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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
Office of Current Intelligence  
23 October 1962

CURRENT INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Comment on 23 October Soviet Government  
Statement on President Kennedy's Speech

1. Moscow's initial reaction to President Kennedy's speech reflects the Soviet leaders' concern to avoid any appearance of acquiescing to the measures announced by the President but, at the same time, to stay clear of commitments to specific Soviet countermeasures.

2. The Soviet statement of 23 October, warning that the US is "recklessly playing with fire," appears to be primarily a holding action aimed at placing the US on the defensive and generating world wide opposition to US policy in the Cuban crisis. The statement evaded the central question of the presence of Soviet strategic missiles in Cuba and reaffirmed Moscow's 11 September contention that military equipment being sent to Cuba is "designed exclusively for defensive purposes." It sought to play down the USSR's role in the crisis by portraying the issue as one between Cuba and the US.

3. Although the statement denounced the US quarantine measures and denied Washington's right to inspect foreign vessels on the open seas, it avoided any hints of Soviet reaction. The statement also implied that the USSR will seek to circumvent the US demand for prompt dismantling and withdrawal of all offensive weapons by contending that all weapons in Cuba are defensive and are under Cuban ownership. The statement said, "The US is demanding that military equipment Cuba needs for self-defense be removed from Cuban territory, a demand which naturally no state which values its independence can meet."

4. As in the 11 September statement, Moscow again attempted to justify its military presence in Cuba by pointing to the deployment of US forces and armaments throughout the world and to US rejection of Soviet proposals for withdrawal of all foreign forces from alien territories.

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