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September 18, 1970

ON-FILE NSC RELEASE INSTRUCTIONS APPLY

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: Henry A. Kissinger

State Dept.
review completed

SUBJECT: Recent Soviet Naval Activity in Cuba

Analysis of reconnaissance flight photography over Cuba has [redacted] confirmed the construction of a probable submarine deployment base in Cien Fuegos Bay. Specifically:

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-- A Soviet submarine tender is anchored next to four bouys which the Soviets have placed in the Bay.

-- [redacted] submarine nets have been emplaced across the approach to the deep water basin in which the mooring bouys and the tender are located.

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-- A Soviet LST is anchored at a fuel pier and the Soviet tanker is anchored in the northern bay.

-- Two special purpose barges are also located in the area.

-- Special construction on Alcatraz Island, an island in the Bay, appears to have been completed. This includes an administrative area, two single-story barracks, a soccer field, basketball court and probably handball, volleyball or tennis courts. An offshore wharf and swimming area are on the east side of the island and a platform tower has been constructed just south of the administrative area.

The foregoing situation acquires special significance in the light of the conversations I had with Charge Vorontsov on August 4 in the White House Map Room. You will recall that I saw Vorontsov at his request on that occasion. He called me in San Clemente to say he wanted to have an appointment as soon as I got back. When I saw him he was extremely cordial and read ~~to me~~ a communication which he handed to me.

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The text of the note which is at Tab A:

-- Expressed Soviet anxiety over alleged attempts by Cuban revolutionary groups in the United States to resume sabotage and subversive activity against Cuba from the U. S. soil.

-- Complained about provocative articles in the American press and ambivalent statements on the part of the U. S. officials concerning Cuba.

-- Stressed that the Soviets were proceeding on the Cuban question from the understanding with regard to Cuba that existed in the past and confirmed that the Soviets expected us to adhere to this understanding.

Note: The so called understanding to which Vorontsov was apparently referring was arrived at during the Cuban missile crisis. In essence, during the exchanges between the U. S. and the Soviets in 1962 at the time of the Cuban missile crisis we were given assurances that the Soviets would not locate nuclear weapons on Cuban territory in return for assurances from the U. S. government that we would not undertake military action to change the government of Cuba.

On August 7 I stated to Vorontsov that at your request I had been instructed to give him the following reply:

-- The U. S. notes with satisfaction the assurance of the Soviet government that the understandings of 1962 are still in force, adding "We take this to mean that the Soviet Union will not emplace any offensive weapons of any kind or any nuclear weapons on Cuban soil."

-- I stated further that you wish to point out that although we have heard repeated reports of increased Soviet activity in Cuba that you were exercising the utmost restraint

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-- You were maintaining the understandings of 1962 which I was hereby authorized to reaffirm.

-- Specifically the U. S. would not use military force to bring about a change in the governmental structure of Cuba.

-- I then added that it had come to our attention that Soviet

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long range airplanes of the type suitable for nuclear bombing missions were flying with increasing regularity to Cuba. While we believe these planes were on reconnaissance missions we thought nevertheless that this might constitute a basis for approaching the limit of our understanding. It would certainly be noticed if the Soviet Union kept such operations to a minimum. The same applied to Soviet naval activity in the Caribbean.

-- I called Vorontsov's attention to the fact that we had taken protective measures in recent days with respect to a Soviet ship which reportedly was in danger of attack from Cuban exile groups.

-- Vorontsov indicated he appreciated the good spirit in which the observations were made and was certain that the Kremlin would be very happy to receive them.

-- I concluded by telling Vorontsov that the major problem now was to see what concrete progress could be made in the area of negotiations.

[redacted] despite the exchange between Vorontsov and myself the Soviets have moved precipitously to establish an installation in Cien Fuegos Bay which is probably designed to serve as a submarine staging base in the Caribbean. [redacted]

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The increase lately in the United States of activity, hostile towards Cuba could not but attract attention in Moscow. Certain anxiety has been caused, in particular, by attempts to unite various groups and organizations of Cuban counterrevolutionary emigration in the United States and by resuming of sabotage and subversive activity of these organizations against Cuba, directed from American territory among other places. There has been an increase in number of provocative appeals in the American press and of ambiguous statements on the part of certain officials of the United States.

We would like to stress that in the Cuban question we proceed as before from the understanding on this question reached in the past, and we expect that the American side will also strictly adhere to this understanding.