

Weaponry In Cuba Assessed

Russian-Supplied Missile Could Be Used Offensively Against U.S., McNamara Asserts.

By THOMAS R. PHILLIPS
Brigadier General, U.S.A. (Ret.)
Military Analyst of the Post-Dispatch
WASHINGTON, Dec. 1.

PRIOR TO THE shooting down of a U-2 reconnaissance plane in October over Cuba, Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara said that the air defense missiles Russia was supplying to Premier Castro "are the latest systems the Soviets are using in their own country."

If this is correct and if the missile were used as a surface-to-surface weapon, it has an offensive capacity against United States military installations in Key West. The system referred to by McNamara has a slant range of 80 miles and can be used as a surface-to-surface weapon with a change in the guidance system.

It is considered certain that the A-2 was hit by a Soviet air defense missile from a launcher manned by a Soviet crew. It was first believed by our intelligence that the air defense missiles furnished by Russia to Cuba were of an early obsolete type with a lesser capability than our Nike Ajax, now obsolete and being disposed of.

In the reconnaissance missions over Cuba, the U-2 was used at very high altitudes to obtain indications of military activity by photography. The suspicious locations were then photographed at low altitudes by high-speed jet reconnaissance planes such as the McDonnell RF-101 and the Navy's F8U-1P.

Maj. Rudolph Anderson Jr. was piloting the plane that was shot down. He was, as is customary in such flights, being tracked by our own radar, and was flying at an altitude of more than 70,000 feet.

On Nov. 16 Castro, in a letter to United Nations Secretary-General U Thant, said that "to the extent of the firepower of our antiaircraft weapons any warplane which violates the sovereignty of Cuba, by invading our air space, can only go so far as to be destroyed."

THE UNITED STATES repeated that until the entire provisions of the agreement between the United States and the U.S.S.R. have been completely and properly implemented, the United States will be forced to continue "to take all appropriate measures to guard against a threat from Cuba. The U-2 and lower level reconnaissance flights are being continued."

Castro's threat is discounted in the Pentagon, first, because the Russians have retained control of the air defense missile systems and do not want to exacerbate the Cuban problem now and, second, because there has not been time to train Cuban crews in the complex techniques of air defense missile systems.

The United States has said that it does not object to Cuba receiving defensive weapons and the air defense missile is unquestionably a defensive weapon.

However, if the system supplied to Cuba, as McNamara stated, the latest system used in the Soviet Union, and if the training of Cuban crews is continued and the Russian crews are withdrawn, Castro should be able to carry out his threat to shoot down our high-flying reconnaissance aircraft. The missile does not have the capability of hitting low-flying aircraft.

There are reported to be 30 MIG-21 interceptors in Cuba. These are also called defensive weapons. They have a speed twice that of sound. One of them inspected one of our RF-101's flying a reconnaissance mission over Cuba and passed it flying in the same direction without difficulty. The RF-101 is reported to have a speed of 1100 miles an hour.

The MIG-21 interceptors can thus prevent aerial reconnaissance at low altitudes.

The end result, unless conditions change, is that Castro will in time have the capability of preventing aerial inspection of Cuba, or at least of making it costly, thus ending what he calls an insult to the dignity of a sovereign state.

There are reported to be 24 air defense missile sites in Cuba. Each battery has six launchers. Presumably, additional missiles are in storage.

One site is at the San Julian air base (built by the United States during the war) where the Soviet light jet bombers were being assembled from crates. Havana is heavily defended. Santiago, west of Guantanamo, has two batteries. The Bahia de Nipe, across the island from Guantanamo, is also protected. This is a harbor, but not commercially important. What is there in the bay that is so important?

Considering the limited number of locations needing defense in Cuba, the number of missile batteries is sufficient for a partial defense. Only around Havana are there a sufficient number of batteries for a strong defense. There is no present reason, however, why the Soviet Union should not, if it desires, add to the missile defense system.

THERE ARE reported in Cuba also 12 or more bomber patrol boats. These are high-speed boats with two missile launchers. The missiles have a range of about 15 miles. They are intended for use against ships, but could be used against land targets.

The United States has discovered at least three coast defense missile installations. They use a winged missile with a range of 25 to 40 miles. Their purpose is to hold off ships, either on reconnaissance missions or pending an amphibious assault.

There are reports from refugees, but no verification, that missiles are being stored in caves in Cuba. The refugees say that these can be hidden indefinitely and then, when Castro has his war, can be brought out and used.

The idea is discounted by Pentagon authorities. Missile systems of any importance are extremely delicate. The guidance systems have to be protected and tested periodically. Many types of missiles must be stored in constant, controlled temperature.

The refugees may be right that something is being stored in caves, but more likely it is ammunition, artillery shells and light conventionally loaded bombs for the use of fighter