eight which could eventually be erected. This would mean a capability of from sixteen or possibly twenty-four missiles. We feel, on the basis of information that we presently have, that these are solid propellant, inertial guidance missiles with eleven-hundred-mile range rather than the oxygen propellant, uh, radar-controlled. Primarily because we have no indication of any radar or any indication of any oxygen equipment. And it would appear to be logical from an intelligence estimate viewpoint that if they are going to this much trouble that they would go ahead and put in the eleven hundred miles because of the tremendously increased threat coverage. Let me see that [words unintelligible].

JFK: What is this map?

Carter: That's, shows the circular range . . .

JFK: When was this drawn?

Carter: . . . capability.

JFK: Is this drawn in relation to this information?

Carter: Uh, no, sir. It was drawn in, uh, some time ago, I believe, but the ranges there are the nominal ranges of the missiles rather than the maximum.

Speaker ?: The circles [around, or are added?] . . .

Carter: That's a ten hundred and twenty circle, as against eleven hundred.

JFK: Well, I was just wondering, uh, whether, uh, San Diego de los Baños is where these missiles are?

Carter: Uh, yes, sir. Well, the . . .

JFK: Well, I wonder how many of these have been printed out.

Bundy: Yeah, well, the circle is drawn in red ink on the map, Mr. President

Carter: The circle is . . .

JFK: Oh, I see. It was never printed?

Carter: No, that's on top.

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JFK: I see. It isn't printed.

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, uh, they could fire on very little notice. They'll have a refire rate of from four to six hours over each launcher.

JFK: What about the vulnerability of such a missile to a, t-, uh, bullets?

Speaker ?: Highly vulnerable, [Mr. President?].

Carter: Uh, 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 [Bahu?].

[Redacted]

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.

[Redacted]

JFK: Uh, General, how long would you say we had, uh, 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. Uh, this would be the total complex. If they're the oxygen type, uh, we have no. . . . It would be considerably longer since we don't have any indication of, uh, oxygen refueling there nor any radars.

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

Carter: [Well, or No?], one of 'em, uh, 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. [Uh. . . .]

Speaker ?: Why would they have to be sideways [though?]?

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

Speaker ?: [Well?], this way it sets down on [words unintelligible].

Speaker ?: Well, all right.

Speaker ?: Fine.

Rusk: Uh, the, the, the total readout on the, uh, flights yesterday will be ready tonight, you think?

Carter: It should be, uh, finished pretty well by midnight.

JFK: Now what, that was supposed to have covered the whole island, was it, uh?

Carter: Uh, yes, sir.

JFK: Except for . . .

Carter: In two throws. But, uh, part of the central and, in fact, much of the central and part of the eastern was cloud covering. The western half was, uh, in real good shape.

JFK: I see. Now what have we got laying on for tomorrow?

Carter: There are seven, six or seven . . .

McNamara: I just left [word unintelligible]/[equipment?]. We're having ready seven U-2 aircraft: two high-altitude U-2s, five lesser-altitude U-2s; six equipped with an old type film, one equipped with a new type, experimental film which hopefully will increase the resolution. We only need two aircraft flying tomorrow if the weather is good. We will put up only two if the weather is good. If the weather is not good, we'll start off with two and we'll have the others ready to go during the day as the weather improves. We have weather aircraft surrounding the periphery of Cuba, and we'll be able to keep track of the weather during the day over all parts of the island. Hopefully, this will give us complete coverage tomorrow. We are planning to do this, or have the capability to do this, every day thereafter for an indefinite period.

Carter: This is a field-type missile, and [redacted] it's designed to be fielded, placed and fired in six hours. Uh, it would appear that we have caught this in a very early stage of deployment. It would also appear that there does not seem to be the degree of urgency in getting them immediately into position. This could be because they have not been surveyed. Or it could be because it is the shorter-range missile and the radars and the oxygen has not yet arrived.

JFK: There isn't any question in your mind, however, uh, that it is an intermediate-range missile?

Carter: No, there's no question in our minds at all. These are . . .

JFK: Just [word unintelligible] . . .

Carter: . . . all the characteristics that we have seen, [live ones?].

Rusk: You've seen actual missiles themselves and not just the boxes have you?

Carter: No, we've seen. . . . In the picture there is an actual missile.

Rusk: Yeah. Sure there is.

Carter: Yes. There's no question in our mind, sir. And they are genuine. They are not, uh, a camouflage or covert attempt to fool us.

Bundy: How much do we know, uh, [Pat?]? I don't mean to go behind your judgment here, except that there's one thing that would be really catastrophic would be to make a judgment here on, on a bad guess as to whether these things are. We mustn't do that.

Carter: Well . . .

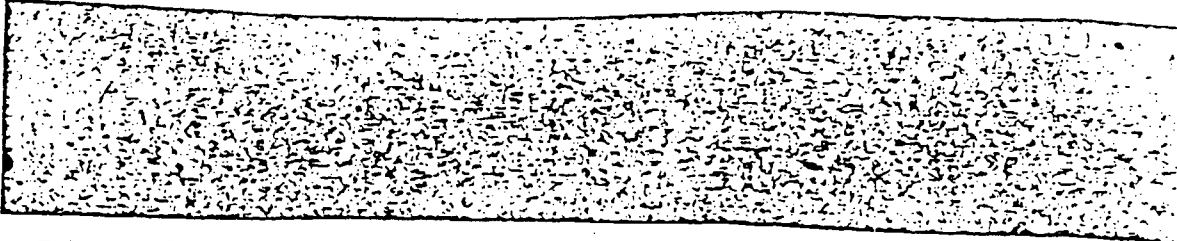
Bundy: How do we really know what these missiles are and what their range is?

Carter:



Bundy: What [made?] the verification? That's really my question. How do we know what a given Soviet missile will do?

Carter:



Bundy: I know that we have accepted them . . .

Carter: This is . . .

Bundy:



Carter:

Rusk: Pat, we don't know of any sixty-five-foot Soviet missile that has a range of, say, fifteen miles, do we?

Carter: Fifteen miles? No, we certainly don't.

Rusk: In other words, if they are missiles this size, they are missiles of considerable range, I think.

McNamara: I tried to prove today--I am, I'm satisfied--that these were not MRBMs. And I worked long on it. I got our experts out, and I could not find evidence that would support any conclusion other than that they are MRBMs. Now, whether they're eleven-hundred miles, six-hundred mile, nine-hundred mile is still a guess in my opinion. But that they are MRBMs seems the most probable assumption at the moment.

Speaker ?: I would apparently agree, uh, given the weight of it.

JFK: Is General Taylor coming over?

McNamara: He is, uh, Mr. President.

JFK: Have you finished, General?

Carter: Yes, sir. That, I think that's at, uh, [word unintelligible] . . .

Rusk: [Because?] we've had some further discussion meetings this afternoon and we'll be working on it [presently?] this evening, but, um, I might mention certain points that are, some of us are concerned about. The one is, um, the chance that, uh, this might be the issue on which, uh, Castro would elect to break with Moscow if he knew that he were in deadly jeopardy. Now, this is one chance in a hundred, possibly. But, in any event, um, we, we're very much, uh, interested in the possibility of a direct message to Castro, uh, as well as Khrushchev, might make some sense. ~~_____~~
~~_____~~ Uh, Mr. Martin* will present you with outline, uh, the kind of, uh, message to Castro that, uh, we had in mind.

Martin: This would be an oral note, message through a third party. Uh, first, uh, describing just what we know about what exists in the, the missile sites, so that he knows that we are informed about what's going on. Uh, second, to point out that the issues this raises as far as the U.S. security is concerned, it's a breach of two of the points that you have made public. Uh, first, the ground-to-ground missile, and, second, obviously, it's a Soviet-operated base in Cuba. Uh, thirdly, this raises the greatest problems for Castro, as we see it. In the first place, uh, by this action the Soviets have, uh, threatened him with attack from the United States, and, uh, therefore the overthrow of his regime; used his territory to, uh, make this, uh, to put him in this jeopardy. And, secondly, the Soviets are talking to other people about the possibility of bargaining this support and these missiles, uh, against concessions in Berlin and elsewhere, and therefore are threatening to, to barga

*Edwin M. Martin.

him away. Uh, in these circumstances, we wonder whether he, uh, realizes the, the position that, uh, he's been put in and the way the Soviets are using him.

Then go on to say that, uh, we will have to inform our people of the threat that exists here, and we mean to take action about it in the next day or so. And we'll have to do this unless we receive word from him that he is prepared to take action to get the Soviets out of the site. Uh, he will have to show us that not only by statements, privately or publicly, but, uh, by action: that we intend to, uh, keep close surveillance by overflights of the site to make su-, to know what is being done. But we will have to know that he is doing something to remove this threat, uh, in order to withhold the action that we intend to, we will be compelled to take.

Uh, if, uh, Castro feels that an attempt by him to take the kind of action that we're suggesting to him, uh, would result in serious difficulties for him within Cuba, we at least want him to know that, uh, er, to, and to convey to him and remind him of the statement that you, Mr. President, made a year and a half ago in effect that there are two points that are non-negotiable. One is the Soviet tie and presence, and the second is aggression in Latin America. This is a, a hint, but no more than that, that, uh, we might have sympathy and help for him in case he ran into trouble trying to throw the old-line Communists and the Soviets out.

Rusk: Yes.

Martin: We'll give him twenty-four hours to respond.

Rusk: The disadvantage in that is, of course, the, uh, the advance notice if he judges that we, we would not in this, in such approach here say exactly what we would do, but, uh, it might, of course, lead him to bring up mobile anti-aircraft weapons around these, uh, missiles themselves, uh, or, uh, take some other action that will make the strike that more difficult. Uh, but there is that, there is that [move that?].

There are two other problems that we are concerned about. Uh, if we strike these missiles, we would expect, I think, uh, maximum Communist reaction in Latin America. In the case of about six of those governments, unless the heads of government had some intimation, uh, requiring some preparatory steps from the security point of view, uh, one or another of those governments could easily, uh, could easily be overthrown-- ~~uh, and therefore,~~ uh, uh, the question will arise as to whether we should not somehow, uh, indicate to them in some way the seriousness of the situation so they can take precautionary steps, whether we tell them exactly what we have in mind or, or not.

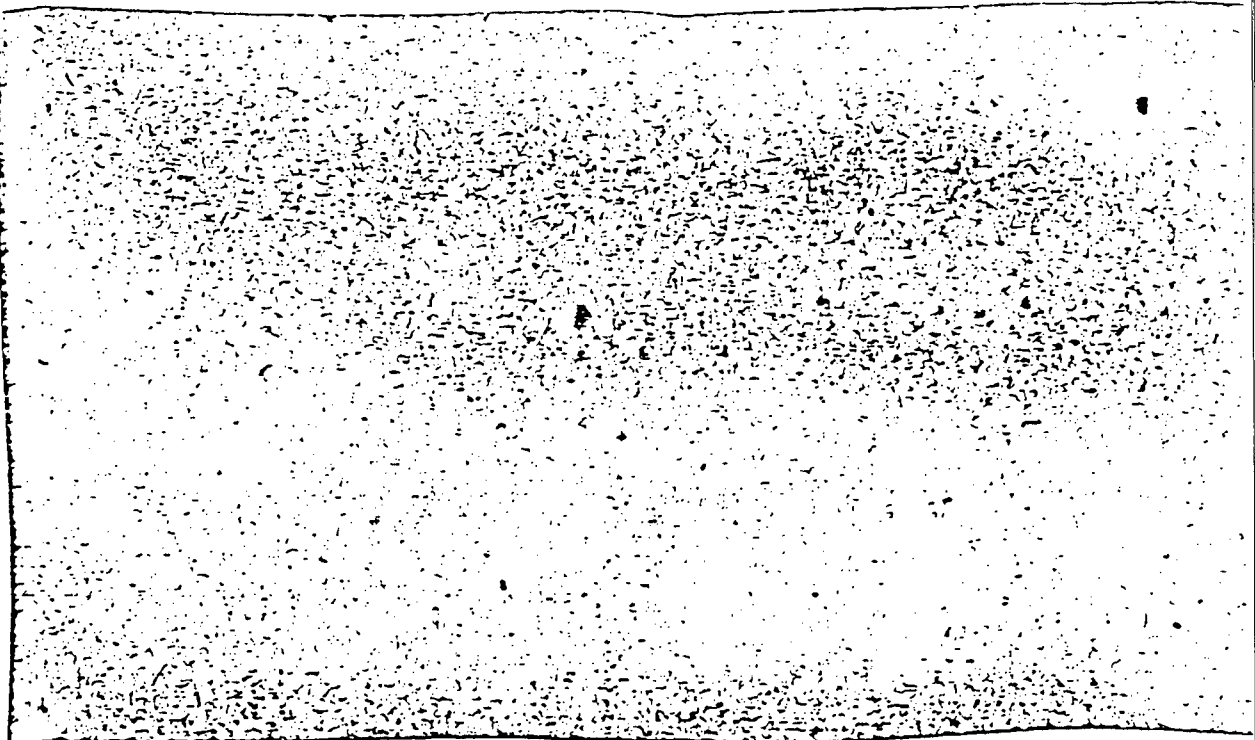
The other is the NATO problem. Uh, we, uh, we would estimate that

the Soviets, uh, would almost certainly take, uh, some kind of action somewhere. Um, for us to, to take an action of this sort without letting, uh, our closer allies know of a matter which could subject them to very great, uh, danger, uh, is a very, uh, far-reaching decision to make. And, uh, we could find ourselves, uh, isolated and the alliance crumbling, very much as it did for a period during the Suez affair, but at a moment of much greater danger over an issue of much greater danger than the Suez affair, for the alliance. I think that these are matters that we'll be working on very hard this evening, but I think I ought to mention them because it's, uh, necessarily a part of this problem.

JFK:

Can we get a little idea about what the military thing is? Well, of course, one, would you suggest taking these out?

McNamara:



JFK:

That would be taking out these three missile sites, uh, plus all the MIGs?

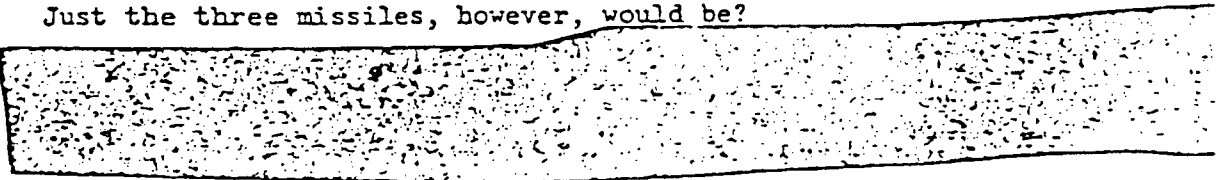
McNamara:

Well, you can go from the three missile sites to the three missile sites plus the MIGs, to the three missile sites plus MIGs plus nuclear storage plus airfields and so on up through the offensive, potential offensive [words unintelligible] . . .

JFK:

Just the three missiles, however, would be?

McNamara:



JFK:

Of course, all you'd really get there would be. . . . What would

you get there? You'd get the, probably you'd get the missiles themselves that are, have to be on the . . .

McNamara: You'd get the launchers . . .

JFK: . . . [words unintelligible].

McNamara: . . . the launchers and the missiles on the [words unintelligible]
. . .

JFK: The launchers are just what? They, they're not much are they?

McNamara: No, they're simply a mobile launchers, uh, device.

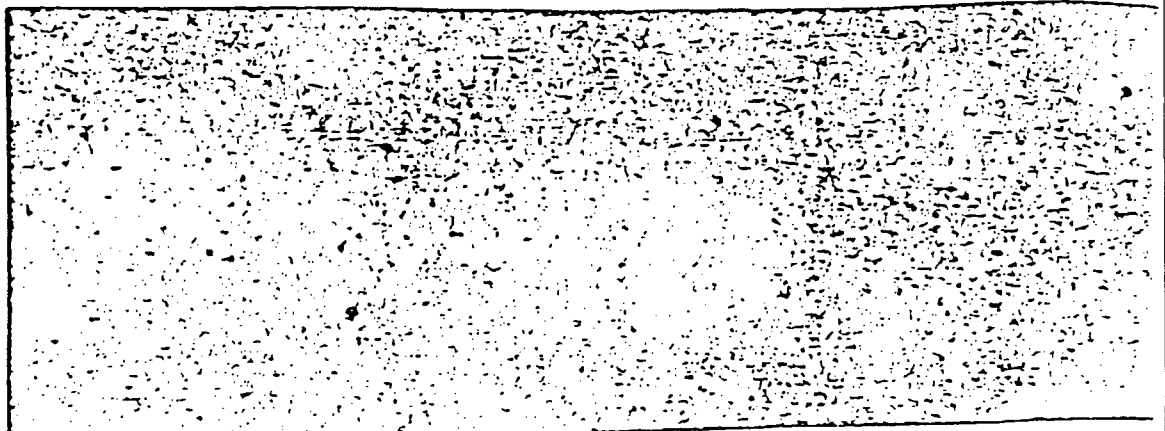
Taylor: This is a point target, Mr., uh, President. You're never sure of having, absolutely of getting everything down there. We intend to do a great deal of damage because we can [words unintelligible]. But, as the secretary says here, there was unanimity among all the commanders involved in the Joint Chiefs, uh, that in our judgment, it would be a mistake to take this very narrow, selective target because it invited reprisal attacks and it may be detrimental. Now if the, uh, Soviets have been willing to give, uh, nuclear warheads to these missiles, there is every, just as good reason for them to give nuclear capability to these bases. We don't think we'd ever have a chance to take 'em again, so that we lose this, the first strike surprise capability. Our recommendation would be to get complete intelligence, get all the photography we need, the next two or three days, no, no hurry in our book. Then look at this target system. If it really threatens the United States, then take it right out with one hard crack.

JFK: That would be taking out the, uh, some of those fighters, bombers and . . .

Taylor: Fighters, the bombers, uh, IL-28s may turn up in this photography. It's not that all unlikely there're some there.

JFK: Think you could do that in one day?

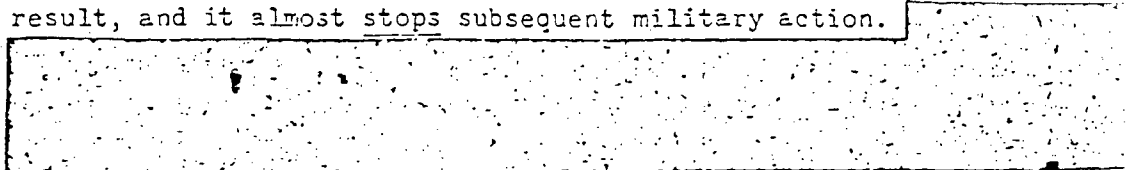
Taylor:



McNamara: Mr. President, could I outline three courses . . .

JFK?: [Yes?].

McNamara: . . . of action we have considered and speak very briefly on each one? The first is what I would call the political course of action, in which we, uh, follow some of the possibilities that Secretary Rusk mentioned this morning by approaching Castro, by approaching Khrushchev, by discussing with our allies. An overt and open approach politically to the problem [attempting, or in order?] to solve it. This seemed to me likely to lead to no satisfactory result, and it almost stops subsequent military action.



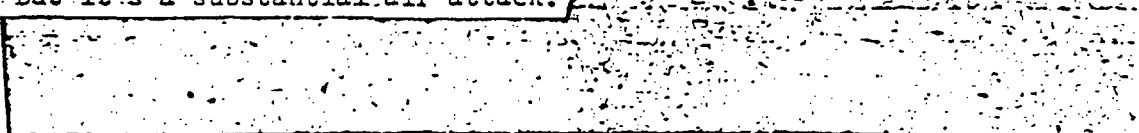
A second course of action we haven't discussed but lies in between the military course we began discussing a moment ago and the political course of action is a course of action that would involve declaration of open surveillance; a statement that we would immediately impose an, uh, a blockade against offensive weapons entering Cuba in the future; and an indication that with our open-surveillance reconnaissance which we would plan to maintain indefinitely for the future,



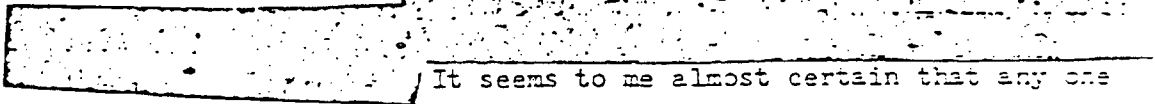
Bundy:

McNamara:

But the third course of action is any one of these variants of military action directed against Cuba, starting with an air attack against the missiles. The Chiefs are strongly opposed to so limited an air attack. But even so limited an air attack is a very extensive air attack. It's not twenty sorties or fifty sorties or a hundred sorties, but probably several hundred sorties. Uh, we haven't worked out the details. It's very difficult to do so when we lack certain intelligence that we hope to have tomorrow or the next day. But it's a substantial air attack.



This is the very, very rough plan that the Chiefs have outlined, and it is their judgment that that is the type of air attack that should be carried out.



It seems to me almost certain that any one

of these forms of direct military action will lead to a Soviet military response of some type some place in the world. It may well be worth the price. Perhaps we should pay that. But I think we should recognize that possibility, and, moreover, we must recognize it in a variety of ways. We must recognize it by trying to deter it, which means we probably should alert SAC, probably put on an airborne alert, perhaps take other s-, alert measures. These bring risks of their own, associated with them. It means we should recognize that by mobilization. Almost certainly, we should accompany the initial air strike with at least a partial mobilization. We should accompany an, an invasion following an air strike with a large-scale mobilization; a very large-scale mobilization, certainly exceeding the limits of the authority we have from Congress requiring a declaration therefore of a national emergency. We should be prepared, in the event of even a small air strike and certainly in the event of a larger air strike, for the possibility of a Cuban uprising, which would force our hand in some way. Either force u-, us to accept a, a, uh, an unsatisfactory uprising, with all of the adverse comment that result; or would, would force an invasion to support the uprising.

Rusk: Mr. President, may I make a very brief comment on that? I think that, um, uh, any course of action involves heavy political involvement. Um, it's going to affect all sorts of policies, positions, uh, as well as the strategic situation. So I don't think there's any such thing as a nonpolitical course of action. I think also that, um, uh, we have to consider what political preparation, if any, is to occur before an air strike or in connection with any military action. And when I was talking this morning, I was talking about some steps which would put us in the best position to crack the . . .

JFK: I think the difficulty . . .

Rusk: . . . the strength of Cuba.

JFK: . . . it seems to me, is. . . . I completely agree that there isn't any doubt that if we announced that there were MRBM sites going up that that would change, uh, we would secure a good deal of political support, uh, after my statement; and, uh, the fact that we indicated our desire to restrain, this really would put the burden on the Soviet. On the other hand, the very fact of doing that makes the military. . . . We lose all the advantages of our strike. Because if we announce that it's there, then it's quite obvious to them that we're gonna probably do something about it. I would assume. Now, I don't know, that, it seems to me what we ought to be thinking about tonight is if we made an announcement that the intelligence has revealed that there are, and if we [did the note?] message to Khrushchev. . . . I don't think, uh, that Castro has to know we've been paying much attention to it any more than. . . . Over a period of time, it might have some effect, [have settled?] back down, change. I don't think he plays it that

way. So [have?] a note to Khrushchev. . . . I don't. . . . It seems to me, uh, my press statement was so clear about how we wouldn't do anything under these conditions and under the conditions that we would. He must know that we're going to find out, so it seems to me he just, uh . . .

Bundy: That's, of course, why he's been very, very explicit with us in communications to us about how dangerous this is, and . . .

JFK: That's right, but he's . . .

Bundy: . . . the TASS statement and his other messages.

JFK: He's initiated the danger really, hasn't he? He's the one that's playing [his card, or God?], not us. So we could, uh . . .

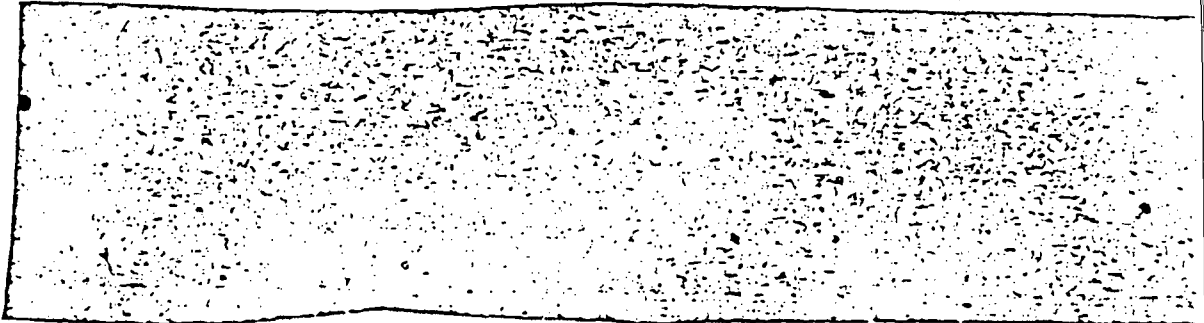
Rusk: And his statement to Kohler* on the subject of his visit and so forth, completely hypocritical.

[Reel 1 ends.]

[Reel 2 begins mid-conversation.]

McNamara: . . . Cuba. There is a great possibility they can place them in operational condition quickly. Unless, as General Carter said, the system may have a, a normal reaction time, set-up time of six hours. Whether it has six hours or two weeks, we don't know how much time has started, nor do we know what air-launch capabilities they have for warheads. We don't know what air-launch capability they have for high explosives. It's almost certainly, uh, a, a substantial high-explosive capability in the sense that they could drop one or two or ten high-explosive bombs some place along the East Coast. And that's the minimum risk to this country we run as a result of advance warning, too.

Taylor:



JFK:

Taylor: No, but it certainly is fair to . . .

JFK: . . . if they get one strike.

Dillon: What if they carry a nuclear weapon?

JFK: Well, if they carry a nuclear weapon. . . . You assume they wouldn't do that.

*Foy D. Kohler.

Taylor: [Words unintelligible] I think we would expect some conventional weapon.

Rusk: I would not think that they would use a nuclear weapon unless they're prepared to [join?] a nuclear war, I don't think. I just don't s-, don't, don't see that possibility.

Speaker ?: I would agree.

Bundy?: I agree.

Rusk: That would mean that, uh, we could be just utterly wrong, but, uh, we've never really believed that, that Khrushchev would take on a general nuclear war over Cuba.

Bundy: May I ask a question in that context?

JFK: We certainly have been wrong about what he's trying to do in Cuba. There isn't any doubt about that [possibly a word unintelligible]
. . .

Bundy: [Words unintelligible] that we've been wrong.

JFK: . . . many of us thought that he was going to put MRBMs on Cuba.

Bundy: Yeah. Except John McCone.

Carter: Mr. McCone.

JFK: Yeah.

Bundy: But, the, uh, question that I would like to ask is, quite aside from what we've said--and we're very hard-locked onto it, I know--What is the strategic impact on the position of the United States of MRBMs in Cuba? How gravely does this change the strategic balance?

McNamara: Mac, I asked the Chiefs that this afternoon, in effect. And they said, substantially. My own personal view is, not at all.

Bundy: Not so much.

McNamara: And, and I think this is an important element here. But it's all very . . .

Carter: The reason our estimators didn't think that they'd put them in there because of . . .

McNamara: That's what they said themselves . . .

Bundy: That's what they said themselves. . . .

McNamara: . . . in TASS statement.

Bundy: Yeah.

Carter: But then, going behind that . . .

JFK: [But why? Did it indicate? Being?] valuable enough?

Bundy: Doesn't prove anything in the strategic balance [overall?].

Carter: Doesn't prove anything. That was what the estimators felt, and that the Soviets would not take the risk. Mr. McCone's reasoning, however, was if this is so, then what possible reason have they got for going into Cuba in the manner in which they are with surface-to-air, uh, missiles and cruise-type missile. He just couldn't understand while their, why the Soviets were so heavily bolstering Cuba's defensive posture. There must be something behind it, which led him then to the belief that they must be coming in with MRBMs.

Taylor: I think it was [old-blooded?] . . .

Carter: [Words unintelligible]

Taylor: . . . point of view, Mr. President. You're quite right in saying that these, these are just a few more missiles, uh, targetted on the United States. Uh, however, they can become a, a very, a rather important adjunct and reinforcement to the, to the strike capability of the Soviet Union. We have no idea how far they will go. But more than that, these are, uh, uh, to our nation it means, it means a great deal more. You all are aware of that, in Cuba and not over in the Soviet Union.

Bundy: Well, I ask the question . . .

Taylor: Yeah.

Bundy: . . . with an awareness [laughter?] of the political . . .

JFK: I will say, my understanding's that . . .

Bundy: [Words unintelligible]

JFK: . . . let's just say that, uh, they get, they get these in there and then you can't, uh, they get sufficient capacity so we can't, uh, with warheads. Then you don't want to knock 'em out [cause?], uh, there's too much of a gamble. Then they just begin to build up those air bases there and then put more and more. I suppose they really. . . . Then they start getting ready to squeeze us in Berlin, doesn't that. . . . You may say it doesn't make any difference if you get blown up by an ICBM flying from the Soviet Union or one that was ninety miles away. Geography doesn't mean that much.

Taylor: We'd have to target them with our missiles and have the same kind

of, of pistol-pointed-at-the-head situation as we have in the Soviet Union at the present time.

Bundy:

JFK:

That's why it shows the Bay of Pigs was really right. [We've, or We'd?] got it right. That was better and better and worse and worse.

Taylor:

[Faint laughter]

Taylor:

[We've changed?] our evaluations well. - - -

RFK:

Of course, the other problem is, uh, in South America a year from now. And the fact that you got, uh, these things in the hands of Cubans, here, and then you, say your, some problem arises in Venezuela, er, you've got Castro saying, You move troops down into that part of Venezuela, we're going to fire these missiles.

Taylor:

Well, I think you've [words unintelligible].

RFK:

I think that's the difficulty . . .

Speaker ?:

[Words unintelligible].

RFK:

. . . rather than the [words unintelligible].

Speaker ?:

[Words unintelligible].

RFK:

I think it gives the [word unintelligible] image.

JFK:

It makes them look like they're coequal with us and that . . .

Dillon:

We're scared of the Cubans.

RFK:

We let the, uh. . . . I mean like we'd hate to have it in the hands of the Chinese. [Possibly words unintelligible]

Dillon:

[Right?] I agree with that sort of thing very strongly.

Martin:

It's a psychological factor. It won't reach as far as Venezuela is concerned.

Dillon:

Well, that's . . .

McNamara:

It'll reach the U.S. though. This is the point.

Speaker ? : That's the point.

Dillon: Yeah. That is the point.

Martin: Yeah. The psychological factor of our having taken it.

Dillon: Taken it, that's the best.

RFK: Well, and the fact that if you go there, we're gonna fire it.

JFK: What's that again, Ed? What are you saying?

Martin: Well, it's a psychological factor that we have sat back and let 'em do it to us, that is more important than the direct threat. Uh, it is a threat in the Caribbean . . .

JFK: [Words unintelligible] I said we weren't going to.

Martin: . . . [words unintelligible].

Rundy?: That's something we could manage.

JFK: Last month I said we weren't going to.

[Laughter]

JFK: Last month I should have said we're . . .

Speaker ? : Well . . .

JFK: . . . that we don't care. But when we said we're not going to and then they go ahead and do it, and then we do nothing, then . . .

Speaker ? : That's right.

JFK: . . . I would think that our risks increase. Uh, I agree. What difference does it make? They've got enough to blow us up now anyway. I think it's just a question of. . . . After all this is a political struggle as much as military. Well, uh, so where are we now? Where is the. . . . Don't think the message to Castro's got much in it. Uh, let's just, uh, let's try to get an answer to this question. How much. . . . It's quite obviously to our advantage to surface this thing to a degree before. . . . First to inform these governments in Latin America, as the secretary suggests; secondly to, uh, the rest of NATO.

Uh, how much does this diminish. . . . Not that we're going to do anything, but the existence of them, without any say about what we're gonna do. Let's say we, twenty-four hours ahead of our doing something about it, we make a public statement that these have been found on the island. That would, that would be notification in a sense that, uh, of their existence, and everybody could draw whatever conclusion they wanted to.

Martin?: I would say this, Mr. President, that I would, that if you've made a public statement, you've got to move immediately, or they, you're going to have a . . .

JFK: Oh, I . . .

Martin?: . . . a [words unintelligible] in this country.

JFK: . . . oh, I understand that. We'll be talking about. . . . Say, say we're going to move on a Saturday and we would say on Friday that these MRBMs, that the existence of this presents the gravest threat to our security and that appropriate action must be taken.

RFK: Could you stick planes over them, until you made the announcement at six o'clock Saturday morning? And at the same time or simultaneously put planes over to make sure that they weren't taking any action or movement, and that you could move in if they started moving in the missiles in place or something, you would move in and knock, that would be the trigger that you would move your planes in and knock them out. Otherwise you'd wait until six o'clock or five o'clock that night. I don't, is that, uh, is that. . . .

Taylor: I don't think anything like that. . . . I can't visualize doing it, uh, doing it successfully that way. I think that, uh, uh, anything that shows, uh, our intent to strike is going to place the airplanes and, and the missiles into, these are por-, really mobile missiles. They can be . . .

RFK: [You mean they can just?] . . .

Taylor: They can pull in under trees and forest and disappear almost at once, as I visualize.

McNamara: And they can also be readied, perhaps, between the time we, in effect, say we're going to come in and the time we do come in. This, this is a very, very great danger to this, this coast. I don't know exactly how to appraise it because . . .

Speaker ?: I don't know.

McNamara: . . . of the readiness period, but it is possible that these are field missiles, and then in that case they can be readied very promptly if they choose to do so.

Carter: These are field missiles, sir. They are mobile-support-type missiles.

Taylor: About a forty-minute countdown, something like that's been estimated.

Ball?: So you would say that, uh, the strike should precede any public discussion?

McNamara: I believe so, yes, if you're going to strike. I think before you make any announcements, you should decide whether you're going to strike. If you are going to strike, you shouldn't make an announcement.

Bundy: That's right.

Dillon: What is the advantage of the announcement earlier? Because it's, it's to build up sympathy or something for doing it; but you get the simultaneous announcement of what was there and why you struck, with pictures and all, I [believe?] would serve the same . . .

Ball?: Well, the only announ-, the only advantage is, it's a kind of ultimatum, it's, there is an opportunity of a response that, which would preclude it. I mean it's, it's more, a more, for, for the appearance than as for the reality. 'Cause obviously you're not going to get that kind of response. But I would suppose that there is a course which is a little different, which is a private message from the president

Martin?:

Ball?: Uh, and, uh, that this is, you're going to have to do this, you're compelled and you've gotta move quickly and you want them to know it. Maybe two hours before the strike, something like that . . .

Dillon: Well, that's it, that's different.

Ball?: . . . even the night before. Uh, but you. . . . But it has to be kept on that basis of total secrecy. And then the question of what you do with these Latin American governments is another matter. I think if you, if you notify them in advance . . .

JFK: That's right. [Indicated?]

Ball?: . . . it may be all over.

JFK: Then you just have to, uh, Congress would, take Congress along . . .

Bundy: I can't. . . . I think that's just not, not right.

Speaker ? : [Words unintelligible]

JFK: I'm not completely, uh, I don't think we ought to abandon just knocking out these missile bases as opposed to, that's much more, uh, defensible, explicable, politically or satisfactory-in-every-way action than the general strike which takes us . . .

Speaker ? : Move down . . .

JFK: . . . us into the city of Havana . . .

Speaker ? : . . . those two.

JFK: . . . and [it is plain to me?] takes us into much more . . .

Speaker ? : [Words unintelligible]

JFK: . . . hazardous, shot down. Now I know the Chiefs say, Well, that means their bombers can take off against us, uh, but, uh . . .

Bundy: Their bombers take off against us, then they have made a general war against Cuba of it, which is a, it then becomes much more their decision. We move this way. . . . The political advantages are, are very strong, it seems to me, of the small strike. Uh, it corresponds to the, the punishment fits the crime in political terms, the we are doing only what we warned repeatedly and publicly we would have to do. Uh, we are not generalizing the attack. The things that we've already recognized and said that we have not found it necessary to attack and said we would not find it necessary to attack . . .

JFK: Well, here's. . . . Let's, look, let's, let's, tonight, it seems to me we ought to go on the assumption that we're going to have the general--number two we've called it . . .

Bundy: Uh-huh.

JFK: . . . course number two, which would be a general strike--that you ought to be in position to do that . . .

Bundy: I agree.

JFK: . . . then if you decide you'd like to do number one.

RFK: How does that in- . . .

JFK: What?

JFK: Does that encompass, uh, an invasion?

JFK: Uh, no, I'd say that's the third course. Let's first start with. . . . I'd have to say first find out, uh, the air, so that I would think that we ought to be in position to do one and two. Which would be. . . . One would be just taking out these missiles, if there were others we'd find in the next twenty-four hours. Number two would be to take out all the airplanes, and number three is invade [here?].

Speaker ? : Well, they'd have to take out the SAM sites . . .

Dillon?: [Words unintelligible] also, Mr. President.

JFK: [Okay?] but that's in, that would be in two, included in number two . . .

Speaker ? : Well . . .

Speaker ? : That's the, that's a terrificly difficult . . .

Dillon: That's a, I mean that's just [words unintelligible] . . .

Speaker ? : [Words unintelligible] that may be three, and invasion four.

Taylor: In order to get in to get the airfields, there's a good number we'd have to [get out?].

Gilpatric?: Well, isn't there a question whether any of the SAM sites are operational?

Taylor?: We're not sure yet.

JFK: Okay, well, let's say we've decided, uh, we've gotta go in the whole way. So let's say that number two is the SAM site plus the air- . . .

Bundy: It's actually to clear the air . . .

JFK: Yeah. Well, whatever it is . . .

Bundy: . . . to win the air battle.

JFK: . . . [words unintelligible]/[to talk over?]. Yeah. Now, it seems to me we ought to be preparing now in the most covered way to do one and two, with the freedom to make the choice about number one depending on what information we have on it, uh, what [word unintelligible] moves that requires, and how much is that gonna . . .

McNamara: Mr. President, it requires no action other than what's been started and you can make a decision prior to the start Saturday or any time thereafter.

Speaker ? : [Words unintelligible]

JFK: Well, where do we put all these planes?

Taylor: You recall, uh, we have . . .

Speaker ? : [Words unintelligible]

Taylor: . . . this problem, Mr. President. We're going to get new intelligence that will be coming in from these flights . . .

JFK: Right.

Taylor: . . . and that's gonna be, have to be cranked into the, any strike plans we're preparing, so there is that factor of time. The secretary has given you the, the time, the minimum time is to make a decision, uh, now to, so that we can brief the pilots and then . . .

crank in the new intelligence. I would point out that, well . . .

McNamara: [The main fact?], to answer the question you asked, we don't have to decide how we're gonna do it. All we have to decide is if we want . . .

Taylor: No.

McNamara: . . . Sweeney* to be prepared to do it.

Taylor: That's correct, the [words unintelligible] . . .

McNamara: And Sweeney has said that he will take the tape that comes in tomorrow and process it Thursday and Friday and prepare the mission folders for [word unintelligible] strikes on Saturday or early, every day thereafter.

Taylor: Yes. The point is that we'll have to brief pilots. We're, we're . . .

McNamara: Right.

Taylor: . . . holding, uh, holding that back. And there'll be, oh, would say four hundred pilots will have to go, to be briefed in the course of this. So I'm just saying this is widening the, the whole military scope of this thing very materially, if that's what we're, we're supposed to do at this time.

JFK: Well, now when do we start briefing the pilots?

Taylor:

JFK:

Taylor:

JFK:

Bundy:

Taylor:

McNamara:

Bundy:

McNamara:

*General Walter C. Sweeney, USAF, Commanding General, Tactical Air Command.

Speaker ? : Uh-huh.

McNamara: And the process of preparation will not in itself run the risk of overt disclosure of the preparation.

Bundy?: Doesn't imply briefing, the preparation?

Taylor: Uh, it does but . . .

McNamara: It implies the preparation of mission folders.

Taylor:

JFK:

Taylor:

JFK:

Taylor:

McNamara:

Speaker:

McNamara:

JFK:

McNamara:

Mr. President, we need to do two things, it seems to me. First, we need to develop a specific strike plan limited to the missiles and the nuclear storage sites, which we have not done. This would

be a part of the broader plan . . .

JFK: Yeah.

McNamara: . . . but I think we ought to estimate the minimum number of sorties. Since you've indicated some interest in that possibility, we ought to provide you that option. We haven't done this.

JFK: Okay.

McNamara: But that's an easy job to do. The second thing we ought to do, it seems to me as a government, is to consider the consequences. I don't believe we have considered the consequences . . .

Speaker ?: [Words unintelligible]

McNamara: . . . of any of these actions satisfactorily, and because we haven't considered the consequences, I'm not sure we're taking all the action we ought to take now to minimize those. I, I don't know quite what kind of a world we live in after we've struck Cuba, and we, we've started it. We've put let's say

[REDACTED] You have, you have, uh, uh, twenty-four objects. Well, you have twenty-four, you have twenty-four, uh, laun-, uh, vehicles, plus, uh, sixteen launchers, plus a possible nuclear storage site, but there's the absolute minimum that you would wish to kill.

Taylor: And you'll miss some.

McNamara: And you'll miss some. That's right. Now after we've launched [REDACTED] sorties, what kind of a world do we live in? How, how do we stop at that point? I don't know the answer to this. I think tonight State and we ought to work on the consequences of any one of these courses of actions, consequences which I don't believe are entirely clear . . .

Bell: With . . .

McNamara: . . . to any of us.

Bell: . . . at any place in the world.

McNamara: At any place in the world, George. That's right. I agree with you.

Taylor: [REDACTED]

JFK: Yeah, but I, I think the only thing is the, the, uh, chances of it becoming a much broader struggle are increased as you step up the, uh. . . . Talk about the dangers to the United States, uh . . .

Bundy: Yeah.

JFK: . . . once you get into, uh, beginning to shoot up those airports, then you get in, you get a lot of anti-aircraft, and you got a lot of, I mean you're running a much more major operation, therefore the dangers of the world-wide effects are substantial to the United States are increased. That's the only argument for it. I quite agree that the, if [you're? or we're?] just thinking about Cuba, the best thing to do is to be bold if you're thinking about trying to get this thing under some degree of, uh, control.

Rusk?: In that regard, Mr. President, there is a combination of the plans which might be considered, namely the limited strike and then the messages, or simultaneously the messages to Khrushchev and Castro, which would indicate to them that this was none other than simply the, fulfilling the statements we've made all along.

JFK: Well, I think we. . . . In other words, that's a matter we've gotta think about tonight.

Speaker ?: Well . . .

JFK:

[Laughter]

JFK:

Martin?:

Taylor:

trying to eliminate as effectively as possible every weapon that can strike the United States.

JFK: But you're not for the invasion?

Taylor: I would not at this moment [words unintelligible].

McNamara: This is why . . .

Taylor: [Words unintelligible] we get committed to the, to the degree that

shackles us with West Berlin.

McNamara:



Martin:

[Well?] in this morning's discussion we went into this, talked to some of your people, I believe, a little bit, and we felt an air strike, even of several days, against a military targets primarily, would not result in any substantial unrest. People would just stay home and try to keep out of trouble.

McNamara:



JFK:

[Words unintelligible]

McNamara:

. . . a damned expensive target system.

Taylor:

That was in number [word unintelligible], Mr. Secretary . . .

McNamara:

Yeah.

Taylor:

. . . but that's not the one I recommended.

McNamara:

Well, neither is the one I'd recommend.

JFK:

What does that include, every anti-aircraft gun, or what does that include?

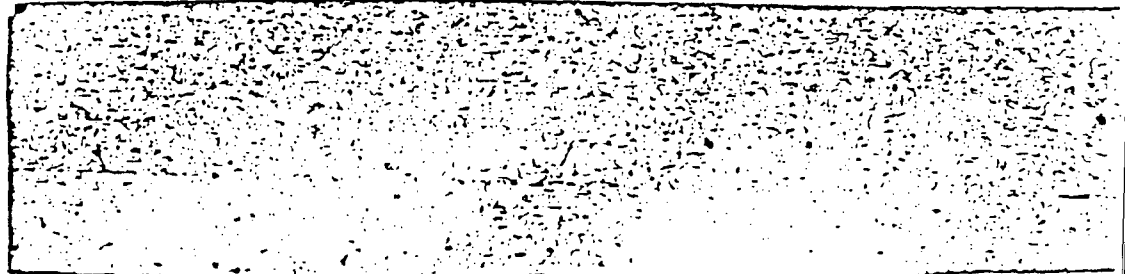
McNamara:

Yeah, uh . . .

Taylor:

This includes [related?] defenses, all sorts of things.

McNamara:



Taylor:

McNamara:

RFK:

Mr. President, while we're considering this problem tonight, I think that we should also consider what, uh, Cuba's going to be a year from now, or two years from now. Assume that we go in and knock these sites out, uh, I don't know what's gonna stop them from saying, We're gonna build the sites six months from now, bring 'em in . . .

Taylor: Noth-, nothing permanent about it.

RFK: Uh, the, what, where are we six months from now? Or that we're in any better position, or aren't we in worse position if we go in and knock 'em out and say, uh . . .

Speaker ?: [We sure are?]

RFK: . . . Don't do it. Uh, I mean, obviously they're gonna have to do it then.

McNamara: You have to put a blockade in following any . . .

Speaker ?: Sure.

McNamara: . . . limited action.

RFK: Then we're gonna have to sink Russian ships.

McNamara?: Right.

RFK: Then we're gonna have to sink . . .

McNamara?: Right.

RFK: . . . Russian submarines. Now whether it wouldn't be, uh, the argument, if you're going to get into it at all, uh, whether we should just get into it and get it over with and say that, uh, take our losses, and if we're gonna . . . If he wants to get into a war over this, uh. . . : Hell, if it's war that's gonna come on this thing, or if he sticks those kinds of missiles in, it's after the warning, and he's gonna, and he's gonna get into a war for, six months from now or a year from now, so. . .

McNamara: Mr. President, this is why I think tonight we ought to put on paper the alternative plans and the probable, possible consequences thereof in a way that State and Defense could agree on, even if we, uh, disagree and put in both views. Because the consequences of these actions have not been thought through clearly. The one that the attorney general just mentioned is illustrative of that.

JFK: If the, uh, it doesn't increase very much their strategic, uh, strength, why is it, uh, can any Russian expert tell us why they . . . After all Khrushchev demonstrated a sense of caution [thousands?]. . .

Speaker ?: Well, there are several, several possible . . .

JFK: . . . Berlin, he's been cautious, I mean, he hasn't been, uh . . .

Ball?: Several possibilities, Mr. President. One of them is that he has given us word now that he's coming over in November to, to the UN. If, he may be proceeding on the assumption, and this lack of

a sense of apparent urgency would seem to, to support this, that this isn't going to be discovered at the moment and that, uh, when he comes over this is something he can do, a ploy. That here is Cuba armed against the United States, or possibly use it to try to trade something in Berlin, saying he'll disarm Cuba if, uh, if we'll, uh, yield some of our interests in Berlin and some arrangement for it. I mean, that this is a, it's a trading ploy.

Bundy: I would think one thing that I would still cling to is that he's not likely to give Fidel Castro nuclear warheads., I don't believe that has happened or is likely to happen.

JFK: Why does he put these in there though?

Bundy: Soviet-controlled nuclear warheads [of the kind?] . . .

JFK: That's right, but what is the advantage of that? It's just as if we suddenly began to put a major number of MRBMs in Turkey. Now that'd be goddam dangerous, I would think.

Bundy?: Well, we did, Mr. President.

U.A.Johnson?: We did it. We . . .

JFK: Yeah, but that was five years ago.

U.A.Johnson?: . . . did it in England; that's why we were short.

JFK: What?

U.A.Johnson?: We gave England two when we were short of ICEMs.

JFK: Yeah , but that's, uh . . .

U.A.Johnson?: [Testing?]

JFK: . . . that was during a different period then.

U.A.Johnson?: But doesn't he realize he has a deficiency of ICBMs, needs a FR capacity perhaps, in view of. . . . He's got lots of MRBMs and this is a way to balance it out a bit?

Bundy?: I'm sure his generals have been telling him FOR a year and a half that he had, was missing a golden opportunity to add to his strategic capability.

Ball?: Yes, I think, I think you, you look at this possibility that this is an attempt to, to add to his strategic capabilities. A second consideration is that it is simply a trading ploy, that he, he wants this in so that he could, he could [words unintelligible]
. . . .

Bundy?: [A prime consistent to his?]/[words unintelligible] . . .

Speaker ? : [Words unintelligible] it means if he can't trade, he's still got the other.

[Several speakers speak at once and only a few words are intelligible.]

Speaker ? : And so . . .

Speaker ? : But [Words unintelligible] . . .

Speaker ? : . . . the political impact in Latin America.

Speaker ? : [Words unintelligible] the source [Words unintelligible].

Speaker ? : [Words unintelligible] up front?

Speaker ? : Sure. Sure.

U.A. Johnson? : We are now considering these then Soviet missiles, a Soviet . . .

Speaker ? : I think we ought to.

U.A. Johnson? : . . . offensive capability.

Taylor? : You have to consider them Soviet missiles.

U.A. Johnson? : It seems to me if we go in there, lock-stock-and-barrel, we can consider them entirely Cuban.

Bundy : Ah, well, what we say for political purposes and what we think are not identical here.

Speaker ? : But, I mean, any, any rational approach to this must be that they are Soviet missiles, because I think . . .

Speaker ? : You mean . . .

Speaker ? : . . . Khrushchev himself would never, would never risk a major war on, on a fellow as obviously erratic, uh, and foolish as, as Castro.

Speaker ? : [A sub-lieutenant?]

JFK : Well, now let's say . . .

RFK : Let me say, of course . . .

JFK : Yeah.

RFK : . . . one other thing is whether, uh, we should also think of, uh, uh, whether there is some other way we can get involved in this through, uh, Guantanamo Bay, or something, er, or whether there's some ship that, you know, sink the Maine again or something.

Taylor : We think, Mr. President, that under any of these plans we will

probably get an attack on, on Guantanamo, at least by, by fire. They have artillery and mortars in the, easily within range, and, uh, any of these actions we take we'll have to give air support to Guantanamo and probably reinforce the garrison.

JFK: Well, that's why, uh, it seems to me that, uh, this, if we decide that we are going to be in a position to do this, either one and two Saturday or Sunday, then I would think we would also want to be in a position, depending on [really?] what happens, either because of an invasion, attack on Guantanamo or some other reason to do the inva-, uh, to, to do the eviction.

Taylor: Mr. President, I personally would just urge you not to set a schedule such as Saturday or Sunday . . .

JFK: No, I haven't.

Taylor: . . . until all the intelligence that could be . . .

JFK: That's right. I just wanted, I just wanted, I thought we ought to be moving, I don't want to waste any time though if we decide that, uh, time is not particularly with us. I just think we ought to be ready to do something, even if we decide not to do it. I'm not saying . . .

Taylor: All . . .

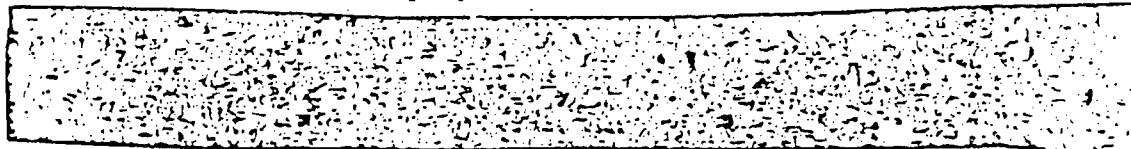
JFK: . . . we should do it.

Taylor: . . . all of this is moving, short of the briefing. We've held back, uh . . .

JFK: I understand.

Taylor: . . . we've restricted people to . . .

JFK:



Taylor: I would say that my answer would be largely planning, particularly in the field of mobilization, just what we wan-, uh, what we will, uh, want to recreate after we, uh, [words unintelligible] these forces to Cuba.

Speaker ?: This is [perhaps?]/[words unintelligible].

Taylor: I might say that air defense measures we're going to, we're started to take already. We moved more fighters into the southeastern United States and gradually improving some of our, our patrol procedures, uh, under the general guise of, uh, of preparations for that part of the country. We don't think there'd be any, any leaks there that might react against our military targets. I, I'd repeat that

our defenses have always been weak in that part of the country.

JFK: Uh, Mr. Secretary, is there anything that, or any of these contingents if we go ahead that, uh, the next twenty-four hours--we're going to meet again tomorrow [for this?] in the afternoon--is there anything [Words unintelligible] . . .

McNamara: No, sir, I believe that the military planning has been carried on for a considerable period of time, is well under way. And I believe that all the preparations that we could take without the risk of preparations causing discussion and knowledge of this, either among our public or in Cuba, have been taken and are authorized; all the necessary reconnaissance measures are being taken and are authorized. The only thing we haven't done, really, is to consider fully these alternatives.

Bundy: Our principal problem is to try and imaginatively to think . . .

McNamara: Yes.

Bundy: . . . what the world would be like if we do this . . .

McNamara: [I know?]

Bundy: . . . and what it will be like if we don't . . .

McNamara: That's exactly right.

Bundy: . . . if we fail if we do.

McNamara: We ought to work on that tonight.

Ball?: This may be incidental, Mr. President, but if we're going to get the prisoners out this would be a good time to get them out.

JFK: I guess they're not gonna get. . . . Well. . . .

Bundy: You mean take 'em out.

Ball?: No, what I meant was . . .

[Laughter]

Ball?: . . . if we're gonna trade 'em [word unintelligible] . . .

JFK: They're on the Isles of Pines? These prisoners?

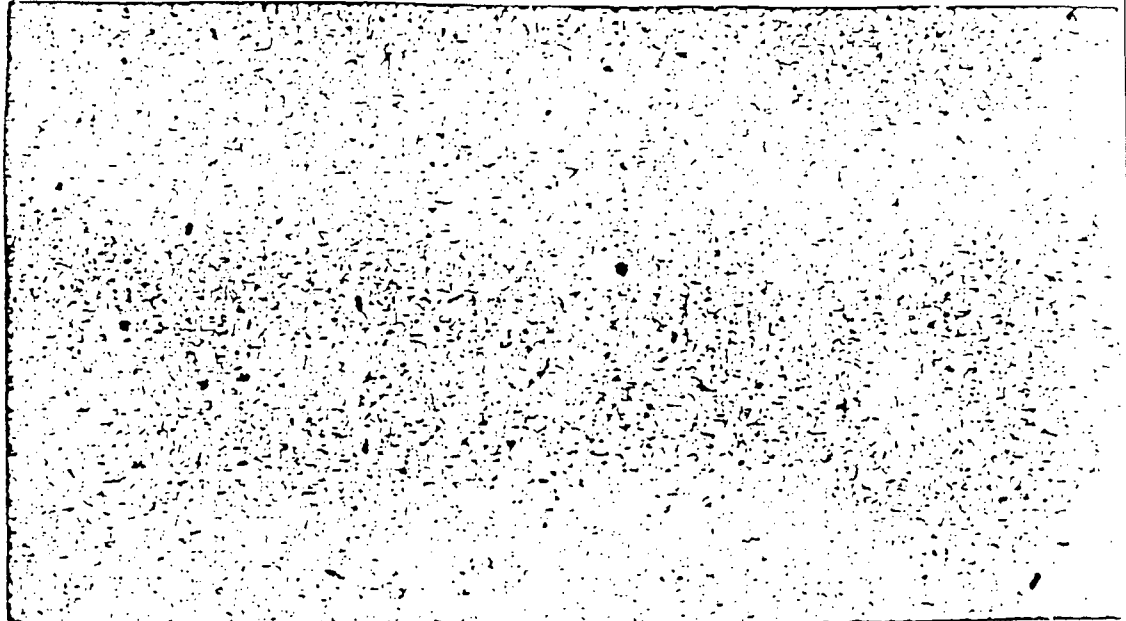
RFK: No. Some of them . . .

Speaker ?: [Yes?] sir.

RFK: . . . are. They're split up.

Bundy: [If you can?] get them out alive, I'd make that choice.
JFK: There's no sign of their getting out now, is there? The exchange?
RFK: No, but they will take a few weeks.
JFK: A few weeks.
RFK: [Yeah?]. You know they're having that struggle between the young Cuban leaders and the [words unintelligible] . . .

Bundy:



JFK:

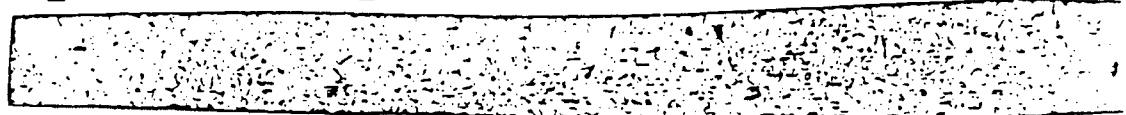
Bundy:

JFK:

McNamara: Shouldn't wait for twenty-four hours at least before any [words unintelligible] . . .

RFK: [Words unintelligible]

Bundy:



Speaker ?: Huh?

Bundy: . . . the other ones.

JFK: Mr. Vice President, do you have any thoughts? Between one and two?

L.B. Johnson: I don't think I can add anything [that is essential?].

JFK: The, uh . . .

Speaker ?: There's a . . .

JFK: . . . the, uh, let's see, what time we gonna meet then tomorrow? What is it we want to have by tomorrow from the . . . We want

to have from the department tomorrow in a little bit more concise form whether there is any kind of a [words unintelligible] we have to give. How much of a [words unintelligible] and, number two, what you think of these various alternatives we've been talking about, if you see there is any use bringing this to Khrushchev in the way of, [for?], for example, do we want to, for ex-, here is Dobrynin now, he's repeated. . . . Uh, I got to go to, uh, see Schroeder.** Let's meet at, uh, eleven to twelve. What time do I get back tomorrow night?

Bundy?: Reasonably [early?].

JFK?: Get back about 7:45.

JFK: We meet here by five. . . .

Bundy: Mr. Secretary, some of the staff are in trouble with the dinner for Schroeder tomorrow night.

JFK: Okay, well, now the. . . . I don't think, I don't know, think we'll have anything by noon tomorrow, do we?

Bundy: Would you want to wait until Thursday morning, Mr. President?

JFK: Looks to me like we might as well. I, I. . . . Uh. Everybody else can meet if they want to, if they need to. The secretary of state, the secretary of defense can . . .

McNamara: I think it'd be very useful to meet or else stay afterwards tonight [words unintelligible] [for a while?].

Bundy: It would be a great improvement not to have any more intense White House meetings--trouble with all the [words unintelligible] if we could meet at the State Department tomorrow.

[Several speakers speak at once and none of the words are intelligible.]

JFK: All right, then I could meet you, Mac, when I get back tomorrow and just as well, whatever the thing is and then we can meet Thursday morning. I don't. . . . The question is whether, uh. . . . I'm going to see Gromyko*** Thursday and I think the question that I'd really like to have is some sort of a judgment on, is whether we ought to do anything with Gromyko. Whether we ought to say anything to him; whether we ought to, uh, indirectly give him sort of a, give him an ultimatum on this matter, or whether we just ought to go ahead without him. It seems to me that . . .

Speaker?: In other words . . .

JFK: . . . he said we'd be. . . . The attorney general, the ambassador

*Anatoly F. Dobrynin. **Gerhard Schroeder. ***Andrei A. Gromyko.

told the attorney general, as he told Bohlen* the other day that they were not going to put these weapons there. Now either he's lying or doesn't know. Whether the attorney general saw Dobrynin--not acting as if we had any information about 'em-- said that, of course, that they must realize that if this ever does happen that this is going to cause this, give a very clear indication of what's going to happen. Now I don't know what would come out of that, I. . . . Possibly nothing. Possibly, uh, this'd alert them. Possibly they would reconsider their decision, but I don't think we've had any clear evidence of that, and it would give them. . . . We'd lose a week.

Ball?: You mean tell them that. . . .

JFK: Well, not tell them that we know that they've got it, but merely in the course of a conversation Dobrynin, having said that they would never do it, the attorney general, who sees Dobrynin once in a while, would . . .

Ball?: How would we lose a week?

JFK: What?

Ball?: How would we lose a week?

JFK: Oh, we would be. . . . What we'd be, Bobby would be saying to them, in short, is if these ever come up that we're going to do, the present state would have to take action. And, uh, this [words unintelligible], uh, this could cause [words unintelligible] the most far-reaching consequences. On the possibility that that might cause them to reconsider their action. I don't know whether his, they're aware of what I sai-. . . . I can't understand their viewpoint, if they're aware of what we said at the press conferences. I say, I've never. . . . I don't think there's any record of the Soviets ever making this direct a challenge, ever, really. . . .

Bundy: We have to be clear, Mr. President . . .

JFK: . . . since the Berlin blockade.

Bundy: . . . that they made this decision, in all probability, before you made your statements.

McNamara: Uh-huh.

Bundy: This is, uh, important element in the calendar.

Dillon: That didn't change it.

Bundy: No. Indeed, they didn't change it, but they, they. . . . It's quite a different thing. There was either a contravenance on

*Charles E. Bohlen.

one . . .

Dillon: Yeah.

Bundy: My, I wouldn't bet a cookie that Dobrynin doesn't know a bean about . . .

Dillon?: Uh-huh.

Bundy: . . . this.

JFK: You think he does know?

RFK: He didn't know.

Bundy: I, I would [words unintelligible] . . .

RFK: He didn't even know that [words unintelligible] in my judgment.

Speaker ?: [Words unintelligible]

Taylor: Why it's, I mean there's evidence of sightings in late August, I think, and early September of, of some sort.

Speaker ?: It seems to me, Mr. President, there's, in your public presentation simultaneous or subsequent to an action, your hand is strengthened somewhat if the Soviets have, uh, lied to you, either privately or in public.

Bundy?: I'll agree to that.

Speaker ?: And then if, or if you, uh, without knowing, if you ask Gromyko, or if Bobby asks Dobrynin again, or if some other country could get the Soviets to say publicly in the UN, No, we have no offensive . . .

RFK: TASS, of course, said they're gonna. . . .

JFK: When did TASS say that?

Speaker ?: A while back.

RFK: . . . said they would send offensive weapons to Cuba.

Bundy: Yeah. The TASS . . .

JFK: Khrushchev say that?

Bundy: . . . statement I read this morning.

RFK?: [Yes?]

Bundy: No, the TASS statement. It's . . .

Speaker 1: We don't know if Communism is under control yet.

Speaker 2: Uh.

Bundy: Uh, no, we don't have any detail on that. Soviet . . .

JFK: Well, what about my. . . . What question would be there for what I might say to Gromyko about this matter, if you want me just get in the record

Speaker 2: Uh-huh.

JFK: . . . like asking him whether they plan to do it.

Speaker 2: Well, I think what you get is to

Bundy: Putting it the other way around saying that we are

Speaker 2: . . . call his

Bundy: . . . putting great weight upon the assurances of him

Speaker 2: . . . call the attention to the statement that you've made on this

Speaker 2: Yup.

Speaker 2: . . . this is your public commitment and that, uh, you, you are going to have to, you're gonna abide by this, and you just want assurances from him that, that, uh, they're, they're living up to what they've said, that they're not gonna

JFK: Well, let's say he said, Well, we're not planning to.

Bundy: "The government of the Soviet Union also authorized TASS to state that there is no need for the Soviet Union to shift its weapons for the repulsion of aggression for a retaliatory blow to any other country, for instance, Cuba. Our nuclear weapons are so powerful in their explosive force, the Soviet Union has so powerful rockets to carry those nuclear warheads that there is no need to search for"

JFK: [I see?]

Bundy: . . . "sites for them beyond the boundaries of the Soviet Union."

JFK: Well, what date was that?

Bundy: September eleventh.

Speaker 2: [Words unintelligible]

Dillon: When they were all there.

JFK: But isn't that. . . . But, as I say, we have to. . . . We never really ever had a case where it's been quite this, uh. . . . After all, they backed down in, uh, Chinese Communists in '58. They didn't go into Laos. Agreed to a ceasefire there.

[Several speakers speak at once and many of the words are unintelligible.]

Bundy: We had this trouble . . .

JFK?: They backed up . . .

Bundy: . . . at [words unintelligible] where they . . .

Speaker ?: [Words unintelligible]

JFK?: [What's?] . . .

Bundy: . . . nuclear storage site.

Speaker ?: At least.

Bundy: Yeah. It's very clear.

JFK: What?

Bundy: I'm as puzzled as Bob is by the absence of a nuclear storage site.

Taylor: We don't know enough about it yet and we [words unintelligible] . . .

Bundy: I understand that. We may learn a lot overnight.

Speaker ?: Isn't it puzzling, also, there are no evidence of any troops protecting the sites?

Taylor: Well, there're troops there. At least there're tents . . .

[Several speakers speak at once and many of the words are unintelligible.]

Speaker ?: [A few campers?][words unintelligible].

Taylor: . . . [presumably they have some personnel?].

McNamara?: But they look like [words unintelligible]. It's as if you could walk over the fields into those vans. [I agree?]

JFK: Well, it's a goddamn mystery to me.

McNamara?: [Words unintelligible]

JFK: I don't know enough about the Soviet Union, but if anybody can tell me any other time since the Berlin blockade where the

Russians have given us so clear provocation, I don't know when it's been, because they've been awfully cautious really. The Russians, I never. . . . Now, maybe our mistake was in not saying some time before this summer that if they do this we're [word unintelligible] to act. Maybe they'd gone in so far [that?] it's. . . .

RFK: Yeah, but then why did they put that statement in it?

JFK: Perhaps it. . . .

Speaker ?: That's it [words unintelligible] . . .

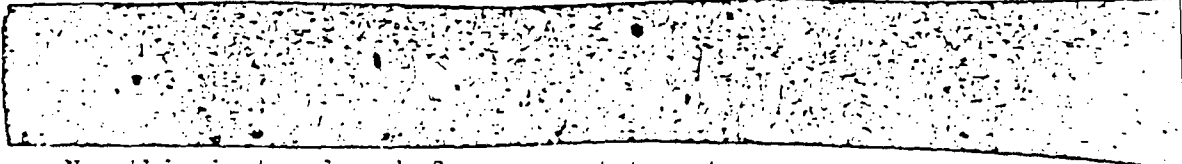
JFK: This was following my statement, wasn't it?

RFK: September eleventh.

Taylor: quick ground [words unintelligible].

JFK: When was my statement? What?

Taylor:



Speaker ?: No, this is two days before your statement.

Carter: Uh, we can try it, but your problems about exfiltration and your problems with training an individual as to what to look for are not handled in twenty-four hours.

McNamara: A better way would be to send in a low-flying airplane . . .

Carter: Yes.

McNamara: . . . and we have today put those on alert, but we would recommend against . . .

Speaker ?: [Words unintelligible]

McNamara: . . . using the low-flying planes until shortly before the intention to strike.

Taylor: This was considered by the, by the co-, commanders today, and they're all of that opinion that the, the loss of surprise would there, was more serious than the, the information we'd get from that.

Speaker ?: I would think it would be very valuable to have them go in shortly before the strike, just to build the evidence. I mean, when you've got pictures that really show what you were, what was there.

JFK: Now, with these great demono-, uh, uh, Bohlen and Thompson,* did they have an explanation of why the Russians are sticking a [word unintelligible] by itself?

[Several conversations are going on at once and only the following fragments are intelligible.]

Speaker ?: Take them out . . .

JFK: [Words unintelligible] Acheson** [words unintelligible].

Speaker ?: . . . a little bit later something [words unintelligible]. Yeah.

JFK: What're we going to say up in Connecticut? You expected the [Bentley trial?].

[Laughter]

JFK: This is a jeer for the . . .

Speaker ?: [Words unintelligible] president?

JFK: [Words unintelligible] eight or nine-thirty . . .

Bundy: The cabinet at ten.

JFK: Yeah. I'll just see Tom Mann*** at one.

Bundy: And that's Mann or Sato**** or both?

JFK: Sato.

Speaker ?: Japanese, uh . . .

JFK: Mann ought to know something. Let's have it here at eleven. Rusk at nine-thirty. In fact, they don't even have to come.

Speaker ?: No.

JFK: [Words unintelligible] the cabinet.

Speaker ?: You just. . . .

JFK: We're going to discuss the [words unintelligible] budget. What about Schroeder? Do I have anything we want to say to Schroeder?

Bundy: We, uh, have a lot on that to discuss which, uh, was half-way in early in the morning. I don't think it's very complicated. The big issue that has come up is Schroeder makes a very strong case for refusing visas on the grounds that he thinks that, uh, that would undermine morale in Berlin in a very dangerous way. I think

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that's the principal issue that's between us.

JFK: I wonder if we could get somebody to give me something about what our position . . .

Bundy: You want that?

JFK: . . . should be on that.

Bundy: Yeah. Very happy to. You want it tonight?

JFK: No, no. Just in the morning.

Speaker ?: Mr. President, at least they're setting up the time . . .

Speaker ?: Yes, Mr. President.

Speaker ?: [Words unintelligible]

JFK: That's very good, General, thank you.

Speaker ?: [Words unintelligible] [Thompson here?]

[Several conversations are going on at once and only the following fragments are intelligible.]

McNamara: Where is Reilly going to be?

Speaker ?: [Words unintelligible]

Carter: Mr. McCone is coming in tonight.

McNamara: . . . in Mac's office. I'll get you one. Did you see him?

Carter: Yes. [Words unintelligible]

McNamara: Yeah, I'll go down and see him [words unintelligible].

Carter: I would suggest that we get into this hot water partly because of this.

JFK: Yeah, I want to talk to him in the morning. I'd like to just be briefed [words unintelligible]. Why is that? [Words unintelligible]

Bundy?: He won't be. . . . Does he get back tonight?

Carter: Coming in tonight. Yes, sir. I'm going to get . . .

Bundy?: Then could he come in in the morning?

Carter: [Words unintelligible]

[Several conversations continue at the same time and only the following fragments are intelligible.]

Bundy?: Could he come in then at nine-thirty?

Carter?: Sure.

Speaker ?: [Bob?], [words unintelligible].

McNamara: Could we agree to meet, uh, mid-afternoon?

Speaker ?: Any time you say, Bob.

McNamara: And then, uh, guide our work tonight and tomorrow on that [schedule?]. Why, why don't we say three o'clock? This'll give us some time . . .

Speaker ?: [Words unintelligible]

McNamara: . . . to cover all we've done . . .

Bundy: Yeah.

McNamara: . . . and then do some more tomorrow night if necessary tomorrow afternoon.

Bundy: Would it be [word unintelligible] to make it a little earlier? I ought to get to a four o'clock meeting with Schroeder.

McNamara: [Word unintelligible] said two o'clock, I think, with Schroeder.

Dillon?: Two o'clock.

Bundy: Good.

McNamara: Really plenty of time between [words unintelligible].

Speaker ?: Two o'clock [words unintelligible].

McNamara: [Words unintelligible] At 2:00 P.M. we'll do it at State.

Speaker ?: All right.

McNamara: Now, could we agree what we're gonna do? I would suggest that we, and I don't expect, in fact I . . .

[McNamara and another speaker speak at the same time and none of the words are intelligible.]

McNamara: . . . I would suggest that we, uh, divide the, the, uh, series of targets up by, in effect, numbers of DGZs and, uh, and, uh, numbers of sorties required to take those out for a series of alternatives starting only with the missiles and working up through the nuclear storage sites and the MIGs and the, er, and the SAMs and so on. So we can say, This target system would take so many point, eighty points and so many objects would take

so many sorties to knock out., The, the. . . . Not because I think that these are reasonable alternatives . . .

Bundy?: They're not really going to be realistic, even, but they give us [words unintelligible] . . .

McNamara: . . . but they give an order [words unintelligible] to the president to get some idea of this. And this we can do, and this can be done very easily. But the most important thing we need to do is this appraisal of the world after any one of these situations . . .

Bundy: Sure.

McNamara: . . . in great detail.

Bundy?: That's right.

McNamara: And, and I think probably this is something State would have to do . . .

Speaker ?: [Word unintelligible]

McNamara: . . . and I would strongly urge we put it on paper . . .

Speaker ?: That's right.

McNamara: . . . and we, I'll be happy to stay, or, how, or, uh, look at it early in the morning, or something like that if, in order that we may inject disagreement if we [words unintelligible] . . .

Bundy: What I would suggest is that someone be deputied to, to do a piece of paper which really is what happens. I think the margin is between whether we take out the [missile zone?, or missiles on?] strike or take a lot of air bases. This is tactical within a decision to take military action. Now, doesn't, overwhelmingly, it may substantially if it doesn't overwhelmingly change the world. I think any military action does change the world. And I think not taking action changes the world. And I think these are the two worlds that we need to look at.

McNamara: I'm very much inclined to agree, but I think we have to make that point . . .

Bundy: I agree. . . .

McNamara: . . . within the military action . . .

Bundy: I agree.

McNamara: . . . a gradation . . .

Bundy: Oh, many gradations and they have major, it can have major effect

McNamara: Yeah.

Bundy: I mean, I don't need to exaggerate that now. The question is how to get ahead with that, and whether, uh, I would think, myself, that it, it, it, the appropriate place to make this preliminary analysis is at the Department of State. I think the rest of us ought to spend the evening really to some advantage separately trying to have our own views of this. And I think we should meet in order; at least, to trade pieces of paper, before two o'clock, uh, tomorrow morning if that's agreeable.

McNamara: Why don't we meet tomorrow morning, and, and with pieces of paper, uh, from State, and this is a b- . . .

Speaker ?: No.

McNamara: . . . maybe you don't feel this is reasonable, but . . .

Speaker ?: No. [Words unintelligible].

McNamara: . . . I, I would strongly urge that tonight State [Words unintelligible] . . .

Bundy: Well, who is State's de facto? Is, are, are you all tied up tonight? Or what?

Speaker ?: No, no.

Ball?: Uh, the situation is that the only one who's tied up tonight is, is the secretary and he is coming down at eleven o'clock from his dinner to look at what we will have done in the meantime.

Speaker ?: Alex* is back waiting for him.

Ball?: Oh, good, we'll have Alex, we'll have Tommy.** Well, we've kept . . .

Bundy: Right.

Ball?: . . . this to our, this has, this has been . . .

Bundy: But you have Tommy? I . . .

Speaker ?: Talked to him this afternoon some.

Bundy: Then you're, do you have any, uh. . . . I'd be fascinated by this the first sense of how he sees this.

Ball?: Well, the, the, the argument was really between, uh, Hilsman's*** demonologists, who were already cut in because they [word unintelligible] your boots, who thought this was a low-risk operation. Tommy thought it was a high-risk operation by the Soviets, in

*U. Alexis Johnson. **Llewellyn Thompson. ***Roger Hilsman.

other words they were taking real chances. Other people rather thought that they, they probably had miscalculated us and thought this wasn't a risky operation. You know, on the way they were going at it . . .

Speaker ?: [Words unintelligible]

Bell?: . . . either impatient like the SAM sites hadn't been set up to protect it, the various factors which suggest to them that they didn't think anything was gonna happen. Tommy leaned the other way.

McNamara: Could I suggest that tonight we actually draft a paper and it start this way--just a paragraph or two of, of the knowns. Uh, we have to. . . . The knowns are that the SAMs that are here. Let's say the, the probable knowns, because we're not certain of any of them. The probabilities are the SAM system isn't working today. This is important. The probabilities are that these missiles are not operational today. The probabilities are that they won't be operational in less than X days, although we can't be certain. Pat said two weeks. I'm not so sure I'd put it that far. But I. . . . There's just two or three of these knowns. I would put in there, by the way . . .

Speaker ?: How . . .

McNamara: . . . the number of . . .

Speaker ?: Unprotected.

McNamara: Uh, they're unprotected. Another known I'd put in is that they have about fifty X, uh, MIGs, -15, -17 and -19s; that they have certain crated, uh, I've forgotten, say, ten, er, X crated MIG-21s, only one of which we believe to have been assembled. They have X crated IL-28s, none of which we believe to have been assembled. These, this is, in a sense, the problem we, we face there.

Bundy: Do you believe State or the agencies should state the military knowns?

McNamara: Well, this. . . . I can sta- . . .

Speaker ?: I think . . .

McNamara: . . . we can do this in just ten seconds . . .

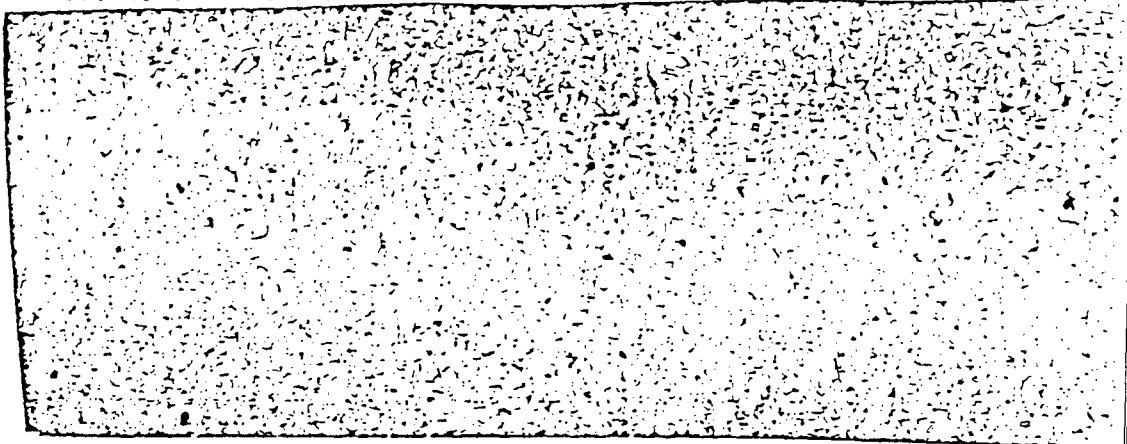
Speaker ?: Yeah.

McNamara: . . . a very, very simple . . .

Speaker ?: Yeah.

McNamara: . . . statement I think. But then I would follow that by the, the alternatives of, not all of them but the more likely alternatives that we consider open to us. And would hope we could stay just a second here and see if we could sketch them out now. Like . . .

Bundy:



Speaker ?: Yeah.

Bundy: I think there's an enormous political advantage, myself, within these options, granting that all the Chiefs didn't fully agree, taking out the thing that gives the trouble and not the thing that doesn't give the trouble.

McNamara?: This, as opposed to, uh, is it an air attack on . . .

Bundy: Supplementary to an air attack. I mean, how're you gonna know that you've got 'em? And if you haven't got 'em, what've you done?

Taylor: Well, this, this, of course, raises the question of having gotten this set, what happens to the set that arrives next week?

McNamara: Oh, I, I think the ans- . . .

Taylor: Yeah.

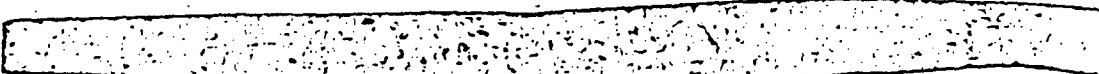
McNamara: . . . I, let me answer Mac's question first. How do we know we've got them? We will have photo recon militarily? with the strike. Sweeney specifically plans this, and . . .

Bundy: Proving a negative is a hell of a job.

McNamara: Pardon me?

Bundy: Proving a negative is a hell of a job.

Taylor:



Bundy: That's true.

McNamara: Terrible risk to put them in there, uh. . . .

Bundy: I ag-, I think the [words unintelligible] is probably a bad idea, but it . . .

McNamara: I think the risk troubles me, it's too great in relation to the risk of not knowing whether we get them.

Bundy: Well . . .

McNamara: But, in any case, this is a small variant of one . . .

Bundy: That's right, it's a minor . . .

McNamara: . . . of the plans.

Bundy: . . . variant of one plan.

McNamara: It seems to me that there are some major alternatives here that I don't think we discussed them fully enough today, and I'd like to see them laid on the paper, if State agrees. The first is what I, I still call it the political approach. Uh, let me say it a nonmilitary action.

[Laughter]

McNamara: It doesn't start with one and it isn't gonna end with one.

Speaker ?: Yeah.

McNamara: And I, for that reason I call it a political approach.

Speaker ?: Right . . .

McNamara: And I say it isn't gonna end with one because once you start this political approach, I don't think you're gonna have any opportunity for a military operation.

Speaker ?: I agree.

Taylor: It becomes very difficult.

McNamara: But at least I think we ought to put it down there, uh.

Taylor: Right.

Bundy: And it should be worked out. I mean what, what is the maximum . . .

Speaker ?: Your ride is waiting downstairs [words unintelligible].

Speaker ?: Very good, thank you [words unintelligible].

McNamara: Yeah, it should, should definitely be worked out. What, exactly what does it in-, involve, and what are the chances of success of it? They're not zero. They're plus I think.

Taylor?: We did an outline this morning along these lines.

McNamara: All right. That, that's [word unintelligible] anyway . . .

Bundy: Um, but, do you see, it's, it's not just the chances of success, it's the, it ought to be examined in terms of the pluses and minuses of, of nonsuccess . . .

McNamara: Yes. Yes.

Bundy: . . . because there is such a thing as making this thing pay off in ways that are . . .

McNamara: Yeah. Yeah.

Bundy: . . . are of some significance, even though we don't act . . .

McNamara: Yeah. I completely agree.

Bundy: . . . or go with that.

McNamara: And, and this is my second alternative in . . .

Bundy: Yeah.

McNamara: . . . particular and I want to come to that in a moment. But the first one I . . .

Bundy: Yeah.

McNamara: . . . I completely agree it isn't. I, I phrased it improperly. Not the chances of success. It's the results . . .

Speaker ?: [words unintelligible]

McNamara: . . . that [we're calling? or causing?] . . .

Bundy: Yep.

McNamara: . . . for the mankind.

Bundy: Yep.

McNamara: Now, the second alternative, I, I'd like to discuss just a second because we haven't discussed it fully today, and I alluded it to, to it a moment ago. I, I, I'll be quite frank. I don't think there is a military problem here. This is my answer to Mac's question . . .

Bundy: That's my honest [judgment?].

McNamara: . . . and therefore, and I've gone through this today, and I asked myself, Well, what is it then if it isn't a military problem?

Well, it's just exactly this problem, that, that, uh, if Cuba should possess a capacity to carry out offensive actions against the U.S., the U.S. would act.

Speaker ?: That's right.

Speaker ?: That's right.

McNamara: Now, it's that problem, this . . .

Speaker ?: You can't get around that one.

McNamara: . . . this, this is a domestic, political problem. The announcement- we didn't say we'd go in and not, and kill them, we said we'd act. Well, how will we act? Well, we want to act to prevent their use, and it's really the . . .

Bundy: Yeah.

McNamara: . . . the act. Now, how do we pre-, act to prevent their use? Well, first place, we carry out open surveillance, so we know what they're doing. All times. Twenty-four hours a day from now and forever, in a sense indefinitely. What else do we do? We prevent any further offensive weapons coming in. In other words we blockade offensive weapons.

Bundy: How do we do that?

McNamara: We search every ship.

Taylor: There're two kinds of, of blockade: a blockade which stops ships from coming in and, and simply a seizure, I mean a, simply a search.

McNamara: A search, that's right . . .

Taylor?: Yeah.

McNamara: . . . and . . .

Speaker ?: Well, it would be a search and removal if found.

Bundy: You have to make the guy stop to search him, and if he won't stop, you have to shoot, right?

Speaker ?: All [word unintelligible] up . . .

Speaker ?: And you have to remove what you're looking for if you find it.

Speaker ?: That's right.

McNamara: Absolutely. Absolutely. And then an ul-, I call it an ultimatum associated with these two actions is a statement to the world,

particularly to Khrushchev, that we have located these offensive weapons; we're maintaining a constant surveillance over them; if there is ever any indication that they're to be launched against this country, we will respond not only against Cuba, but we will respond directly against the Soviet Union with, with a full nuclear strike. Now this alternative doesn't seem to be a very acceptable one, but wait until you work on the others.

Bundy: That's right.

[Laughter]

McNamara: This is the, this is the problem, but I've thought something about the others this afternoon.

Speaker ?: He's right.

Ball?: Bob, let me ask you one thing that seems slightly irrelevant. What real utility would there be in the United States if we ever actually captured one of these things and could examine it and take it apart?

McNamara: Not very much. No. No.

Ball?: Would we learn anything about the . . .

McNamara: No, no.

Ball?: . . . technology that would be meaningful?

McNamara: I don't [words unintelligible]. Pat may . . .

Carter: I don't think so.

McNamara: . . . disagree with [me?], but I . . .

Speaker ?: Yeah.

McNamara: Well, in any case, that's an alternative. I'd like to see it expressed and discussed.

Ball?: Of course, if, if it takes two hours to screw a head on as a guy said this morning, two to four hours . . .

McNamara: Oh, by the way, that should be one of the knowns in this . . .

Ball?: Yeah.

McNamara: . . . initial paragraph.

Bundy?: That's right.

Ball?: . . . uh, they got all night. How're you gonna survey 'em

during the night? Uh, I mean, it seems to me that they're some gaps in the surveillance.

McNamara: Oh, well, it's really the, yes, it isn't the surveillance, it's the ultimatum that is . . .

Ball?: Yeah.

McNamara: . . . the key part in this.

Ball?: Yeah.

McNamara: And really what I tried to do was develop a little package that meets the action requirement of that paragraph I read.

Speaker ?: Yeah.

McNamara: Because, as I suggested, I don't believe it's primarily a military problem. It's primarily a, a domestic, political problem.

Ball: Yeah, well, as far as the American people are concerned, action means military action, period.

McNamara: Well, we have a blockade. Search and, uh, removal of, of offensive weapons entering Cuba. Uh, [word unintelligible] again, I don't want to argue for this . . .

Ball: No, no, I . . .

McNamara: . . . because I, I don't think it's . . .

Ball: . . . I think it's an alternative.

McNamara: . . . a perfect solution by any means. I just want to . . .

Bundy: Which one are we [still on?] would you say?

McNamara: Still on the second one, uh . . .

Ball: Now, one of the things we look at is whether any, the actual operation of a blockade doesn't, isn't a greater involvement almost than a . . .

McNamara: Might well be, George.

Ball: . . . military action.

Speaker ?: I think so.

McNamara: It's, it's a search, not a, not an embargo, uh. . . .

Speaker ?: Yeah.

Ball: It's a series of single, unrelated acts, not by surprise. This, uh, come in there on Pearl Harbor just frightens the hell out of me as to what's going beyond. [Yeah, well, any-way?] the Board of National Estimates have been working on this ever since . . .

Bundy: What, what goes, what goes beyond what?

Ball: What happens beyond that. You go in there with a surprise attack. You put out all the missiles. This isn't the end. This is the beginning, I think. There's a whole hell of a lot of things . . .

Bundy: Are they all working on powerful reaction in your [word unintelligible]?

Carter: Yes, sir.

Bundy: Good.

Ball: . . . which goes back down to, uh, Mr. Secretary, is this the central . . .

Bundy: Yeah.

Ball: . . . point of, to connect . . .

[Two conversations are going on at once. Only these fragments are intelligible.]

McNamara: Well, that, that takes me into the third category of action. I'd lump them all in the third category. I call it overt military action of varying degrees of intensity, ranging. . . . And, if you feel there's any difference in them, in the kind of a world we have after the varying degrees of intensity . . .

Speaker ?: Right.

McNamara: . . . you have to divide category three into subcategories by intensity and probable effect on the world thereafter. And I think there is, at least in the sense of the Cuban uprising, which I happen to believe is a most important element of category three, it applies to some elements in categ-, some categories of category three, but not all. But, in any event, what, what kind of a world do we live in? In Cuba what action do we take? What do we expect Castro will be doing after, uh, you attack these missiles? Does he survive as a, as a political leader? Is he overthrown? Uh, is he stronger, weaker? Uh, how will he react? How will the Soviets react? What can. . . . How, how could Khrushchev afford to accept this action without some kind of rebuttal? I don't think, he can't accept it without some rebuttal. It may not be a substantial rebuttal, but it's, it's gonna have to be some. Where? How do we react in relation to it? What happens when we do mobilize? How does this affect our allies' support of us in relation to Berlin? Well, you know far better than I the problems, uh, but it would seem to me if we could lay

this out tonight and then meet a reasonable time in the morning to go over a tentative draft, discuss it, and then have another draft for some time in the afternoon . . .

Gilpatric?: One kind of planning, Bob, that, uh, that, uh, we didn't explicitly talk about today, uh, which is to look at the points of vulnerability around the world, not only in Berlin . . .

McNamara: Sure.

Gilpatric?: . . . not only in Turkey . . .

McNamara: Sure. Iran.

Gilpatric?: Iran and all of them . . .

McNamara: And Korea.

Gilpatric?: What, what precautionary measures ought to be taken?

McNamara: Yes. Yes.

Gilpatric?: Well, these, this, these are, these are both military and political . . .

McNamara: Exactly. Well, uh, and we call it a world-wide alert . . .

Speaker ? : [Yeah?]

McNamara: . . . under that heading we've got a whole series of precautionary measures that we, we think, uh, should be taken. All of our forces should be put on alert, but beyond that, mobilization, redeployment, movement, and so on. . . . Well, would it be feasible to meet at some time in the morning, uh, that's . . .

Speaker ? : [Words unintelligible]

McNamara: . . . [words unintelligible]? Mac, what would you think?

Bundy: I ought to, uh, join the president for the meeting with Schroeder and I'll be involved in getting some, started for that until ten o'-, uh, from about nine-thirty on. I could be, meet any time before that.

Speaker ? : Well, why don't we take the [words unintelligible]?

Carter: Well now, the president was going to see Mr. McCone at nine-thirty.

Bundy: That's right.

McNamara: Well, why don't we meet at eight-thirty? Is that . . .

Bundy: [Fine?]

McNamara: Let's, let's try that.

Bundy: Okay.

Speaker ?: Well you want. . . . Is [Halberstem?] coming?

McNamara: Now, there's not much we can do to help, uh, I'd be happy to, though

Speaker ?: No. [Words unintelligible].

McNamara: . . . if you think of anything we can do. We'll, we'll go to work tonight and get these numbers of sorties by target systems laid out. I'll, Reilly's up in Mac's office and I'll go down there now and get them started on it.

Carter: I think Mr. McCone could be helpful to you all in the morning.

McNamara: Well, I think he should try to stay here at eight-thirty.

Speaker ?: Yeah.

Carter: He didn't worry about this for a heck of a long time

Bundy: Sure.

Carter: . . . [word unintelligible] some.

[Meeting appears to be breaking up. Only the following fragments of conversation are intelligible.]

McNamara: Yeah.

Speaker ?: We can meet while [words unintelligible].

Speaker ?: Yeah.

Speaker ?: Are you going to be dining tonight? Or whatever it was you [word unintelligible]?

Bundy: I'm at your service.

Speaker ?: [Words unintelligible] I thought I, we might be in touch with you

Bundy: I'll be right there. I can come down, or at supper privately. Either way.

[Laughter]

Speaker ?: Well, uh, why don't we, why don't we see what it looks like

Speaker ?: Yeah.

Speaker ? : . . . uh, [starting?] under way.

Ball?: We're trying to run this with a minimum of manpower and it must still [words unintelligible].

[Several speakers speak at once and only the following words are intelligible.]

Bundy: We must do.

Taylor?: Secretarial problems. This has been one of the problems.

Speaker ? : Well, I think I could bust out a staff . . .

Bundy: I have two, extremely, totally . . .

McNamara: I've got, I'd trust my staff anywhere, I mean, I. . . . They [word unintelligible]. . . . I've got my car out here, Admiral.

Speaker ? : Oh, it's out this way.

McNamara: Yeah. All right. Good night.

Buddy: Good night.

Speaker ? : [Words unintelligible]

[Conversations end. Room noises for almost four minutes. Telephone rings in the distance.]

Lincoln: Hello. [In the distance.]

[Footsteps]

Cleaning man: Yes, lady, I'm gonna bring this.

Lincoln: Hello, [words unintelligible] [left?].

Cleaning man: [Laughs] Here. There's just some stacks, that's all.

[Recording ends.]