

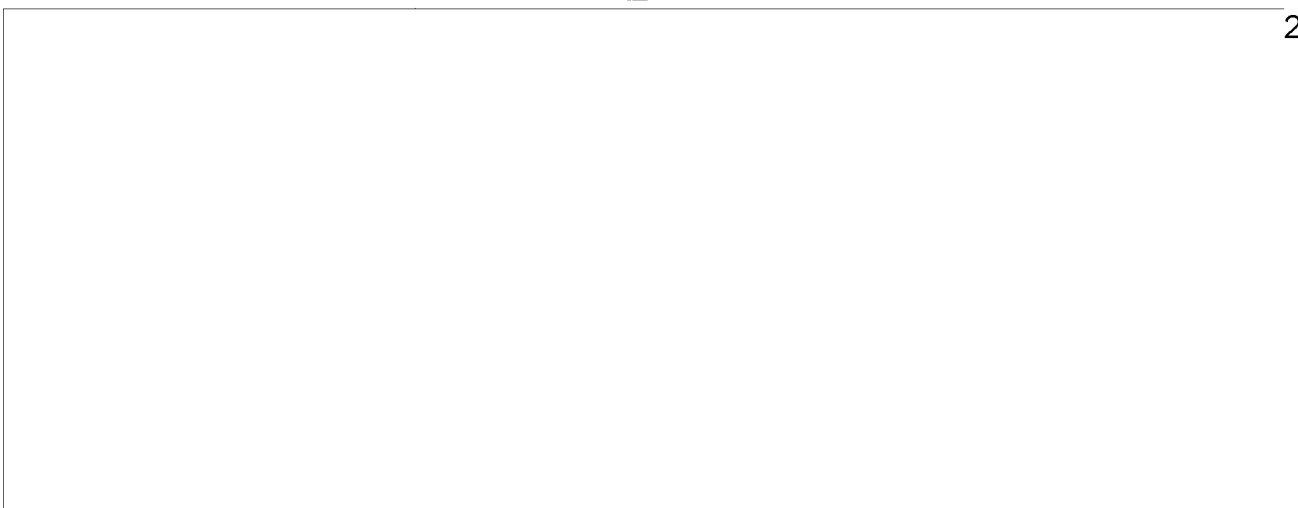
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D. USIB Passes Its Test in the Cuban Crisis

85. One of the most spectacular challenges to the USIB in supporting the urgent intelligence needs of the President and the NSC was posed by Khrushchev in the Soviet arms build-up in Cuba during the fall of 1962. In view of the many appraisals and post mortems written about this event, this section will be confined to a summary of the actions taken by the USIB to deal with the crisis situation as it developed from August through October 1962.*

86. On 1 August 1962 the USIB approved an NIE on the situation and prospects in Cuba which updated two previous estimates in January and March. This August estimate noted that the USSR was becoming more deeply committed to preserve and strengthen the



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Castro regime, but had avoided formal commitment to protect and defend the regime in all contingencies. It stated that Cuban military capabilities had been enhanced by Soviet Bloc provision of military equipment and instructions but were essentially defensive. It was believed unlikely that the Bloc would provide Cuba with a capability to undertake major independent military operations overseas, or station in Cuba Bloc combat units, at least for the next year or so. It was estimated that Cuban armed forces were probably capable of containing and controlling any threat through guerilla action, and of repelling any invasion short of direct US military intervention in strength. 194/

87. While there had been numerous reports from ground observers that Soviet missiles or excessive numbers of Soviet aircraft or submarines had been deployed to Cuba in 1961 and early 1962, NPIC had disproved almost all of them until August 1962. The photography from a U-2 mission on 29 August showing eight SA-2 sites was the first firm evidence of what the Soviets had begun in Cuba and of how far they had progressed. Coincidentally, the Watch Committee report approved by USIB on that same date contained an initial assessment of the developing situation in Cuba. Also at that meeting the Board agreed

during discussion of the Weekly Survey of Cold War Crisis Situations that a SNIE on Cuba should be prepared for early consideration. After the first version was considered but not acted upon at the 7 September meeting, USIB approved a SNIE on the military buildup in Cuba at its 19 September meeting which contained the following conclusions:

"a. We believe that the USSR values its position in Cuba primarily for the political advantages to be derived from it, and consequently that the main purpose of the present military build-up in Cuba is to strengthen the Communist regime there against what the Cubans and the Soviets conceive to be a danger that the U.S. may attempt by one means or another to overthrow it. The Soviets evidently hope to deter any such attempt by enhancing Castro's defensive capabilities and by threatening Soviet military retaliation. At the same time, they evidently recognize that the development of an offensive military base in Cuba might provoke U.S. military intervention and thus defeat their present purpose.

"b. In terms of military significance, the current Soviet deliveries are substantially improving air defense and coastal defense capabilities in Cuba. Their political significance is that, in conjunction with the Soviet statement of 11 September, they are likely to be regarded as ensuring the continuation of the Castro regime in power, with consequent discouragement to the opposition at home and in exile. The threat inherent in these developments is that, to the extent that the Castro regime thereby gains a sense of security at home, it will be emboldened to become more aggressive in fomenting revolutionary activity in Latin America.

"c. As the build-up continues, the USSR may be tempted to establish in Cuba other weapons represented to be defensive in purpose, but of a more 'offensive' character; e.g., light bombers, submarines, and additional types of short-range surface-to-surface missiles (SSM's). A decision to provide such weapons will continue to depend heavily on the Soviet estimate as to whether they could be introduced without provoking a U. S. military reaction.

"d. The USSR could derive considerable military advantage from the establishment of Soviet medium and intermediate range ballistic missiles in Cuba, or from the establishment of a Soviet submarine base there. As between these two, the establishment of a submarine base would be the more likely. Either development, however, would be incompatible with Soviet practice to date and with Soviet policy as we presently estimate it. It would indicate a far greater willingness to increase the level of risk in U. S. - Soviet relations than the USSR has displayed thus far and consequently would have important policy implications with respect to other areas and other problems in East-West relations.

"e. The Latin American reaction will be to the evidence of an increased Soviet commitment to Cuba, rather than to the technical implications of the military build-up. Many Latin Americans will fear and resent a Soviet military intrusion into the Hemisphere, but will regard the problem as one to be met by the U. S. and not their responsibility. We estimate the chances are better now than they were at Punta del Este to obtain the necessary two-thirds OAS majority for sanctions and other steps short of direct military action aimed at Cuba. If it became clear that the USSR was establishing an 'offensive' base in Cuba, most Latin American governments would expect the U. S. to eliminate it, by whatever means were necessary, but many of them would still seek to avoid direct involvement."

General Carter as Acting Chairman also urged all Board members to keep their principals alerted to developments in the Cuban situation. 195/

88. On 31 August the President had ordered USIB through the Acting DCI not to allow publication of the information from the 29 August U-2 mission about Soviet defensive missiles until U. S. policy-makers had established a course of action. After the President announced the presence of a missile defense system in Cuba on 4 September, the community was able to publish information on SAM sites. At executive sessions on 7 and 13 September however the Board had discussed a further restriction on publishing any intelligence on offensive weapons in Cuba. Agencies were to continue normal distribution of raw reports. A few days after this restriction, reports of actual sightings of offensive missiles began to come in from ground observers in Cuba, and none of this information appeared in intelligence publications although it did go to analysts with a need to know and was used in the targeting exercise which led to the U-2 mission ^{on} 14 October. One exception to the restrictions was White House permission to publish information on a shipment of IL-28 medium jet bombers that arrived in Cuba for which there were pictures of the deck-loaded crates



on ships. When this permission was granted on 11 October the President instructed the DCI to put into effect a system for rigid control of information on offensive weapons. A meeting on that same date in the Pentagon of representatives of the USIB chaired by General Carter agreed upon implementing procedures which also would improve the flow of this sensitive information to the senior policy echelon. The resultant DCI order specified that all such sensitive information would require a special SECRET designator PSALM and its dissemination within each USIB component was to be strictly controlled by each USIB member personally without inhibiting the essential analytical process. Such information also would be disseminated outside USIB components only to specific individuals on an EYES ONLY basis who by virtue of their responsibilities as advisors to the President had a need to know. 19/

89. The first reports out of Cuba suggesting the presence of MRBMs did not reach Washington until after mid-September. On 5 October COMOR submitted to USIB its report which stated that there was a pressing and continuous need for up-to-date intelligence on the progress of the Soviet arms buildup in Cuba to assist in making

policy decisions of immediate and vital concern to the nation.

It noted that this intelligence could best be provided with sufficient timeliness and broadness of scope by overflying Cuba with the U-2. The most immediate concerns were the missile installations springing up all over the islands. In addition to the SA-2 sites, there were surface-to-surface (SSM) sites observed on recent coverage. Also ground observers had reported sightings they believed were the SS-4 MRBM, and these reports had to be confirmed or denied by photo coverage. The presence of MIG-21 aircraft had been confirmed and overhead reconnaissance was needed to substantiate estimates of the numbers involved. Moreover, to prepare for possible US operations in the area, responsible commanders required up-to-date intelligence which, while secondary to the above needs, were potentially of even greater importance.

COMOR therefore proposed frequent and regular U-2 overflights of the island for coverage of listed primary objectives once a month. 197/

The next day, 6 October, COMOR forwarded to the Board a copy of a memorandum to the Director of NRO at his request which reiterated and much of the previous report/which added a section on SIGINT requirements as well as giving an up-to-date list of objectives for search,

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surveillance and technical analysis. At the USIB meeting on 10 October, the Chairman first reported the discussion of this subject at the 9 October Special Group meeting and subsequent decisions by the President. The Special Group had agreed that first priority be given to one U-2 mission in the western part of the island. In answer to a request at that Special Group meeting for the Board's opinion on the COMOR report, the USIB also on 10 October (as previously discussed in paragraph 63 of Section C) agreed that the Chairman should express to the Special Group the Board's view that the two groups of surveillance targets requiring resolution of 2-5 feet to provide order of battle and operational status information should be surveyed as promptly as possible. These targets included missile sites, camps, airfields, ports, landing beaches and special areas. The Board also requested COMOR to submit at the next weekly meeting a specific list of priority targets in the technical analyses group requiring a resolution of one foot. 198/ At its 17 October meeting, USIB considered the COMOR response, and authorized and directed COMOR to keep up-to-date the requirements, targets and priorities for low-altitude reconnaissance contained therein, and to keep USIB, NRO and appropriate operational authorities currently informed. 199/

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90. The Board at its 17 October meeting also agreed that a SNIE should be prepared on a crash basis on the Cuban situation, taking into account broad Soviet intentions and the strategic consequences related thereto. 200/ This action reflected the fact that, after bad weather from 10 to 13 October, the U-2 mission authorized on 9 October had flown over the area west of Havana/to test the operational readiness of SAM sites and to look for suspected SSM activity. This flight was the first to discover the presence of MRBMs. On 16 October approval had been given for an unlimited number of flights over Cuba. The intelligence community had also geared to meet the crisis which now faced the nation. GMAIC was charged with preparing an immediate evaluation, and agreed that the observed missiles were clearly under Soviet control and the site would probably hold up to 24 missiles although there was no evidence of the presence of nuclear warheads. COMOR reviewed its target planning, the Watch Committee directed the NIC to monitor closely any Soviet actions elsewhere to determine how Cuban events fitted into a broader picture, and BNE concluded that the Soviets would not risk nuclear war if the U. S. took direct action against Cuba. At its 17 January meeting, USIB directed that GMAIC, NPIC and JAEIC

jointly provide a continuing community evaluation of the Soviet missile threat in Cuba, including 24-hour-a-day support from NPIC. Based on the 15 October U-2 mission, GMAIC initially estimated that at least 16 and possibly 32 missiles of 1,020 n.m. range would be operational within a week or so.

91. On 18 October 1962, the Chairman with the Board's agreement initiated a series of special USIB meetings of Board members, with one assistant each if desired, held every morning for the next five days at 0830 in the Conference Room of the CIA East Building in downtown Washington near the Lincoln Memorial. Each of these daily meetings generally lasted throughout the entire morning, and two of them were reconvened after a luncheon recess. The sole agenda for these meetings was to review and discuss the developments related to the Cuban situation, both there and throughout the world.* At the 18 October meeting the Chairman

*This account of the Board's actions in these meetings and the one on 24 October 1962 are based on material which, because it had to be handled in accordance with PSALM procedures, was filed in separate folders in the USIB Secretariat files under control of the Executive Secretary, containing the minutes and records for each of these special meetings. 201/

also reported that, based on meetings with certain principals of Board members, events had overtaken the SNIE on Cuba drafted by BNE and therefore Board action was not appropriate. The Board then proceeded with its review and discussion of developments with respect to Cuba and their implications. After a briefing by the Director of NPIC on the results of the latest reconnaissance missions over Cuba, the Chairman tabled a brief memorandum of the following problems to which USIB should address itself at once and be prepared to report at a meeting the next day. He explained that these were the policy problems being discussed in the meetings of principals. The principal question for the USIB was to analyze the effects of probable courses of action which might be taken by the United States and to appraise all aspects of these actions. The courses were three:

1. To accept the MRBM's and other offensive capabilities in Cuba as a fact of life and do nothing about it.
2. To initiate a total or limited blockade under a declaration of war against Cuba.
3. To take military action ranging from taking out identified IRBM's, plus other Cuban air capabilities, plus SAM sites and cruise missile sites, to invading Cuba. After general Board discussion,

the USIB requested BNE, with the USIB representatives, to prepare an estimate responsive to these problems. The USIB also requested GMAIC and JAEIC to review their recent evaluations on missile sites and nuclear weapons in Cuba.

92. At the 19 October meeting after the usual briefing by the Director of NPIC, the first "Joint Evaluation of Soviet Missile Threat in Cuba," by GMAIC, JAEIC and NPIC, dated 18 October, was handled out and discussed. Its main conclusion was that a Soviet regiment with eight launchers and sixteen 1020-nm MRBMs was deployed in western Cuba, must be considered operational and could launch the missiles within 18 hours of a decision to do so. These missiles were Soviet manned and controlled, and it was believed that offensive action by them would be by command from the USSR. There was however no evidence of nuclear warheads in Cuba, but it must be assumed that they could be available. The USIB agreed that this Joint Evaluation should be kept up-to-date daily for the time being, and reviewed at each USIB meeting. The Chairman of COMOR distributed a paper concerning possible revision of the satellite reconnaissance schedule in light of the Cuban crisis. After discussion, ^{USIB deferred action} /until there was a better basis for decision. The Acting Chairman, General Carter, then handed out

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in executive session a Memorandum from the DCI, which indicated the probable US courses of action developed in discussion among the principals on 18 October, together with some of the reasoning involved. The DCI asked for guidance from USIB members for his use in further discussions which were to begin at 1100 hours, 19 October, and probably continue throughout the weekend. The discussion led into a consideration of SNIE 11-18-62, "Soviet Reactions to Certain US Courses of Action", dated 13 October. A shorter version distributed by the State member at the meeting was amended and approved by USIB, which contained the following basic conclusions:

This estimate stated that a major Soviet objective in their military buildup in Cuba was to demonstrate that the world balance of forces has shifted so far in their favor that the US could prevent the advance of Soviet offensive power even into its own hemisphere. It was considered possible, but unlikely, that the USSR was installing the missiles to bargain for US concessions elsewhere. If the US accepted this buildup, it was believed that the Soviets would continue the buildup of strategic weapons in Cuba, probably to contribute to their total strategic capability vis-a-vis the US. This would provide encouragement to Communists and anti-American elements, and a loss of confidence in US power and determination generally. If the US confronted Khrushchev with knowledge of the MRBM deployment and pressed for a withdrawal, it was not believed that the Soviets

would halt the deployment but would propose negotiations on foreign bases generally. Such a warning would degrade surprise in a subsequent US attack. As to the effect of a blockade, it was not believed that a blockade itself would bring down the Castro regime. The Soviets would exert strong pressures elsewhere to end the blockade, and heavily exploit all adverse reactions. If the US took direct military action against Cuba, the Soviets would be under great pressure to respond in ways which would inflict injury to US interests. While the possibility must be recognized that the Soviets would again miscalculate and respond in a way which could escalate to general war, it was not believed the Soviets having no public treaty with Cuba would attack the US from Soviet bases or with missiles from Cuba. Although the Soviets would almost certainly consider retaliatory actions outside Cuba, it was believed that the Soviet leaders would not deliberately initiate general war or take military measures running the gravest risks of general war.

93. The USIB also approved a brief statement drafted during the meeting on the "Difference Between Soviet Responses to a Blockade and US Measures of Force Against Cuba", as a response to the aforementioned memorandum from the DCI. The USIB agreed that the short SNIE 11-18-62, the brief statement and the Joint Evaluation be provided to the DCI for his use in meeting with the principals. Subsequently the USIB approved an amended version of the Annex to SNIE 11-18-62 on "Military

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Significance of Ballistic Missiles in Cuba." General Carroll, Director of DIA, advised the Board on certain steps which had been taken to get necessary intelligence to the operational commanders. During this meeting, a CIA Current Intelligence Memorandum on "Evidence of a Soviet Military Commitment to Defend Cuba" was distributed as requested at the meeting of the preceding day.

94. The 20 October meeting began with the usual NPIC briefing. The Chairman then raised a question about the Joint Evaluation dated 19 October, particularly with reference to the assumption that nuclear weapons could now be in Cuba to support the operational missile capability as it becomes available. He pointed out that this raised a problem for the policy makers. After discussion which generally agreed that this assumption constituted a logical appraisal, the USIB approved the Joint Evaluation for presentation to the principals. This evaluation noted that an additional Soviet MRBM regiment was deployed east of Havana, and that two fixed sites being constructed near Havana were believed to be for the 2200-nm IRBM. The Board then considered a memorandum from COMOR recommending, with a State Department dissent, that the present schedule for satellite reconnaissance be reaffirmed. After discussion, the USIB requested the Chairman, COMOR, to consult with the NRO as to whether any other vehicles could be made available for satellite reconnaissance missions. Later in the

meeting, the Chairman of COMOR reported that no other vehicles could be made available from a practical viewpoint. As suggested by the Acting Chairman, the Critical Collection Problems Committee (CCPC) was requested to study and recommend means to maximize intelligence collection capabilities worldwide in this critical situation. The Board then had a thorough discussion of a new draft SNIE 11-19-62 on "Soviet Reactions to Certain US Courses of Action". After a new draft had been prepared, the USIB approved as amended SNIE 11-19-62, making clear that it was a slightly revised and updated version of SNIE 11-18-62 approved the preceding day. The principal changes were in a new section on the status of the buildup, and a revised statement that, under any form of blockade, the Soviets would concentrate on political exploitation especially in the UN. They might however risk violent encounters to penetrate the blockade and, if the US used force for the blockade, the Soviets might respond but seek to avoid escalation.

95. In the 21 October meeting after the usual NPIC briefing reported that 72 per cent of Cuba had been covered, the Chairman in executive session reported on the discussion at the meetings of the principals on the preceding day, including the current status of plans to deal with the Cuban situation. He also

explained the arrangements for briefings of allied nations. The Chairman suggested that the USIB consider preparing an estimate on the consequences of US strikes against the ballistic missiles and IL-28's in Cuba. After the DCI had to leave for a meeting of the principals, the Board discussed the subject of the proposed estimate as well as the consequences of other possible US actions, but after this USIB meeting the request for this estimate was cancelled. USIB then discussed possible changes in a Supplement to the Joint Evaluation, dated 20 October, as guidance in the preparation of the next daily supplement. These changes concerned the conclusion that the apparent Soviet objective to rapidly achieve full operational capability for their MRBM and IRBM requirements rather than to achieve immediate operational capability at each site as missiles and equipment arrived, might be very significant to planners judging various Soviet courses of action.

96. The USIB also discussed and approved, subject to certain amendments and specific timing, the recommendations in a memorandum from CCPC on "Crisis Collection Recommendations." Dr. Scoville, DD/R, CIA, was to communicate to NRO the USIB actions regarding the scheduling of satellite reconnaissance vehicles, while the Chairman of CCPC was to follow up on the



other approved CCPC recommendations.



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97. After discussion of the need for a sanitized version of the "Evaluation of Offensive Threat in Cuba" for use in briefing authorized personnel, such as allied officials, and a recess to prepare it, the USIB approved such a sanitized version to be issued as a CIA Intelligence Memorandum. Prior to the conclusion of the meeting, General Carter read a one-page Special Watch Report No. 637A, containing a review of the Soviet Bloc military situation in the light of developments in Cuba. The USIB noted and concurred in this report, which had a 26-page NIC compilation attached. This Watch Report concluded that there was no evidence of (a) exceptional measures by Soviet Bloc forces to increase general operational readiness, (b) significant prepositioning or deployment of long-range air and submarine strike forces although these could be initiated suddenly, or (c) alerting of Soviet military forces. It noted a continuing buildup of combat air strength in the European Satellites but no significant ground force reinforcement of that area. It also noted that the annual training cycle of Soviet Bloc forces reached a climax late in the fall, and that there was a gradual but steady trend since January toward improvement of Bloc military capabilities generally and particularly those in the East European forward area.



98. The 22 October meeting began with the Chairman reporting to the Board on policy decisions which had been reached in meetings of the principals, and the plans for a public announcement by the President at 1900 hours on that date. The DCI then consulted with and obtained the advice of the USIB members, in anticipation of his further participation in meetings of the principals to draft the Presidential announcement. Prior to leaving for such a meeting, the DCI stated that no photography should be identified with the U-2, but should be discussed in general terms such as "the information derived from military reconnaissance."

99. Mr. Hilsman, the State Department USIB member, then explained to the Board the arrangements for briefing representatives of the Organization of American States and of NATO prior to the President's announcement, and certain neutral countries following the President's announcement. The USIB discussed the intelligence aspects of briefings on the Cuban situation of other foreign governments and of the press, and agreed that:

(a) The sanitized Top Secret Evaluation approved the previous day should be distributed to USIB members for use along the lines discussed

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in the meeting, subject to identification as PSALM and deletion of the words "Background Use Only" on the covers.

(b) State, in consultation with DD/I, should prepare a further sanitized version of the Evaluation which could be used in connection with briefings of the press and for similar purposes.

100. After noting Supplement 2 dated 21 October which identified another IRBM regiment at Remedios, the USIB agreed that the Joint Evaluation by GMAIC, JAEIC and NPIC should continue to be prepared on a daily basis for the time being and distributed to the USIB member agencies without Board review. Mr. Cline asked for advice in answer to a question as to whether there was any evidence that during the next 48 hours there might be a substantial increase in Soviet capabilities in Cuba. The consensus of USIB members was that there was no current evidence to that effect. Following a current briefing by NPIC, the Board discussed briefly, without attempting to reach a consensus, whether the Cuban situation indicated a basic change in Soviet policy or in the USIB appraisal thereof. The Board then agreed that the next USIB meeting should be on the call of the Chairman rather than regularly at 0830 each day as during the past few days.

101. President Kennedy made his momentous announcement to the American people on the Soviet Arms Buildup in Cuba by radio and television at 1900 hours on 22 October 1962. He stated that he had directed the following initial steps to be taken immediately: (a) a strict quarantine on all offensive military equipment under shipment to Cuba, (b) continued and increased close surveillance of Cuba and its military buildup (c) a policy to regard any nuclear missile launched from Cuba against any Western Hemisphere nation as an attack by the Soviet Union on the U. S. requiring full retaliatory response against the USSR, (d) reinforcement of the Guantanamo base, (e) calling an immediate meeting of the Organization of American States to consider the threat to hemispheric security and to invoke the Rio Treaty, (f) asking for an emergency meeting of the U. N. Security Council to take action against the Soviet threat, with a U. S. resolution calling for prompt dismantling and withdrawal of all offensive weapons in Cuba under supervision of U. N. observers before lifting the quarantine, and (g) calling upon Khrushchev to halt and eliminate this clandestine, reckless, and provocative threat to world peace and stable relations between our two nations, as well as abandoning this course of world domination and joining in an

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historic effort to end the arms race and transform the history of man. An exchange of messages between the President and Khrushchev on 26, 27 and 28 October led to the latter's agreement to order that the weapons "you regard as offensive" be dismantled, crated and returned to the USSR under agreements "to enable U.N. representatives to verify the dismantling of these means." 202/

102. Meanwhile the USIB had held a regular USIB meeting on 24 October which was solely concerned with developments related to the Cuban crisis. The Board first approved a Special Daily Watch Report which concluded that the Soviet Union in the past several days had taken steps to bring its military forces to an increased state of readiness. There were indications of preparations to deploy some Long Range Aviation bombers to Arctic bases but no major redeployment of other Soviet Bloc forces had so far been noted. There were tenuous indications of impending troop movements into the East European area, and Bloc forces in the Berlin area were in a high state of readiness. Almost all Soviet merchant ships enroute to Cuba [redacted]

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[redacted] but so far no indications that any were altering their courses to Cuba had been noted. There was some evidence that 3 or more Soviet long range attack submarines were on patrol near

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Soviet merchant shipping routes to Cuba. The Board then noted a report by the Chairman that the Watch Committee would meet each day at 0800 to prepare a Special Watch Report for presentation to the NSC Executive Committee at 1000. Rather than requiring USIB approval every day, each USIB member was to arrange that his Watch Committee member be able generally to represent his principal, subject to any Board member registering a dissent if desired by advising Mr. McCone's Office prior to the NSC Executive Committee Meeting. General Carter, as Chairman of the Watch Committee, called attention of Board Members to the "Recommended List of Key Indicators for All-Source Priority Reporting" distributed by memorandum for the Watch Committee, dated 23 October 1962. The Chairman said that he planned to keep other USIB members informed immediately of current developments, and requested all members to do likewise since every agency was involved in the present situation, and it was essential that the entire Community stay closely tied together.

103. After discussion USIB agreed that the Top Secret "Evaluation of Offensive Threat in Cuba" should now be downgraded to Secret, so that the information in it could be used to meet such



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63 estimate. The Board also amended and approved a COMOR proposal that, in view of the public disclosure of such overflights and information derived therefrom, aerial overflight photography of Cuba henceforth acquired be classified SECRET and handled outside the TALENT control system, and that such photography previously acquired be similarly downgraded and removed from the TALENT system. The Board also approved that the following information be authorized for public release by the USIB:

Release limited number of pictures both high and low level on basis that surveillance is now overt and no longer covert.

Release the number of sites and launchers by order of magnitude - 8 to 10 bases of about 4 launchers more or less per base - located at San Cristobal, Sagua La Grande, Guanajay and Remedios.

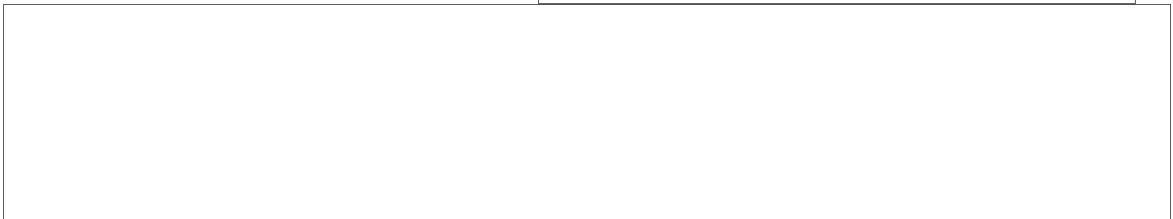
Reports from all intelligence sources confirm that at least 30 missiles are present in Cuba - this evidence is undeniable. More than 20 IL-28's.



Personnel, at least 5,000, are in Cuba -
the exact numbers cannot be determined because
personnel have entered on a number of ships and
aircraft.

104. Distributed for information at this meeting were Supplement 4 to the Joint Evaluation by GMAIC, JAEIC and NPIC, as well as a memorandum from the Director of NSA describing additional actions taken or planned by NSA to improve SIGINT posture. The Supplement noted that 2 MRBM sites were estimated to achieve full operational capability on 25 October instead of 22 October as previously estimated. No new missile sites had been identified, and no IRBMs per se had yet been identified. No new intelligence had been received to modify the nuclear storage situation.

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105. At the end of this 24 October meeting it was agreed that the next USIB meeting would be on call of the Chairman and the Board then resumed its regular weekly meeting schedule.



106. One of the most interesting and knowledgeable postscripts to the intelligence coverage of the Cuban crisis was contained in an article written in the spring of 1964 by Sherman Kent who was Chairman of the Board of National Estimates during this period. The following paragraphs quoted from that article give a summation of his conclusions:


"As is quite apparent, the thrust of these paragraphs [conclusions c. and d. of the 19 September 1962 SNIE quoted on page 136] was that the Soviets would be unlikely to introduce strategic offensive weapons into Cuba. There is no blinking the fact that we came down on the wrong side. When the photographic evidence of 14 October was in, there was the proof.

* * *

"On 15 October we realized that our estimate of the Soviets' understanding of the mood of the United States and its probable reaction was wrong. On 28 October we realized that the Soviets had realized they had misjudged the United States. In between we verified that our own feeling for the mood of the United States and its probable reaction had been correct. In a way our misestimate of Soviet intentions got an ex post facto validation.

* * *

"It is tempting to hope that some research


together with new requirements served on our own intelligence services, might turn up new insights into the Soviet process of decision-making. The odds are pretty strongly against it; and yet the-to us-incredible wrongness of the Soviet decision to put the missiles into Cuba all but compels an attempt to find out. Any light that can be thrown on that particular decision might lessen the chances of our misestimating the Soviets in a future case."

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107. The ultimate official postscript to the efforts of the intelligence community during this Cuban crisis was the following letter from President Kennedy to the Chairman of USIB dated 9 January 1963, and presented by Mr. McCone to Board members at the 23 January meeting together with his own letter of appreciation:

"I wish to express to you, the members of the United States Intelligence Board, and to the individual members of the intelligence agencies my deep and sincere appreciation for your outstanding service to our Nation -- and the Free World -- during the recent international crisis.

"In the course of the past few months I have had occasion to again observe the extraordinary accomplishments of our intelligence community, and I have been singularly impressed with the overall professional excellence, selfless devotion to duty, resourcefulness and initiative manifested in the work of this group. The fact that we had timely and accurate information, skillfully analyzed and clearly presented, to guide us in our judgments during this crisis is, I believe, the greatest tribute to the effectiveness of these individuals and agencies. The magnitude of their contribution can be measured, in part, by the fact that the peace was sustained during a most critical time.

"It is, of course, a great source of strength to me to know that we have such dedicated and skilled men and women in the service of our Nation in these times of peril. Although I cannot personally commend each member of the intelligence community for their individual efforts, I would like you to convey to them, through the members of the United States Intelligence Board, my personal word of commendation, my deep admiration for their achievements, and the appreciation of a grateful Nation." 203/

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