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MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

Subject: Responding to Floggers in Cuba

Issue

Renewed Soviet shipment of Flogger fighter aircraft to Cuba is a serious act to which we must respond. This memorandum seeks your approval of a series of political, economic, and military measures which take account of the Flogger issue in the context of our broader strategy to counter Cuban interventionism and to meet the global challenge posed by the Soviets and their proxies.

Background

The arrival of eight crates containing Flogger aircraft is the first shipment since twelve MiG-23s and MiG-27s (both of which are designated "Flogger") were delivered to Cuba in 1978. When Secretary Vance raised the issue with Dobrynin at the time of the 1978 deliveries, the Soviets insisted that the Floggers in Cuba could not carry nuclear weapons and had nothing to do with the 1962 Understandings.

We responded that if the planes were not nuclear-capable, and if the quantity were limited, we would not regard them as constituting a threat. We added, both in Washington and Moscow, that an increase in the number of ground attack Mig-23s in Cuba would have a seriously adverse effect on US-Soviet relations.

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Implications of Renewed Flogger Shipments

Military. The second shipment of Floggers in itself will not significantly enhance Cuban military capabilities. Although this model of aircraft can be quickly equipped to deliver nuclear weapons without detection by the US, we have no evidence that there are nuclear weapons in Cuba or that the Soviets intend to deploy nuclear weapons to Cuba. Considered in this light, we do not now face a crisis resembling the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis.

If the renewed shipment of Floggers is viewed as part of a continuing process of Cuba military modernization and expansion, however, the military implications go beyond the immediate capabilities provided by these new aircraft:

- A Cuban Air Force modernized with multi-mission aircraft such as the Flogger could force us to upgrade substantially air defense capabilities in order to defend targets in the Southeastern United States and Central America, including the Panama Canal.

- De facto US acceptance of additional Flogger deployments could open the door to further Soviet qualitative improvements in Cuban military capabilities (e.g., Foxbat aircraft, modern submarines, amphibious forces).

Political. Whether or not it was intended as a direct Soviet challenge, the renewed shipment of Floggers -- after a 40 month hiatus and despite repeated US demarches about the

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arms buildup in Cuba -- almost certainly was a purposeful, pre-meditated act which the Soviets took in full recognition of the risks of a US reaction. Whatever the Soviet motive, moreover, the absence of an effective US response could be regarded by Moscow -- and by certain Latin American governments -- as American acquiescence in continuing Soviet augmentation of Cuban power projection capabilities to threaten our fundamental interests in the region. Such miscalculation about US strength and determination also could increase Soviet willingness to take aggressive actions against US interests elsewhere in the world.

1962 US-Soviet Understanding on Cuba. This refers to a series of US-Soviet diplomatic exchanges -- both oral and written -- which occurred in the wake of the 1962 Cuban missile crisis. No formal agreement was ever concluded.

There are two basic elements. First is a US understanding that the Soviets would withdraw and would not reintroduce "offensive weapon systems." Following that understanding, the Soviets withdrew not only their ballistic missiles, but also the IL-28 nuclear-capable bombers (which had a mission similar to that now performed by Flogger).

Second is a Soviet understanding that the US "had no intention of invading Cuba." However, the two conditions upon which our no-invasion pledge rested -- UN supervision

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of Soviet missile withdrawals and adequate safeguards against their reintroduction -- were never satisfied because of Castro's objections. It can be argued, therefore, that the US is not bound by the no-invasion pledge it made as part of the 1962 Understanding. (Additional background on the 1962 Understanding is attached.)

The Floggers appear to fall into a "gray area" of the 1962 Understanding. On the one hand, the Flogger model can be quickly and covertly converted to carry nuclear weapons (whether or not the specific aircraft delivered to Cuba presently are nuclear configured). On the other hand, the Carter Administration (as the Soviets would be likely to remind us) accepted Soviet assurances that the Floggers in Cuba were not nuclear-capable and were not covered by the 1962 Understanding (although the Carter Administration's 1978 marker on the consequences of additional Flogger deliveries would facilitate a new US demarche on the issue).

In any event, continued Soviet modernization of the Cuban Air Force with dual-capable aircraft such as Flogger undermines the value to the United States of the 1962 Understanding which has been a principal facet of US policy toward Soviet activities in Cuba. The MiG-23 is particularly objectionable because it can be rapidly converted to a nuclear attack mode without being detected by the US.

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In addition, delivery of MiG-23s directly undercuts two previous US positions regarding Soviet aircraft in Cuba. In 1962, Kennedy successfully insisted upon removal of IL-28 bombers on grounds they were dual-capable. In 1978, the US put the Soviets on notice that delivery of further ground-attack MiG-23s to Cuba would adversely affect US-Soviet relations.

US Objectives

We want to respond to renewed Soviet deliveries of Floggers to Cuba in a manner which will contribute to our longer-term efforts to counter Cuban intervention in the region and will support our broader strategy of meeting the challenge posed by the Soviets and their proxies. Our response must be clearly distinguishable from the Carter Administration's 1978 acceptance of unverifiable Soviet assurances on Flogger. It should not, however, provoke a US-Soviet confrontation in the Caribbean which would divert attention from Poland and feed Allied suspicions that we were over-reacting to Castro.

In NSDD-17, you authorized a series of measures to counter the Cuban export of revolution in the hemisphere. The Flogger shipments provide both the need and the opportunity to supplement and accelerate that program. In doing so, we can attempt to:

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- increase Soviet concerns about US intentions, and Soviet willingness to limit further modernization/ expansion of Cuban military capabilities;
- exacerbate Castro's sense of isolation and doubts about the depth of the Soviet security commitment to him; and
- build support for our regional strategy.

Possible Responses

Military and Intelligence. An increased program of intelligence collection and air surveillance (SR-71, U-2, P-3, RC-135 flights) already is underway. Other options include:

- Increasing the readiness of our defense capabilities at Homestead, AFB in southern Florida, including increased ordnance stocks, visits and/or deployment of tacair units;
- Reinforcing Guantanamo, including deployment of the dual-capable Lance (which we believe would be consistent with the Treaty of Tlatelolco);
- Scrambling fighter aircraft whenever Cuban (and possibly Soviet) military aircraft approach US airspace;
- Increasing naval activity around Cuba. A large-scale naval exercise, including two CVBGs, al-

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ready is scheduled for April. Other surface combatants may be able to conduct a smaller exercise earlier;

- Deploying tactical fighter aircraft to the Western Caribbean. The Colombian island of San Andres (midway between Colombia and Nicaragua), Howard AFB in Panama, and airbases in Honduras are possible sites; and
- Repeating a communications exercise simulating US military preparations against Cuba designed to increase Soviet and Cuban concerns about US intentions.
- Accelerating the timetable for beginning Radio Marti broadcasts (including announcement of the composition of the Presidential commission).

Diplomatic. Walt Stoessel already has made a demarche to Dobrynin. Amb. Hartman will be following up in Moscow in the context of a presentation of our concerns about Cuba and Central America.

We also can press the Soviets for a clarification of the 1962 Understanding which would encompass nuclear capable aircraft such as Flogger. If we pursue this course, we would reject any Soviet efforts to raise issues which would restrain our actions against Castro by making clear that our demarches

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did not signal any willingness to reopen the 1962 Understanding for renegotiation or to enter into any negotiation concerning US or Soviet arms transfers.

Finally, we could initiate a series of consultations with countries in the region about the deteriorating security environment and about cooperative measures to improve the prospects for peace and stability in the area.

Security and Economic Assistance. The Caribbean Basin Initiative (CBI) is a comprehensive strategy for countering Cuban intervention by improving economic conditions in the region. A budget supplemental to fund the CBI is now being prepared. We also are planning major security assistance increases for El Salvador and Honduras.

Economic Sanctions. We can further increase the pressure on the Cuban economy by blacklisting ships which call in Cuban ports, curtailing tourism, and other measures to improve the effectiveness of the embargo. We also can decrease Nicaragua's access to trade and credit.

Implementation Strategy

We want to select and move forward with individual responses on a schedule which will steadily increase the pressure on the Soviets and Cubans (short of provoking a crisis which diverts attention from Poland), and will build support

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for our longer-term program to counter Castro. The near-term actions we choose, therefore, should increase our leverage over the Soviets and the Cubans and put us in a better position--diplomatically, militarily, and politically--to take more forceful actions in the event that our concerns are not satisfied.

Timetable. During January, you could use your State of the Union address to describe our concerns about Cuban activities in the context of describing the challenges posed by the Soviets and their proxies around the globe. In that address, you can announce the CBI, the \$300 million supplemental for emergency economic assistance to the region, and steps for accelerating the start of broadcasts by Radio Marti (including the announcement of the members of the Presidential commission). As a separate but related action, we also could notify Congress of your decisions to use your Section 506(a) authority to increase security assistance for El Salvador and Honduras.

During their meeting next week, Secretary Haig can make a demarche to Gromyko about the Floggers in the context of our growing concern about continuing Soviet modernization and expansion of Cuban power projection capabilities. Secretary Haig can press for Soviet clarification of the 1962 Understanding to encompass nuclear capable aircraft such as Flogger,

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and signal that the US may have no alternative but to reconsider its position on the Understanding -- and the no-invasion pledge -- if the Soviets do not satisfy our concern about the erosion of the limits it contains.

The increased pattern of surveillance flights over and around Cuba should be maintained. Preparations for more visible military measures also should be begun, and overt movement of ordnance to Homestead AFB should be considered.

In February, additional military measures should be implemented. These might include temporary deployment of tactical fighter units to Homestead AFB and, if feasible, to Howard AFB in Panama and to San Andres island in the context of a US-Colombian exercise. We also should do the preparatory work necessary to facilitate prompt deployment of US tacair to Honduras, but should not implement deployment unless MiGs are delivered to Nicaragua or other circumstances dictate. If feasible, naval activity around Cuba could be increased and small-scale naval exercises could be staged. Finally, a communications exercise designed to raise Soviet and Cuban anxieties about US actions against Cuba could be conducted.

During the same time period, you could give a major foreign policy speech focusing on the situation in the Caribbean and Central America. Depending on the circumstances, you could use the occasion to announce additional economic

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sanctions against Cuba, defensive military measures (e.g., reinforcement of Guantanamo, orders to challenge Cuban/Soviet military aircraft approaching US airspace), and/or political progress in Central America (e.g., Central American Regional Grouping, security consultations with selected regional governments on cooperative measures to deal with the changing security environment).

The choice of, and schedule for, specific subsequent actions (e.g., accelerated timetable for CVBG exercises, deployment of aircraft to Honduras, further diplomatic exchanges with the Soviets, reconsideration of the 1962 Understanding) would depend on developments over the coming weeks and months. All, however, would be part of our longer-term regional strategy.

Congressional Strategy. Consultations initially should be confined to the leadership and to the chairmen and ranking minority members of appropriate committees. They should outline our objectives and broad approach in general terms, and describe the kinds of near-term measures and NSDD-17 initiatives we are considering. We should be particularly circumspect about discussing the prospect of any diplomatic exchanges with the Soviets regarding the 1962 Understanding. The presentations also will have to be made in such a way as

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to avoid any impression that we were conducting consultations under the War Powers Act.

Public Affairs. We want to increase public awareness of the situation in the region and public support for the measures we will be taking in response. At the same time, we want to avoid raising unrealistic expectations or stimulating a sense of crisis, either of which could force our hand before we were ready and jeopardize our broader objectives.

Our public posture leading up to your State of the Union address therefore should be low-key. We should acknowledge the second shipment of Floggers to Cuba, state that we consider this development to be serious, and say that we have raised our concerns with the Soviets at a high level (making clear these are diplomatic exchanges and not negotiations). We should avoid raising the 1962 Understanding, but should say, if asked, that the Floggers may touch on that undertaking.

Recommendations

That you approve the general approach described above.

Approve _____ Disapprove _____

Additionally, that in the context of this approach you approve:

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- Announcing the economic assistance supplemental and other measures in your State of the Union address.

Approve _____ Disapprove _____

- A stepped up program of air surveillance over and around Cuba.

Approve _____ Disapprove _____

- A demarche by Secretary Haig to Gromyko in Geneva next week.

Approve _____ Disapprove _____

- An accelerated timetable for naval exercises around Cuba and increased readiness for air defense capabilities in the Southeastern US.

Approve _____ Disapprove _____

- Approaching the Colombians and Panamians on deploying US aircraft to bases on their territory, and approaching the Hondurans on preparing for possible deployments to their facilities.

Approve _____ Disapprove _____

- A communications exercise designed to increase Soviet and Cuban concerns.

Approve _____ Disapprove _____

- Naming the members of the Presidential commission in order to move forward with Radio Marti broadcasts.

Approve _____ Disapprove _____

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- The concept of a major foreign policy speech in February describing additional diplomatic, economic, and military measures we are taking in the region.

Approve _____ Disapprove _____

- The Congressional consultation strategy described above.

Approve _____ Disapprove _____

- The initial public affairs strategy described above.

Approve _____ Disapprove _____

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Annex:

Background on the 1962 Understanding

The 1962 Understanding, as embodied in the exchange of letters between Kennedy and Khrushchev, was never formalized because Castro refused to permit verification that offensive weapons would not be reintroduced into Cuba. Kennedy made clear to the Soviets that a formal US non-invasion commitment would, in addition, have to be conditioned on responsible Cuban behavior. When he announced the lifting of the naval quarantine (November 20, 1962), Kennedy stated:

"As for our part, if all offensive weapons are removed from Cuba and kept out of the Hemisphere in the future, under adequate verification and safeguards, and if Cuba is not used for the export of aggressive Communist purposes, there will be peace in the Caribbean."

Indications that the Soviets were building submarine facilities at Cienfuegos led to a subsequent series of diplomatic exchanges in 1970 and 1971 which broadened the 1962 Understanding to include a ban on "servicing in or from Cuba of nuclear submarines and submarines carrying offensive weapons."

In expressing US concern over Soviet naval activities at the Cuban port of Cienfuegos in 1970, Kissinger called attention on the record to Kennedy's November 20, 1962 statement, noting "this, of course, remains the policy of this Government."

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To our knowledge, the Carter Administration did not make a definitive public statement regarding the 1962 Understanding.

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