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October 21, 1962

MEMORANDUM OF DISCUSSION WITH THE PRESIDENT ALONE,
OCTOBER 21, 1962. (Approx. 4:30 p. m.)

On my report of my discussion with General Eisenhower at my residence this morning, the following information was given later to the Attorney General. It is not to be given to anyone else.

After briefing by Lundahl, General Eisenhower and I engaged in a long discussion concerning the proper procedure to be followed. Eisenhower's conclusions are as follows:

1. Any military action would be inconclusive and therefore inadvisable unless it employed invasion and occupation of Cuba. Eisenhower gave this opinion on a basis of his experience in war in countless examples of air strikes which though most effective, were never completely conclusive.
2. From a military point of view a surprise attack would be most effective and most desirable if followed in a minimum time by invasion.
3. However, from a broader point of view, he opposed surprise attack because of the indictment, the resulting tensions, and the fact that such action by the United States would license other countries to resort to violent military action without notice.
4. Therefore Eisenhower would accept the handicaps from a military point of view, of warning or notice, and therefore would follow the suggested plan of initiating a blockade, conducting intense surveillance, and announcing the intention of taking military action if the Soviets and the Cubans either maintained the status quo of their missile installations or continued the construction of their missile bases. The military action he envisaged would be air strikes and invasion.

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5. General Eisenhower emphasized he was giving his opinion based solely on intelligence and without the benefit of a study of the war plans or the most recent diplomatic exchanges with Castro, Khrushchev, our allies, etc. It seemed fair to conclude that his views as expressed above represent a flash judgment rather than a considered judgment arrived at with all facets of the problem laid before him.

John A. McCone
Director

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