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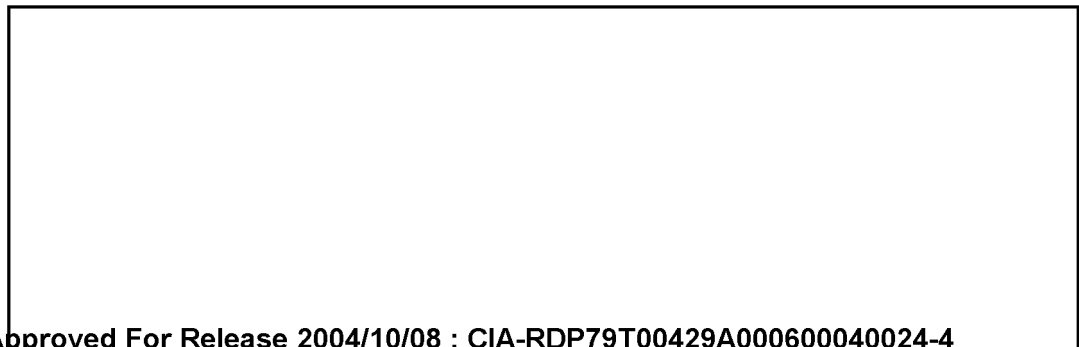
CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

*Memorandum*



SOVIET PRESENCE  
IN CUBA

7 DECEMBER 1962



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7 December 1962

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

MEMORANDUM: The Soviet Presence in Cuba

1. The withdrawal of Soviet offensive missiles and IL-28's from Cuba still leaves the USSR with a substantial military presence on the island. (See Annex I and II) Although Khrushchev has suggested to the President that he would withdraw the Soviet ground combat groups and other units which were associated with protection of the offensive weapons, we have seen no evidence of preparations to carry this out.

2. We do not have the evidence upon which to make a firm judgment as to what disposition the USSR is likely to make of its forces in Cuba. This paper merely examines those factors which might lead the USSR to retain a large military establishment there.

3. Although Soviet-Cuban relations are now at their lowest point since Moscow recognized the Castro regime, Soviet leaders have no intention of abandoning their earlier conception of Cuba as the bridgehead for extending Soviet Communist influence in Latin America.

[REDACTED]

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its main objective: maintaining a Communist regime in the Western Hemisphere. This is the goal that probably remains uppermost in the minds of Soviet leaders as they reassess their Cuban policies.

4. We expect the Soviet leaders will try now to rebuild their relationship with Cuba. They cannot ignore the fact that the USSR's prestige is still committed to protecting Cuba from external efforts to undermine and destroy the Castro regime. This will mean continued and perhaps increased economic assistance and assurances of continued military aid.

At the same time, the Soviet leaders wish to avoid a new flareup of the crisis. They probably recog-

5. The Soviet leaders, however, may decide to retain a substantial military presence in Cuba. Such a decision probably would be governed by two major considerations, the first to improve Soviet-Cuban relations and the second to deter future US pressures against the Cuban regime. In addition, the Soviets would strongly desire not to convey an impression of weakness in response to US firmness by removing their entire military presence from the island quickly.

6. In view of their present strained relations with Cuba, the Soviet leaders are anxious to avoid any appearance of a further major reduction of their commitments in Cuba. They feel obliged to demonstrate in some way that they remain committed to protecting Cuba against all external pressures. In addition, Moscow may view the retention of a substantial military presence as providing a base for an expanded program of assistance and training for the Cuban armed forces.

8. Cuban leaders, in apparent recognition of their continued dependence on the USSR, have been circumspect in public statements critical of the withdrawal of Soviet strategic missiles. The closest any Cuban leader has yet come to public criticism of the Soviet position was an interview given by Che Guevara

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to a correspondent of the London Daily Worker on 28 November in which he said: "Some people in Europe are saying that a great victory has been won. We say that the danger is still here ...While war may have been avoided, that does not mean that peace has been assured. We ask whether in exchange for some slight gain we have only prolonged the agony."

9. In contrast to the restrained public comment, however, there have been strong private expressions of Cuban anger

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[Redacted]

Cuba, Castro is reported to have said that as far as he is concerned, Mikoyan could go home immediately.

10. In addition to their desire to placate Castro, the Soviet leaders probably believe that preservation of a substantial military presence in Cuba would enhance their ability to deter renewed US military pressures. Moscow may also regard the continued presence of the SAMs as an essential element in any efforts to discourage the US from continuing its aerial surveillance of the island. Finally, the possibility cannot be excluded that the Soviets might look upon the existence of a substantial military presence as the foundation for a future attempt to re-establish Soviet offensive bases in Cuba.

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ANNEX I

Soviet Military Forces Still in Cuba

1. The USSR's presence in Cuba has been significantly reduced by the withdrawal of the strategic missiles and the IL-28s. We have seen no evidence to date of other Soviet equipment leaving Cuba. Construction continues on barracks in the armored group areas.

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2. We believe that at least 12,000 Soviet troops are still in Cuba.

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[Redacted]

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We expect, however, that the 1000-2000 Soviet personnel associated with strategic missiles who are still in Cuba will join the approximately 4000 Soviet troops who have left since the end of October.

3. The four Soviet armed combat groups in Cuba are made up of about 6000 troops. Recent photography shows continuing construction or other activity at the bases of all four armored groups. Each of these groups includes one medium (T-54) tank battalion and some of the following: armored reconnaissance units, armored infantry units, multiple rocket launchers, FROG artillery rockets, SNAPPER antitank missiles, 120-mm mortars, 57-mm antitank guns, and engineer groups with self-propelled bridging equipment. We have not yet detected the removal of any of these units or equipment.

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Aside from

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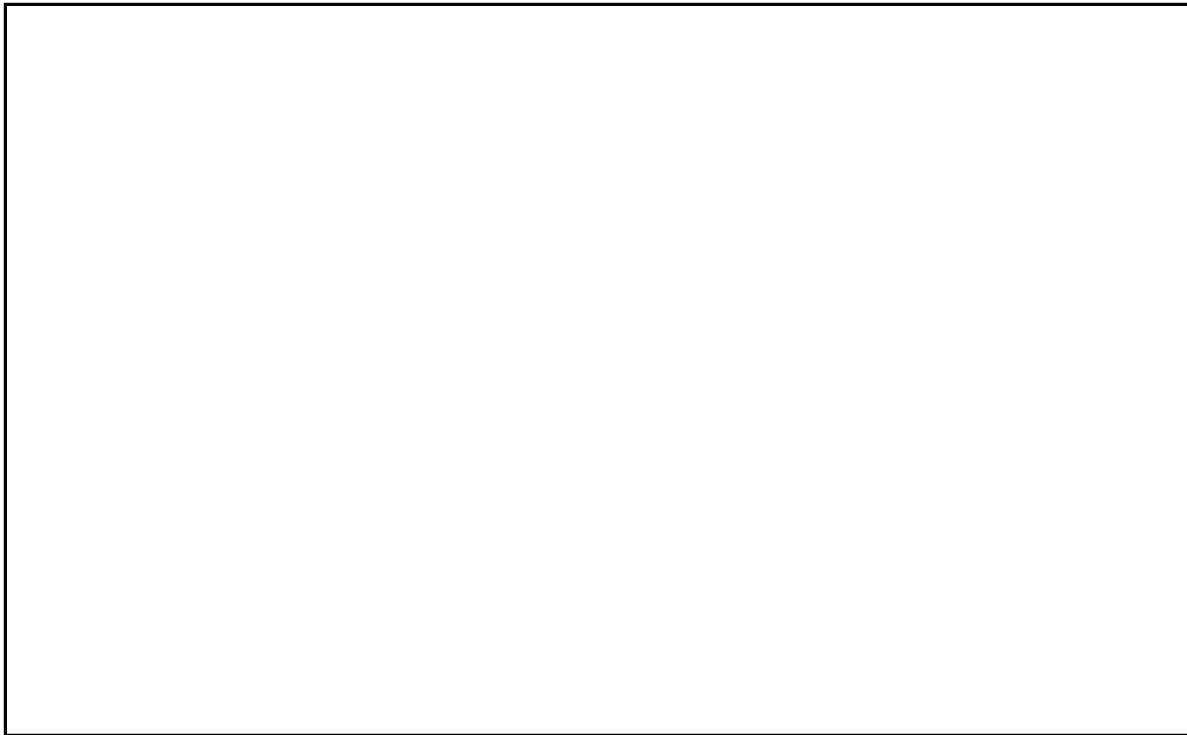
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the recent dismantling of one cruise missile site, which may have been moved elsewhere on the island, there is no evidence of Soviet preparations to remove these personnel from Cuba. Photography [redacted] shows that the other three cruise missile sites are still operational.

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