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JOHN MCCONE

AND THE CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS

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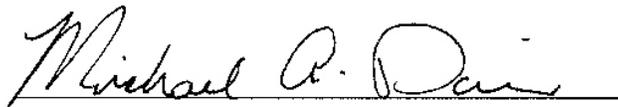
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LIST OF PARTICIPANTS¹

(As of October, 1962)

Acheson, Dean	Former Secretary of State
Ball, George W.	Under Secretary of State
Bundy, McGeorge	Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs
Carter, General Marshall S.	Deputy Director of Central Intelligence
Castro, Fidel	Prime Minister of Cuba
Cline, Ray S.	Deputy Director for Intelligence, CIA
Dillon, C. Douglas	Secretary of the Treasury
Eisenhower, Dwight D.	Former President of the United States, 1953-1961
Elder, Walter	Executive Assistant to the Director of CIA
Fomin, Alexander	Soviet spy, KGB Station Chief
Fulbright, Senator J. William	Chairmen, Senate Foreign Relations Committee
Gilpatric, Roswell L.	Deputy Secretary of Defense
Gromyko, Andrei A.	Soviet Foreign Minister
Hicklenlooper, Senator Bourke	Chairmen, Senate Republican Policy Committee
Hilsman, Roger Jr.	Director, Bureau of Intelligence & Research
Jacquier, General Paul	Director, External Documentation & Counter-Espionage Service
Johnson, U. Alexis	Deputy Undersecretary for Political Affairs
Johnson, Lyndon B.	Vice President of the United States
Keating, Kenneth B.	Republican Senator from New York
Kennedy, John F.	President of the United States
Kennedy, Robert F.	Attorney General
Kent, Sherman	Chairmen, Board of National Estimates, CIA
Khrushchev, Nikita S.	Premier of the Soviet Union
Kirkpatrick, Lyman B.	Executive Director, CIA
Krock, Arthur	Columnist, <i>New York Times</i>
Lansdale, General Edward G.	Assistant for Special Operations to the Secretary of Defense Head of Operation MONGOOSE

¹ Information taken from *Foreign Relations of the United States* database, and McAuliffe's *CIA Documents on the Cuban Missile Crisis*.

Lawrence, David	Editor and columnist, <i>U.S. News & World Report</i>
Lemnitzer, General Lyman	Chairmen, Joint Chiefs of Staff (until October 1, 1962)
Lovett, Robert A.	Former Secretary of Defense
Lundahl, Arthur C.	Director, National Photographic Interpretation Center
Malinovsky, Marshall Rodion	Defense Minister of the Soviet Union
McCloy, John J.	Member of the U.S. delegation to the United Nations
McCone, John A.	Director of Central Intelligence
McNamara, Robert S.	Secretary of Defense
Nitze, Paul	Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs
O'Donnell, Kenneth	Special Assistant to President Kennedy
Parker, David S.	Deputy Director, National Photographic Interpretation Center
Rostow, Walt W.	Counselor & Chairmen of Policy Planning Council, Department of State
Rusk, Dean	Secretary of State
Russell, Senator Richard B.	Chairmen, Senate Armed Services Committee
Scali, John	ABC News Correspondent
Scott, Paul	Columnist
Scoville, Herbert Jr.	Deputy Director of Research, CIA
Sorensen, Theodore "Ted"	Special Counsel to the President
Stevenson, Adlai E.	American Representative to the UN
Taylor, General Maxwell D.	President's Military Representative (until October 1, 1962) Chairmen, Joint Chiefs of Staff
Thompson, Llewellyn E., Jr.	Former Ambassador to the Soviet Union
Tidwell, William A.	Assistant to Deputy Director for Intelligence (Planning), CIA
U Thant	Secretary-General of the United Nations
Vinson, Congressman Carl	Chairmen, House Armed Services Committee
Wheelon, Albert D.	Chairmen, Guided Missile & Astronautics Intelligence Committee

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS²

AEC	Atomic Energy Commission
BNE	Board of National Estimates, CIA
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
COMINT	Communications Intelligence
DCI	Director of Central Intelligence
DDCI	Deputy Director of Central Intelligence
DD/I	Deputy Director for Intelligence
DD/R	Deputy Director of Research
DD/S	Deputy Director of Science and Technology
ELINT	Electronic Intelligence
EXCOMM	Executive Committee of the National Security Council
GMAIC	Guided Missile and Astronautics Intelligence Committee
ICBM	Intercontinental Ballistic Missile
IRBM	Intermediate-Range Ballistic Missile
JAEIC	Joint Atomic Energy Intelligence Committee
JCS	Joint Chiefs of Staff
KGB	Soviet State Security
MRBM	Medium-Range Ballistic Missile
NPIC	National Photographic Intelligence Center
OAS	Organization of American States
SAC	Strategic Air Command
SAM	Surface-to-Air Missile
SNIE	Special National Intelligence Estimate
SSM	Surface-to-Surface Missile
UN	United Nations
USIB	United States Intelligence Board

² Information taken from *Foreign Relations of the United States* database, and McAuliffe's *CIA Documents on the Cuban Missile Crisis*.

INTRODUCTION

In October 1962, the United States and the Soviet Union engaged in the dangerous game of nuclear brinkmanship. For the next two weeks, both countries went to their highest military alert levels, and it seemed likely that both countries would go to war, with the probability of nuclear exchange greater than ever before. In the months preceding the crisis, US intelligence sought to discover the true nature of the Soviet buildup in Cuba, while their Soviet counterpart tried to keep that buildup secret as long as possible. The Director of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), John McCone, was one of the first government officials that discovered the large military buildup underway in Cuba. Because of his own personal beliefs about communism and his experiences with nuclear power, McCone led a personal effort to convince members of the intelligence community and the Kennedy administration that the Soviets might take such a risk and place nuclear weapons in Cuba. During the crisis, McCone was one of the intelligence officials responsible for briefing the Kennedy administration on the Soviet efforts in Cuba. After the crisis subsided, McCone provided Kennedy with confirmation that the Soviets had begun removal of the missiles, officially ending the crisis. John McCone's role in the crisis is one of the key facets to understanding the reasons of the crisis and its outcome.

Because of the declassification of government documents and memoirs from the participants, historians have a wide range of documentation for their studies. Most historians focused on the reasons why the crisis happened, and the role of government officials in his outcome. However, even with the massive data available on the crisis, extensive studies on President John Kennedy, his brother, Attorney General Robert Kennedy, and several other advisors overshadowed McCone's role in the Cuban Missile Crisis. In most historical works, McCone received little attention before or during the crisis. Even in the most detailed works,

historians viewed his role as secondary to the crisis. Because of McCone's efforts, the U.S. intelligence community found the missiles before they were completed, and the government had the most recent intelligence it needed to make informed decisions during the Cuban Missile Crisis.

McCone maintained throughout the summer and fall of 1962 that the Soviet Union might place nuclear weapons into Cuba.¹ Part of the reason for this hypothesis was the correct assumption that the placement of missiles into Cuba gave Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev a way to counter the growing American nuclear superiority, and protect the communist government on Cuba.² McCone made his concerns clear to President Kennedy and other members of the administration before leaving on his honeymoon in late August 1962. During his honeymoon, he called for more reconnaissance flights over Cuba, empowering his deputy, General Marshall Carter, to continue his efforts in Washington. When he returned from his honeymoon, he found gaps in the reconnaissance over western portions of Cuba, and pushed for more reconnaissance flights.³ On the final of those authorized flights, October 14, the reconnaissance flights found the missiles. McCone's "crusade"⁴ during the summer and fall of 1962 was a primary reason for the early discovery of the missiles.

At the start of the crisis, McCone delegated many of his responsibilities to his subordinates, and created a committee composed of several intelligence groups to deliver daily intelligence recommendations based on the daily reconnaissance flights. Continuing his crusade against Castro, McCone joined several prominent members of the Executive Committee

¹ John McCone, Memorandum for the File, "Discussion in Secretary Rusk's Office at 12 o'clock, 21 August 1962," National Security Archives, *Cuban Missile Crisis*, <http://www.nsarchive.chadwyck.com> (accessed June 12, 2010).

² Dino A. Brugioni, *Eyeball to Eyeball: The Inside Story of the Cuban Missile Crisis* (New York: Random House, 1991), 146.

³ Daniel James and John G. Hubbell, *Strike in the West: The Complete Story of the Cuban Missile Crisis* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1963), 9.

⁴ Aleksandr Fursenko and Timothy Naftali, *One Hell of a Gamble: Khrushchev, Castro, and Kennedy 1958-1964* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1997), 198.

(EXCOMM) proposing a surgical strike against missile sites followed by an invasion.⁵ Despite his push for air strikes even during the blockade, McCone had the job of briefing the administration on the intelligence reports, keeping Kennedy and his cabinet informed on the Soviet military buildup in Cuba.⁶ Despite his emotional calls for attacks on Cuba, McCone's efforts to combine the intelligence reports, analysis, and photo interpretation branches during the crisis allowed the president to have a detailed picture on the withdrawal of the missiles, and allowed him to make informed decisions when dealing with the Soviet government.⁷

After Kennedy made the decision to blockade Cuba, McCone utilized the committees he organized during the first week of the crisis to bring detailed intelligence reports on the construction efforts in Cuba and the status of Soviet ships bound for Cuba. He also had the important task of briefing members of the press and Congress on the situation, and provided deputies to answer questions during the UN talks, despite his personal belief that the talks hurt the diplomatic standing of the United States. When the crisis weakened his emotional state, he urged caution during EXCOMM deliberations, and requested that his deputies prepare daily memorandums combining the evaluations of the joint committees and other CIA intelligence reports. After Khrushchev authorized the removal of the missiles in Cuba, Kennedy, under intense pressure from Congress and public, relied on the CIA Director for analysis on whether the missiles had indeed left Cuba. McCone gave the administration the conclusions of the analysts and committees studying the Soviet withdrawal, concluding that the Soviet Union dismantled and shipped the missiles back to the Soviet Union.⁸ Again, McCone had the

⁵ George W. Ball, *Past is another Pattern: Memoirs* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1982), 290.

⁶ Ernest R. May and Philip Zelikow, eds., *The Kennedy Tapes: Inside the White House During the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of the Harvard University Press, 1997), 118.

⁷ Norman Polmar and John D. Gresham, *DEFCON-2: Standing on the Brink of Nuclear War during the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2006), 107.

⁸ "Summary Record of the Tenth Meeting of the Executive Committee of the National Security Council," U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, Vol. XI,

important role of giving Kennedy the evidence he needed that the missiles were in fact leaving Cuba, officially ending the crisis.⁹

After the crisis subsided at the end of 1962, American historians began searching for the reasons why the events took place as they did. In the years immediately following the crisis, historians focused on what happened before and after, asking why the events happened and why the government failed to prevent the crisis. Without classified government documents, historians used their own experiences, evidence available at the time, and previous surprise attacks to prove or disprove that the government could have prevented the crisis, or defend the government's actions before and during the crisis.¹⁰ In the 1970s and 1980s, several historians used emerging primary evidence from personal memoirs, actual intelligence training, and newly declassified documents to shed light on the events, methods, and problems facing an earlier detection of Soviet intentions in Cuba.¹¹ Since the 1990s, both the U.S. and Russia declassified many Cold War documents, creating resurgence in scholarship on the crisis. These archives led many historians to re-evaluate interpretations of events. These new historians focused more on the mindset of the U.S. government during the crisis, Soviet motivations for the introduction of missiles into Cuba, and the intelligence efforts to keep that introduction a secret from the Americans.¹² This new scholarship inspires other historians to focus on evaluating the mindset of

http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/frus.html (accessed June 30, 2010). See also "Memorandum for the Director, "Your Briefings of the NSC Executive Committee, 3 November 1962," in Mary McAuliffe, *CIA Documents on the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Washington, D.C.: Central Intelligence Agency, 1992), 353-355.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Roberta Wohlstetter, "Cuba and Pearl Harbor: Hindsight and Foresight", *Foreign Affairs* XLIII (July 1965): 690-707. See also Theodore "Ted" Sorensen, *Kennedy* (New York: Harpers and Row, 1965), 663-673.

¹¹ Victor Marchetti and John D. Marks, *The CIA and the Cult of Intelligence* (New York: Alfred A. Knoff, 1974), 306-312. See also McGeorge Bundy, *Danger and Survival: Choices about the bomb in the First Fifty Years* (New York: Random House, 1988), 415-420.

¹² Aleksandr Fursenko and Timothy Naftali, *One Hell of a Gamble* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1997), 163-220. See also Roger Hilsman, *Cuban Missile Crisis: A Struggle Over Policy* (Westport: Praegar, 1996), 18-66.

the analysts in the U.S. intelligence community.¹³ Other historians used the massive amount of primary evidence in the post-Cold War era to make dramatic narrative histories of the Crisis.¹⁴ However, even with the number of works produced on the crisis, historians produced no encompassing work on the importance of McCone's participation.

One of the reasons McCone has a secondary role in the majority of histories is the lack of a published memoir. This requires historians of the Cuban Missile Crisis to draw from the interviews, declassified documents, and memoirs from other men close to McCone to discover his role in the crisis. Most historians choose to utilize the large array of sources to discover the reasons why the crisis happened and how select members of the government influenced the outcome. Most of the information on McCone's involvement in EXCOMM comes from other participants such as George Ball, McGeorge Bundy, Robert Kennedy, Arthur Schlesinger Jr., and Theodore "Ted" Sorensen. Ball's memoir examined McCone's management of the intelligence effort before and during the crisis, and showed McCone's repeated requests for more flights even during his honeymoon.¹⁵ Bundy takes a more critical view on McCone, showing how McCone used his position to convince the administration, without evidence, that the Soviets were placing nuclear weapons in Cuba.¹⁶ Robert Kennedy's work is one of the best tales on the crisis, but contained little information on McCone except for a few quotations.¹⁷ Schlesinger and Sorensen emphasized how McCone challenged the viewpoint of Kennedy and the intelligence community,

¹³ Aleksandr Fursenko and Timothy Naftali, *Khrushchev's Cold War* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2006), 425-465. See also Graham T. Allison and Phillip Zelikow, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis* (New York: Addison Wesley Longman, 1999),

¹⁴ Lawrence Freedman, *Kennedy's Wars* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 162-181. See also Michael Dobbs, *One Minute to Midnight: Kennedy, Khrushchev, and Castro on the Brink of Nuclear War* (New York: Alfred K. Knopf, 2008).

¹⁵ George Ball, *The Past is Another Pattern: Memoirs* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1982), 287-305.

¹⁶ Bundy, *Danger and Survival*, 419-436.

¹⁷ Robert Kennedy, *Thirteen Days: A Memoir of the Cuban Missile Crisis* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1969), 86-93.

and how he pushed the administration to re-evaluate their mindset.¹⁸ The best documentation on McCone's involvement came from the *Foreign Relations of the United States, The Kennedy Tapes*, Mary McAuliffe's *CIA Documents on the Cuban Missile Crisis* and Dino Brugioni's *Eyeball to Eyeball: The Inside Story of the Cuban Missile Crisis*. Out of the many primary sources on the Cuban Missile Crisis, McAuliffe's *CIA Documents* provided the best evidence on McCone's importance during the crisis through the declassified CIA memorandums produced by McCone and his deputies.¹⁹ Brugioni's insight as a peripheral member in the crisis provided key insights into McCone's management style and his role outside the EXCOMM meetings.²⁰ The *Foreign Relations of the United States* draws heavily from McAuliffe's work on the meetings, as well as providing information from the messages between other members of EXCOMM.

Most of the information on McCone's involvement came from excerpts from larger works on issues facing the U.S. during the crisis. The most detailed work that studied McCone's involvement in depth was Aleksandr Fursenko and Timothy Naftali's *One Hell of a Gamble*, where McCone received a small section on his "crusade" during the summer and fall of 1962.²¹ Another excellent source on McCone's involvement with the intelligence mission comes from James Nathan's *Anatomy of a Missile Crisis*. In this work, Nathan produced an excellent background on McCone, from his beginnings as a successful executive, his time as Chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission, and his service as head of the CIA.²² Other writers such as Graham Allison, Bruce J. Allyn, Michael Beschloss, Don Bohning, James Blight, Lawrence

¹⁸ Arthur Schlesinger Jr., *A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House* (New York: Black Dog & Leventhal Publishers, Inc., 1965), 678, 797-799. See also Theodore "Ted" Sorensen, *Kennedy* (New York: Harper's and Row, 1965), 667-705.

¹⁹ McAuliffe, *CIA Documents*, 8-354.

²⁰ Brugioni, *Eyeball to Eyeball*, 68-127, 135-169, 311-321, 346-353, 391-392, 423-424, 440-562.

²¹ Fursenko and Naftali, *One Hell of a Gamble*, 163-220.

²² James Nathan, *Anatomy of a Missile Crisis* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2001), 24, 77-78, 145-147.

Freedman, Phillip Nash, Robert Weisbrot, David Welch, and Philip Zelikow together help build a more complete picture of McCone's efforts during the crisis.

Graham Allison and Philip Zelikow focused on the reasons the Soviets placed missiles in Cuba, and noted that McCone was one of the first officials to recognize the Soviet reasons.²³ Beschloss detailed how McCone's background influenced his views about the Soviet Union, and his belief that the Soviets might place nuclear weapons in Cuba.²⁴ Philip Nash's *The Other Missiles of October: Eisenhower, Kennedy, and the JUPITERS* gave an excellent analysis on McCone's arguments supporting the decision to remove the JUPITER missiles from Turkey in their negotiations with the Soviet Union.²⁵ A complement to Nash's work is Bohning's detailed analysis of the covert operations authorized against Castro during the summer of 1962. Bohning provided information on how the intelligence resources used for the earlier operations helped McCone discover the true nature of the Soviet buildup in Cuba.²⁶ Allyn, Blight, and Welch's *Cuba on the Brink* contained a brief section on McCone's clash with members of Kennedy's administration on the missile issue, and credited McCone as the principal figure in the discovery of the missiles.²⁷ Freedman's *Kennedy's Wars* is one of the best recent sources on the crisis that contained many important facts about McCone, from his involvement in covert operations against Castro, his search for the missiles, and his efforts as part of EXCOMM.²⁸

²³ Graham T. Allison and Philip Zelikow, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis* (New York: Addison Wesley Longman, 1999), 80-96.

²⁴ Michael Beschloss, *The Crisis Years: Kennedy and Khrushchev 1960-1963* (New York: Harper/Collins, 1991), 413-430.

²⁵ Philip Nash, *The Other Missiles of October: Eisenhower, Kennedy, and the JUPITERS, 1957-1963* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997).

²⁶ Don Bohning, *The Castro Obsession: US Covert Operations against Cuba, 1959-1965* (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, 2006), 114-128.

²⁷ James Blight, Bruce J. Allyn, and David A. Welch, *Cuba on the Brink: Castro, The Missile Crisis, and the Soviet Collapse* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1993), 124-126.

²⁸ Freedman, *Kennedy's Wars*, 153, 161-167, 170-179, 184-202, 213-236.

While the recent surge in crisis studies produced several detailed works on the event, little work exists on connecting John McCone's influence throughout the period before and after the crisis. Most historians viewed McCone as the primary reason that the United States found the missiles, but used information on his role as part of a larger study on the crisis itself. McCone was a key member of the intelligence effort to find the missiles, and served as one of the core members of EXCOMM when the president needed solutions to the discovery of the missiles in Cuba. When Khrushchev made the decision to remove the missiles from Cuba, McCone took on the responsibility of overseeing the intelligence sources he created during the crisis to determine if indeed the Soviets were removing the missiles from Cuba. Therefore, McCone's involvement in the Cuban Missile Crisis is one of the key facets to understanding how the crisis began and the role the U.S. government had in ending the conflict.

CHAPTER ONE: John McCone and the Intelligence Mission

John McCone was the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency from November 1961 to April 1965. During the summer and fall of 1962, he maintained that the Soviet Union might place nuclear weapons into Cuba. Part of the reason for this hypothesis was his belief that the placement of missiles into Cuba would give Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev a way to counter the growing American nuclear superiority and protect the communist government on Cuba.²⁹ McCone made his concerns clear to President John Kennedy and other members of the administration before leaving on his honeymoon in late August 1962. During his honeymoon, he used his deputy, General Marshall S. Carter, to continue his efforts in Washington. When he returned from his honeymoon a few weeks later, he still found gaps in the reconnaissance over western portions of Cuba and pushed again for more reconnaissance flights.³⁰ After the president finally authorized more flights, the October 14 flight found the missiles. McCone's "crusade"³¹ was a primary reason for the early discovery of these missiles.

McCone was born in January 1902 to a wealthy family in San Francisco. His father, Alexander McCone, ran the family's iron foundries throughout California. In 1922, McCone graduated from the University of California at Berkeley with a degree in engineering, and began working in the steel industry. McCone rose through the ranks of several steel factories, became the Vice President of the Consolidated Steel Corporation, and helped establish the Bechtel-McCone Corporation. As founder and as an engineer, McCone had a role in the design and construction of several oil refineries, factories, and power plants in the Americas and the Middle East. Even during the Great Depression, McCone managed his businesses making large sums of money through construction projects. During World War II, he founded the Seattle-Tacoma

²⁹ Brugioni, *Eyeball to Eyeball*, 146.

³⁰ James and Hubbell, *Strike in the West*, 9.

³¹ Fursenko and Naftali, *One Hell of a Gamble*, 198.

Corporation, and invested \$100,000 into the California Shipbuilding Corporation, making a \$44 million dollar profit by the end of the war. After the war, McCone served in the Truman administration as a Deputy to Secretary of Defense James Forrestal, and as the Under Secretary of the Air Force. During his time within the Truman administration, McCone played an important role in the incorporation of nuclear weapons into air warfare tactics.³²

Along with his business savvy and government experience, McCone had the look of a Republican tycoon, with his “rimless eyeglasses, white hair, roseate complexion, and three-piece suits.”³³ In 1958, McCone’s business experience, government experience, Republican ideals, and his staunch belief in the importance of nuclear technologies led President Dwight Eisenhower to appoint him as the Chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC).³⁴ Yet even in the Republican administration, McCone found himself as an outsider due to his outspoken comments on the importance of nuclear weapons.³⁵ McCone’s comments made him many enemies within the Eisenhower administration, especially on the issue of the nuclear test ban, which he opposed.³⁶ McCone believed that Soviet propaganda encouraged many Americans to support the test ban treaty, and fought against President Eisenhower’s support for the ban as well.³⁷ The main reason McCone maintained his position as Chairman of the AEC was the fear of the political consequences if Eisenhower removed a Republican he had placed in the position.³⁸

While McCone served in the AEC, a revolution broke out in Cuba. The dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista led many Cubans to resent their government and his American supporters.³⁹

³² Nathan, *Anatomy of a Missile Crisis*, 145. See also “John A. McCone and Mrs. Pigott marry in Seattle,” August 30, 1962, *The New York Times*, 20.

³³ Nathan, *Anatomy of a Missile Crisis*, 146.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ Beschloss, *The Crisis Years*, 417.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Edward H. Judge, *A Hard and Bitter Peace* (Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall Press, 1996), 160.

Fidel Castro became the leader of the dissenters, and pushed for the overthrow of the oppressive Batista government. Castro and his movement toppled the Batista government faster than experts in both the United States and the Soviet Union had predicted.⁴⁰ As Castro consolidated his power, he declared Cuba a socialist state, modeled after the teachings of Karl Marx and Vladimir Lenin. This dramatic event provided the Soviet Union with a tremendous opportunity, while for the United States this event proved its worst fears. With a Soviet-backed communist nation in Latin America, the Soviet Union could pressure many Latin American countries into accepting communism, undermining the U.S.' close neighbors. With the close proximity of Cuba to the United States, roughly ninety miles, the Soviet Union could threaten the security of the U.S. by placing weapons in Cuba.⁴¹

In response to recommendations from the intelligence community, the newly elected President John F. Kennedy approved a plan for an invasion of Cuba to remove Castro from office.⁴² On April 12, 1961, the invasion commenced, with surprise air strikes against Cuba air force buildings and installations with Cuban forces landing on the beaches. However, the attacks eliminated only half of the Cuban air force, and Kennedy denied several requests for air support.⁴³ As a result, the invasion failed, with 114 dead and 1,189 captured. This failure severely shifted international opinion away from the United States, and led to an overhaul of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). Kennedy showed his displeasure, when he exclaimed that the "CIA should not undertake operations where weapons larger than hand guns are used."⁴⁴ He

⁴⁰ W.W. Rostow, *The Diffusion of Power: An Essay in Recent History* (New York: MacMillan, 1976), 49-52.

⁴¹ Furesenko and Nafatali, *One Hell of a Gamble*, 200. See also W.W. Rostow, *Diffusion of Power: An Essay in History* (New York: MacMillan, 1976), 49-52. See also Herbert S. Dinerstein, *The Making of a Missile Crisis* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1976), 21.

⁴² Marchetti and Marks, *CIA and the Cult of Intelligence*, 30.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

replaced Allen Dulles with McCone as Director of CIA (DCI) despite McCone's Republican credentials.⁴⁵

There were several reasons Kennedy placed the Republican executive at the head of the CIA.⁴⁶ Both McCone and Robert Kennedy's families attended the same Catholic Church, and they became close during the sickness and death of McCone's first wife, Rosemary Cooper.⁴⁷ Arthur Schlesinger, an aide to Kennedy, believed this friendship had a large role in the selection of McCone, but McCone's reputation as a "rigid cold warrior" was also important.⁴⁸ While McCone was not Kennedy's first choice as DCI, he was impressed with McCone "for his reputation as a man of action,"⁴⁹ and believed that his appointment "would deflect opposition to his [Kennedy's] intention to reduce the CIA's size and autonomy after Bay of Pigs."⁵⁰ Kennedy also appreciated McCone's knowledge of Soviet missile strength, and without deliberation with his cabinet, the president appointed him as Director of the CIA in November 1961.⁵¹

Once he arrived at the CIA headquarters, McCone made sweeping changes to the organization, beginning with the elimination of the intercom system that allowed senior officers to interrupt the Director in his office.⁵² McCone replaced many of Dulles' deputies and most of the division chiefs, and battled with the Pentagon on the use of intelligence planes, satellites, and better logistical support.⁵³ Because of his prior relationship with the AEC, McCone set up a CIA

⁴⁵ Polmar and Gresham, *DEFCON-2*, 46.

⁴⁶ Douglas F. Garthoff, *Directors of Central Intelligence As Leaders of the U.S. Intelligence Community, 1946-2005* (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, 2007), 41.

⁴⁷ Nathan, *Anatomy of a Missile Crisis*, 146. See also "John A. McCone and Mrs. Pigott marry in Seattle," 20.

⁴⁸ Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *Robert Kennedy and His Times* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1978), 459. See also Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House* (New York: Black Dog & Leventhal Publishers Inc., 1965), 429.

⁴⁹ Nathan, *Anatomy of a Missile Crisis*, 146.

⁵⁰ Beschloss, *Crisis Years*, 417.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² Nathan, *Anatomy of a Missile Crisis*, 148.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

briefing for the commission to keep it informed on Soviet nuclear capabilities.⁵⁴ McCone also had the advantage of being new to the intelligence community, giving him a more objective viewpoint on intelligence estimates.⁵⁵ McCone entered the office as the Agency released reports on the Bay of Pigs operation. One report, from Lyman Kirkpatrick, detailed the reasons for the failure of the operation.⁵⁶ Kirkpatrick made the mistake of handing the report directly to McCone instead of using the proper channels, a breach that angered McCone as much as the report itself did.⁵⁷ This incident led “the hawkish republican” to impose stricter guidelines on intelligence reports, and later blamed Kennedy and Dulles for failing to make the invasion work.⁵⁸ McCone earned the reputation of a “hard-driving executive” as DCI, but many believed him to be a much more cautious and realistic manager than previous directors.⁵⁹ McCone had the important role of repairing the reputation and morale of the CIA, by utilizing new measures to protect secrecy and provide quality national intelligence.⁶⁰

While McCone reformed the CIA, tensions mounted between the Soviet Union and the United States. After the Bay of Pigs, Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev and the Soviet government voiced support for the Castro regime and issued several warnings to Washington.⁶¹ Castro, fearful of future invasions, began requesting larger arms shipments from the Soviet Union.⁶² Khrushchev agreed to send larger supplies of small arms, at the same time increasing

⁵⁴ John McCone, interview by Thomas Soapes, July 26, 1976, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abilene, KS, Transcript, 18.

⁵⁵ Schlesinger, Jr. *Robert Kennedy and His Times* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1978), 474.

⁵⁶ Richard M. Bissell Jr., *Reflections of a Cold Warrior: From Yalta to the Bay of Pigs* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 193.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ Schlesinger, Jr., *Robert Kennedy and His Times*, 459. See also Nathan, *Anatomy of a Missile Crisis*, 148.

⁶⁰ Marchetti and Marks, *CIA and the Cult of Intelligence*, 306.

⁶¹ Fursenko and Naftali, *Khrushchev's Cold War*, 425-435.

⁶² Fursenko and Naftali, *Khrushchev's Cold War*, 425-435. See also Dmitri Volkogonov, *Autopsy for an Empire: The Seven Leaders who Built the Soviet Regime* (New York: The Free Press, 1998), 236.

the economic assistance to the fledging communist nation.⁶³ In Khrushchev's mind, the situation in Cuba and the success of the regime coincided with the overall prestige of the Soviet Union in the international independence movement of the early 1960s.⁶⁴ The Soviet assistance at the time involved personal weapons and vehicles, as Khrushchev delayed his decision to introduce weapons systems that were more expensive.⁶⁵

In April 1962, after making the decision to send military aid to Cuba, Khrushchev continued receiving reports of increased American subversion efforts in Cuba.⁶⁶ With the Soviet Union falling farther behind in the construction of nuclear missiles, and the threat to the communist government in Cuba, Khrushchev felt he had two choices: to focus the overstretched Soviet economy on either a costly nuclear buildup or on much-needed domestic improvements.⁶⁷ The Soviet premier analyzed the situation and realized Cuba's importance to the communist movement and the advantages to placing nuclear weapons on the island to secure Castro and balance the strategic situation with the Americans.⁶⁸ It was then that Khrushchev decided to supply Cuba with long-range weapons to accomplish his goals. Khrushchev saw that the best option to solve these dilemmas was to introduce medium and intermediate-range ballistic missiles (MRBM, IRBM), weapons that the Soviet Union had in surplus. This decision solved the two issues without overstressing the Soviet economy.⁶⁹

⁶³ Volkogonov, *Autopsy for an Empire*, 236.

⁶⁴ Fursenko and Naftali, *Khrushchev's Cold War*, 425-435. See also Nikita Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers* (New York: Little Brown & Company, 1970), 509, 514.

⁶⁵ May and Zelikov, eds., *The Kennedy Tapes*, 420-421.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ Nikita S. Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers* (New York: Little Brown & Company, 1970), 514.

⁶⁹ Freedman, *Kennedy's Wars*, 162-163. See also Fursenko and Naftali, *One Hell of a Gamble*, 177-184.

The Soviet Union began making official plans to send offensive weapons to Cuba during May.⁷⁰ The first step in formulating the plan was to sell the idea to Fidel Castro. While many in the Soviet government believed that Castro would not accept a large Soviet base in Cuba, the negotiations concluded with the decision to deploy nuclear weapons in Cuba. Khrushchev assigned Rodion Malinovsky, his Defense Minister, to create an operation to hide the deployment from Western intelligence.⁷¹ On May 24, the Soviet government initiated Operation ANADYR to deploy nuclear missiles in Cuba, and prepared the selected units for deployment. Khrushchev believed that the presence of nuclear missiles in Cuba would counterbalance the American superiority in long-range ballistic missiles and guaranteed the safety of Cuba.⁷²

Operation ANADYR went into effect in June 1962, and preparations for the shipment of materials to Cuba began.⁷³ With the amount of materials and personnel assigned to ANADYR, the operation marked the clear divergence from past Soviet assistance to non-bloc countries.⁷⁴ According to Anatoly Gribkov, one of the staff assigned to planning ANADYR, the sheer size of the operation meant American intelligence would eventually discover the missiles.⁷⁵ The plan called for large shipments that contained several missile divisions of the Soviet Rocket Forces, anti-aircraft weapons, jet fighters and bombers, and radar equipment.⁷⁶ To confuse Western intelligence, Malinovsky and his staff chose the name ANADYR for the operation, in relation to

⁷⁰ Rodion Malinovsky, "Memorandum, To the Chairmen of the Defense Council," May 24, 1962, Cold War International History Project, *Cuban Missile Crisis*, Virtual CWIHP Archive; http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=topics.home&topic_id=1409 (accessed March 17, 2010).

⁷¹ Fursenko and Naftali, *Khrushchev's Cold War*, 425-435.

⁷² Dinerstein, *Making of a Missile Crisis*, 150-191.

⁷³ S.P. Ivanov, "List of Troops and Commanders to take Part in Operation 'Anadyr'," May 24, 1962, CWIHP, *Cuban Missile Crisis*, Virtual CWIHP Archive; http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=topics.home&topic_id=1409 (accessed September 15, 2010).

⁷⁴ Robert Weisbort, *Maximum Danger* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2001), 74-75.

⁷⁵ Alfred Friendly, Jr., ed., *Operation ANADYR: U.S. and Soviet Generals Recount the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Chicago, 1994), 23-29.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

the Anadyr River that flows through eastern Siberia.⁷⁷ Soviet personnel received orders to pack for frigid weather, stating their destination for somewhere in the upper regions of Siberia. En route into the Atlantic, Soviet captains, under the supervision of Committee for State Security (KGB) officers, opened their destination orders, learning that Cuba was their destination.⁷⁸ Soviet personnel offloaded the materials at night in Cuba only, and concealed their transport to the construction sites.⁷⁹ These methods limited the possibilities of premature discovery of the contents of the shipments.⁸⁰

During the same period the Soviet Union enacted ANADYR, the United States had a secret operation underway in Cuba, codenamed MONGOOSE. The Kennedy administration enacted MONGOOSE to remove Castro's government from power. A select group of Washington officials met together to discuss subversion and reconnaissance plans. Officials such as Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, Deputy Undersecretary Alexis Johnson, General Maxwell Taylor, and General Lyman Lemnitzer served in the Special Group. Robert Kennedy also attended many of the MONGOOSE meetings, but had a more limited role. While MONGOOSE focused on efforts to collapse the Castro regime, it had the unexpected role of revealing the beginnings of the Soviet buildup in Cuba, which led to increased reconnaissance of the island.⁸¹

MONGOOSE used several methods for gathering intelligence in Cuba. The first method involved surveillance of shipments destined for Cuba, and the types of weapons or materials they contained. The second came from first-hand accounts from refugees fleeing Cuba for the United

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Freedman, *Kennedy's Wars*, 153, 161. See also Schlesinger, Jr., *Robert Kennedy and His Times*, 479. See also Fursenko and Naftali, *One Hell of a Gamble*, 198.

States. The use of intelligence agents on the ground in Cuba provided the most accurate information on the ground. Photoreconnaissance, the final method, provided the concrete proof needed for Washington to act on the intelligence reports from Cuba.⁸² The surveillance of shipping bound for Cuba carried with it inherent limitations and problems. While satellite and reconnaissance planes provided detailed photographs of the ships bound for Cuba, much of the contents remained in the holds within the ship. For those crates on the decks, the CIA used a specialized system known as “crate-ology”.⁸³ This system utilized a computer and calculated measurements of items in reconnaissance pictures, formulating their size for analysts to compare to their data on Soviet technology. This system had its restrictions, hindering its use as evidence. The system did correctly identify the crates transporting bomber and fighter parts on the decks of the Soviet ships, but neither the crate-ology system nor the standard shipping intelligence methods found the MRBMs within the holds of the ship.⁸⁴

Since the overthrow of the Batista government in 1959, thousands of Cuban refugees fled to the United States and brought reports with them. These refugees brought stories of dramatic events in Cuba, notably reports of missiles in Cuba. These reports contained a numerous false or incorrect accounts. This caused the “cry wolf phenomenon”⁸⁵ to develop inside the intelligence community. The sheer volume of the reports also made this form of intelligence insufficient on its own.⁸⁶ In terms of providing evidence for Soviet actions in Cuba, the system could do little more than describe the situation for the people of Cuba and for the mentality of the common people on American efforts in Cuba.⁸⁷

⁸² Hilsman, *The Cuban Missile Crisis*, 23-29.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Marchetti and Marks, *CIA and the Cult of Intelligence*, 300-312.

⁸⁵ Wohlstetter, “Cuba and Pearl Harbor: Hindsight and Foresight,” 698-700.

⁸⁶ Hilsman, *Cuban Missile Crisis*, 23-29.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

Photo-reconnaissance provided the verification that policy makers in Washington needed to take action in Cuba. The most useful photo-reconnaissance came from the Lockheed U-2 high-altitude reconnaissance plane. The U-2 proved incredibly useful over the skies of Cuba in 1962. The main problem to this method of reconnaissance is its dependence on good to fair weather to bring back accurate pictures. Within hurricane season in the Caribbean, there were a limited number of days each month for complete coverage of Cuba. The Soviet Union also devised a defensive missile system to engage high altitude aircraft, increasing the risk over areas where the system existed. Up to September 1962, Cuba lacked this missile system, but after their installation, the Kennedy administration decided to limit the flights over the island.⁸⁸

MONGOOSE became the primary focus for McCone and the CIA in the summer of 1962. On August 1 during the Special Group meeting, McCone presented the intelligence community's analysis of the strength of Castro's regime and the potential for organized resistance against his government. The report concluded that Castro had consolidated his control over the communist party in Cuba, a fact recognized by the Soviet government. Despite their differences, the intelligence community believed that the Soviet and Cuban relations improved from March to August, with the Soviet Union sending military equipment and advisors to aid the Cuban military. The report stipulated that while the Soviets increased their military shipments to Cuba, they provided only defensive weapons. According to the available data, the Soviets had not made a formal commitment to protect Cuba and had not decided to station Soviet troops on

⁸⁸ "Lockheed U-2A," National Museum of the Air Force Fact Sheets, Database online; <http://www.af.mil/factsheets/factsheet.asp?fsID=129> (accessed March 21, 2010). See also "V-750 SA-2 Guideline," Federation of American Scientists, Weapons of Mass Destruction, Database online; <http://www.fas.org/nuke/guide/russia/airdef/v-75.htm> (accessed September 16, 2010).

the island. This conclusion led the community to believe that the Soviets would not enhance their commitment to Cuba in the near future.⁸⁹

McCone's experiences in the Air Force and the Atomic Energy Commission along with his anti-communist ideals influenced his unique analysis of the early reports of Soviet military equipment in Cuba.⁹⁰ The experiences in the Truman and Eisenhower administrations made him skeptical of Kennedy's "Flexible Response," because he believed that the nuclear balance remained the crucial deterrence to Soviet aggressions. To McCone, the minimum number of nuclear missiles and warheads did not count as deterrence and assumed Khrushchev felt the same way. Because of this mindset, McCone was more receptive to the idea of the Soviet Union using Cuba as a missile base, despite the prevailing mindset within the administration and the rest of the intelligence community that the Soviets would not take such a risk.⁹¹

While the intelligence community had little knowledge of Soviet plans for Cuba, the early reports of increased shipments from the Soviet Union to Cuba alarmed McCone. On July 26, the first ANADYR shipment aboard the *Maria Ulyanova* arrived at the port of Cabanas.⁹² Reports of the first shipments arriving in Cuba did not reach Washington until the first week of August. McCone viewed the increase in Soviet personnel and the sudden increase in shipments as the first steps in a new Soviet commitment to Cuba.⁹³ On August 10, McCone voiced his concerns about Cuba during a meeting with the Special Group. McCone reported on the sudden increase of unidentified military equipment and Soviet personnel, and possibly electronic

⁸⁹ Robert McNamara, "National Intelligence Estimate NIE 85-2-62," August 6, 1962, U.S. Department of State, *FRUS*, Vol. X, http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/frus.html (accessed June 30, 2010).

⁹⁰ Dinerstein, *Making of a Missile Crisis*, 86.

⁹¹ Beschloss, *Crisis Years*, 419. See also Ball, *Past is Another Pattern*, 287. See also Rostow, *The Diffusion of Power*, 259. See also McGeorge Bundy, *Danger and Survival: Choices About the Bomb in the First Fifty Years* (New York: Random House, 1988), 420. See also Elie Abel, *The Missile Crisis* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1966), 14.

⁹² Friendly, *Operation: ANADYR*, 17.

⁹³ John McCone, "Memorandum, 'Soviet MRBMs in Cuba', 31 October 1962," in McAuliffe, *CIA Documents*, 13.

equipment to compromise rocket tests at Cape Canaveral.⁹⁴ During the meeting, McCone “expected that the Soviet Union would supplement economic, technical, and conventional military aid with medium-range ballistic missiles (MRBM).”⁹⁵ He justified his beliefs by comparing the Soviets placing missiles in Cuba with the Jupiter missiles in Turkey.⁹⁶

McCone’s fears of the future deployment of missiles in Cuba continued to grow as more reports arrived in Washington. On August 20, he presented the Special Group with the analysis of the intelligence gathered since the August 10 meeting, based on sixty intelligence reports arriving from Cuba and reconnaissance flights over Soviet vessels and Cuban ports. According to intelligence reports, twenty-one Soviet ships docked in Cuban ports during the month of July, with seventeen ships en route in the Atlantic at the time of the report. Soviet personnel offloaded unknown materials from the docked vessels in large crates under extreme security precautions. McCone believed that these crates possibly contained airplane fuselages or missile components, and some contained components for radar equipment. Along with increased supplies, approximately 4,000 to 6,000 Soviet personnel arrived in Cuba in July and August, but no evidence of organized units. The implications of this operation, according to McCone, were that the crates possibly contained components for surface-to-air missile (SAM) systems, Communications Intelligence (COMINT) equipment, or Electronic Intelligence (ELINT) systems. These systems posed a problem for future reconnaissance flights and operations in the Caribbean.⁹⁷

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ “Editorial Note,” U.S. Department of State, *FRUS*, Vol. X, http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/frus.html (accessed June 30, 2010).

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ John McCone, “Memorandum on Cuba,” August 20, 1962, NSA, *Cuban Missile Crisis Revisited*, DNSA, <http://nsarchive.chadwyck.com> (accessed June 15, 2010).

The Special Group decided to brief other members of the administration on the Cuban situation in light of the most recent intelligence. On August 21, Rusk held a meeting in his office with McCone, McNamara, Johnson, Taylor, Lemnitzer, and Bundy. McCone stated its purpose was to bring other members of the cabinet up to date on the recent intelligence on Cuba. The DCI detailed that at the August 10 meeting, he gave as much information as available, and that since there was a substantial increase in Soviet assistance to Cuba. The extent of the Soviet operation was much more involved than previously believed, with preliminary indications of sophisticated electronic equipment and missile sites. McCone reiterated his concerns that the Soviets might place MRBMs into Cuba, and proposed that the administration have plans in place if it occurred. The group understood the critical nature of the situation and discussed various options in case the Soviet Union decided to risk placing nuclear missiles in Cuba. The group proposed a partial and total blockade, but feared that it might lead to similar actions by the Soviet Union in Berlin, Italy, and Turkey. McCone proposed aggressive actions in intelligence, sabotage, and guerilla warfare, and detailed the disappointing results in Cuba up to that point. The committee at the end of the meeting agreed that the situation was critical enough to brief the president, and McCone arranged a meeting with the president for Wednesday, August 22.⁹⁸

The following day, McCone brought the military buildup in Cuba to President Kennedy's attention. McCone reported, "Intelligence of recent Soviet military assistance to Cuba indicates that an unusually large number of Soviet ships have delivered military cargos to Cuba since late July."⁹⁹ Construction projects underway in Cuba used materials and personnel offloaded from four Soviet ships, with at least 1,500 passengers. An additional 1,500 personnel arrived from late

⁹⁸ McCone, "Discussion in Secretary Rusk's Office at 12 o'clock, 21 August 1962," in McAuliffe, *CIA Documents*, 21-23.

⁹⁹ John McCone, "Current Intelligence Memorandum," August 22, 1962, U.S. Department of State, *FRUS*, Vol. X, http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/frus.html (accessed June 30, 2010).

July to the end of August, bringing the total number of Soviet personnel in Cuba to 5,000. McCone believed the Soviets had begun an unprecedented military aid program to Cuba, a program new and different from previous efforts.¹⁰⁰

Despite the large number of Soviet personnel, the report stipulated there was no direct evidence of organized army units in Cuba. Intelligence sources reported two large military construction sites on the northern coast of Cuba, with regular convoys from the ports to those construction areas. The construction appeared confined to northwest Cuba, and photo-reconnaissance showed limited activity in other regions of the island. McCone concluded that while they had little knowledge of the nature of the construction, it could be the initial phases of a SAM defense system, intelligence-gathering facilities, or possibly missile sites. The general conclusion that the community and McCone agreed on was that the construction proved that the Soviet Union had taken a strong step forward in protecting Cuba. Despite McCone's suspicions on the introduction of missiles into Cuba, the president, Rusk, and McNamara doubted that the Soviets would risk moving nuclear missiles into Cuba.¹⁰¹

While Kennedy did not believe the Soviets would risk placing missiles into Cuba, he joined the Special Group meeting on Thursday, August 23 with McCone, Rusk, McNamara, Gilpatric, Taylor, and Bundy. When the group discussed possible responses for Soviet actions in Cuba, McCone again raised the issue of what the administration should do in case the Soviets placed offensive missiles in Cuba. Kennedy requested more intelligence of Soviet personnel presently in Cuba, and the number and type of weapons delivered to the island. Kennedy anxiously wondered whether photo interpreters could decipher between SAM sites and surface-

¹⁰⁰ McCone, "Current Intelligence Memorandum." See also Beschloss, *Crisis Years*, 413-416.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

to-surface missile (SSM) sites.¹⁰² McCone told the president, “We probably could not differentiate between surface-to-air and 350 mile ground-to-ground offensive missiles.”¹⁰³

Kennedy wanted more analysis on the danger missile installations posed to the United States and Latin America, and whether the administration should release a statement detailing the American position on missiles in Cuba.¹⁰⁴ During the discussion, McCone questioned the value of the JUPITER missiles in Italy and Turkey, and inquired how difficult they were to remove. McNamara spoke up stating that the JUPITERS “were useless, but difficult politically to remove.”¹⁰⁵ The president wanted to know how to move against Soviet missiles in Cuba, using air strikes or an increased subversion effort.¹⁰⁶

In response to McCone’s recommendations, Kennedy ordered a series of studies and reactions on the Soviet buildup in Cuba. National Security Action Memorandum 181 queried the Department of Defense about the possibility of removing the Jupiter missiles in Turkey. It called for a study on the implications of giving the intelligence to members of the Organization of American States (OAS) and asked them to limit their assistance to Cuba. It also called for an analysis of possible actions if they discovered Soviet surface-to-surface missiles in Cuba. Bundy reiterated to the agencies that the president wanted an immediate response.¹⁰⁷

On August 25, McCone made his final recommendations before leaving on his honeymoon. McCone urged his deputy, General Carter,¹⁰⁸ to recommend that the administration

¹⁰² John McCone, “Memorandum of Meeting with the President, 23 August 1962,” in McAuliffe, *CIA Documents*, 27-29.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ McGeorge Bundy, “National Security Action Memorandum No. 181,” August 23, 1962, NSA, *Cuban Missile Crisis*, DNSA; <http://nsarchive.chadwyck.com> (accessed June 15, 2010).

¹⁰⁸ President Kennedy appointed Lieutenant General Marshall Carter as the Deputy Director of the CIA in 1962, where he had an expanded role during McCone’s honeymoon in September 1962 and burial of his son in October 1962.

support more reconnaissance flights to determine the extent of the construction projects underway in Cuba.¹⁰⁹ After giving his last orders to Carter, McCone left Washington on August 26, bound for Seattle, Washington, where he married Theiline Pigott¹¹⁰ on August 29.¹¹¹ On August 30, the couple departed for Cape Ferrat on the French Riviera where they remained for most of the month of September.¹¹² With McCone out of the country, Carter replaced McCone in meetings with the United States Intelligence Board (USIB) and the MONGOOSE Special Group.¹¹³ On August 29, Carter met with the USIB, where he detailed his conversation with McCone and Lemnitzer on using Air Force RF-101¹¹⁴ and Navy RF-8¹¹⁵ reconnaissance aircraft to supplement the U-2 in Cuba.¹¹⁶ The following day, Carter attended the Special Group meeting, where he argued that other types of photography failed to provide enough detail on certain construction sites. Based partly on Carter's arguments, the Special Group agreed to study the issue further and locate specific targets that had the greatest need of low-level flights.¹¹⁷

Carter sent several telegrams to McCone keeping the Director informed of the recent intelligence on Cuba and on the outcome of the meetings with the administration.¹¹⁸ With McCone's support, Carter kept ranking members of the administration from dismissing the idea

¹⁰⁹ Brugioni, *Eyeball to Eyeball*, 127.

¹¹⁰ Theiline Pigott had been married to Paul Pigott, who was President of the Pacific Car and Foundry Company in Seattle. Both McCone's first wife and Pigott's first husband died within the year before they re-married, and the two families had known each other for some time.

¹¹¹ "John A. McCone and Mrs. Pigott Marry in Seattle," 20. See also Lyman Kirkpatrick, "Action Generated by DCI Cables for Nice Concerning Cuba Low-Level Photography and Offensive Weapons," in McAuliffe, *CIA Documents*, 39.

¹¹² Schlesinger, Jr., *Robert Kennedy and His Times*, 506. See also Abel, *The Missile Crisis*, 18-19.

¹¹³ Kirkpatrick, "Action Generated by DCI Cables," in McAuliffe, *CIA Documents*, 39.

¹¹⁴ The McDonnell RF-101 Voodoo was a reconnaissance variant of the U.S. Air Force's F-101 interceptor. The RF-101 served alongside of the Lockheed U-2 and the Vought RF-8 as the primary photo-reconnaissance aircraft in the early 1960s. It was one of the first aircraft considered for low-level flights over Cuba during the Cuban Missile Crisis. It had a top speed of 1,134 mph and a range of 1,520 nautical miles.

¹¹⁵ The Vought RF-8 Crusader was a reconnaissance variant of the U.S. Navy's F-8 air superiority fighter. It was a fast and agile aircraft, making it well suited to low-level reconnaissance flights. With a top speed of 1,225 mph and a range of 1,500 nautical miles without the weapons, it had the capacity to make repeated flights over Cuba.

¹¹⁶ Kirkpatrick, "Action Generated by DCI Cables," in McAuliffe, *CIA Documents*, 39.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ McCone, "Soviet MRBMs in Cuba," in *ibid.*, 13.

that the Soviets might place nuclear weapons into Cuba. Rather than suppress McCone's repeated statements that he believed the Soviets would place missiles in Cuba, Carter reiterated his ideas to important officials in Washington. Carter's importance to McCone's efforts became clear as the agency received more and more reports on construction projects in Cuba.¹¹⁹

The first definitive report of the presence of SAM sites in Cuba came from a U-2 reconnaissance flight on August 29. The U-2 flight that day covered areas around Havana and other parts of Western Cuba, and showed several construction sites consistent with previous SAM sites in the Soviet Union. Preliminary analysis identified the SAMs as the SA-2 Guideline¹²⁰, the same missile system responsible for downing Gary Power's U-2 in 1960. On August 31, Carter reported the readout of the U-2 flight to Bundy and Lemnitzer. After Bundy informed Kennedy of the conversation, Kennedy contacted Carter that afternoon. Kennedy put a freeze on distribution of the report, giving the intelligence community time to prepare an extensive briefing for him.¹²¹

On September 1, Carter spoke with Ray Cline, the Acting Deputy Director of Intelligence (DD/I), authorizing him to prepare a full analysis of the photography. Cline presented his analysis to Carter on September 3, which showed not only the presence of SAM sites, but also guided missile boats, and additional land armaments. The photography discovered eight SAM sites under construction, and another unknown site being prepared. Due to the speed of the construction from overflights earlier in the month, analysts believed the sites could be

¹¹⁹ Lemnitzer, "Memorandum Prepared by Acting Director of Central Intelligence Carter," August 29, 1962, U.S. Department of State, *FRUS*, Vol. X, http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/frus.html (accessed September 1, 2010).

¹²⁰ The SA-2 Guideline is the NATO codename for the Soviet S-75 tactical surface-to-air missile system designed to intercept medium to high altitude aircraft. The missile had a range 24 nautical miles at a speed well in excess of any American aircraft.

¹²¹ William Tidwell, "Instructions Concerning The Handling of Certain Information Concerning Cuba, 1 September 1962," in McAuliffe, *CIA Documents*, 33. See also Marshall Carter, "Lt. Gen. Marshall S. Carter to McCone, Cable, 4 September 1962 [Excerpt]," in McAuliffe, *CIA Documents*, 45. See also Brugioni, *Eyeball to Eyeball*, 127.

operational within two weeks. The U-2 also discovered eight Soviet missile boats, each armed with anti-ship missiles. The following day, Carter informed McCone in a telegram of the construction as well as his belief that the report altered the Cuban situation. Carter assured McCone that he would continue to push the administration for more reconnaissance flights during the scheduled briefing with the president later that day.¹²²

Following the briefing at the White House on September 4, Kennedy released a statement on the presence of SAMs and guided missile boats in Cuba. The statement included much of the information from Cline's report, and the conclusion that reconnaissance showed no offensive missiles. The statement did include a warning to the Soviets, where Kennedy stated that "where it to be otherwise, the gravest issues would arise."¹²³ After the release of the President's statement, the Special Group met to plan the next series of overflights. The summer weather over the Caribbean had limited the amount of useful photography on a majority of the August flights, leaving the Group to choose where to concentrate future reconnaissance flights. Carter approved the recommendations from McCone and the Special Group to direct the next flight to cover "those areas of the island which were not photographed because weather or range did not permit."¹²⁴

After Carter authorized the Deputy Director of Research (DD/R) Herbert Scoville¹²⁵ to create a plan for overflights of Cuba, he sent another telegram to McCone on September 5, where he detailed the Soviet and Cuban response to the president's ultimatum. At the time of the telegram, the Soviet Union had remained silent on the president's speech. The Cuban

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ "Editorial Note," US Department of State, *FRUS*, Vol. X, http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/frus.html (accessed June 30, 2010).

¹²⁴ Kirkpatrick, "Action Generated by DCI Cables," in McAuliffe, *CIA Documents*, 39.

¹²⁵ Herbert Scoville served as the Deputy Director of Research (DD/R) within the CIA, and was a supporter of a nuclear test ban treaty and arms control treaties.

government released its own statement emphasizing their right to self-defense against American-sponsored attacks. Sources in Cuba believed that Castro might use the situation to justify increased Soviet military assistance, to divert intelligence sources from his economic and political problems. The next day, McCone received another cable from Carter which confirmed that Cuba had requested more Soviet assistance, but that the Soviet government “does...not desire [to] develop Cuba as Soviet base [in] this hemisphere.”¹²⁶ While the Soviet government insisted on this sentiment to Rusk, Carter was reporting to McCone the confirmation of nine SAM sites.¹²⁷

McCone viewed the Soviet response with caution, because of his conviction that Khrushchev saw the situation as a means of balancing its strategic situation with the United States. The intelligence analysis from the August 29 mission led the intelligence community to believe that another missile site near Banes, Cuba might be a SSM site. The president once again chose to limit the dissemination of the report outside of the intelligence branches. When McCone received the report of this site, it fueled his suspicions concerning the Soviet intentions in Cuba. McCone reiterated his suspicions to Carter on September 7. After he thanked Carter for keeping him informed, McCone told Carter, “My hunch is we might face [sic] prospect of Soviet short-range surface-to-surface missiles or portable type in Cuba which could possibly command important targets of Southeast United States and possibly Latin American Caribbean areas.” McCone prepared to meet with the French General Paul Jacquier in Paris, while he continued advocating low-level flights. The final point he suggested to Carter was that he speak to Rusk to

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Marshall Carter, “Carter to McCone, Cable, 5 September 1962 [Excerpt],” in *ibid.*, *CIA Documents*, 47.

help develop policies for possible action in Cuba should the Soviets introduce missiles, even to the point of briefing other Latin American nations on current intelligence.¹²⁸

Reports of missiles in Cuba continued to surface in early September. Angel Gonzales, Chief of the Mexican branch of the Student Revolutionary Directorate, released a report to the *New York Times* showing the installation of guided missile sites in the Pinar Del Rio Province.¹²⁹ In Carter's response to McCone's telegram, he quoted a report that the son of a Cuban official had "'Rockets of some kind that shot down U-2' ...and preparations being made for 'complete destruction' of Guantanamo Base in event of attack on Cuba."¹³⁰ The situation in Cuba had reached the attention of the Republicans in Congress as well. According to Carter, Congressional Republicans gave the president the authority to invade Cuba if necessary. Carter planned to take McCone's statements on using RF-101 for reconnaissance and the introduction of missiles to Cuba again during the scheduled meeting with Bundy on Saturday, September 8.¹³¹

Despite McCone's continuing correspondence to Washington, a series of problems with the U-2 complicated the intelligence-gathering mission. The U-2 flight on September 5 failed to produce any usable photography over the Banes site because of cloud cover.¹³² On August 30 and September 8, a series of U-2 incidents led the Kennedy administration to re-evaluate the risks involved in using the aircraft over Cuba. On September 4, the day of Kennedy's ultimatum, one of the U-2s accidentally penetrated Soviet airspace in the Soviet Far East, prompting the Soviets to send fighters to intercept.¹³³ When Kennedy learned of the incursion, he immediately

¹²⁸ Kirkpatrick, "Action Generated by DCI Cables," in McAuliffe, *CIA Documents*, 40. See also McCone, "McCone to Carter, Cable, 7 September 1962," in *Ibid.*, 51-52. See also Beschloss, *Crisis Years*, 419.

¹²⁹ "Anti-Aircraft Guns Open Fire in Cuba," September 6, 1962, *The New York Times*, 15.

¹³⁰ Kirkpatrick, "Action Generated by DCI Cables," in McAuliffe, *CIA Documents*, 40.

¹³¹ Carter, "Carter to McCone, Cable, 7 September 1962 [Excerpt]," in *ibid.*, 53-55.

¹³² Friendly, *Operation: ANADYR*, 99-116. See also Henry M. Pachter, *Collision Course* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Inc., 1963), 7.

¹³³ Kirkpatrick, "Action Generated by DCI Cables," in McAuliffe, *CIA Documents*, 40.

prompted a halt to the missions over Soviet territory.¹³⁴ On September 8, a U-2 was lost over the Chinese mainland, prompting even more restrictions on U-2 flights over Cuba.¹³⁵ After this incident, Kennedy halted the entire program pending a briefing to review procedures.¹³⁶

Carter informed McCone of the decision to halt reconnaissance flights over Cuba. In Carter's September 8 telegram, he provided McCone another intelligence report on the September 5 U-2 flight. The new photographs showed three more SAM sites, located in the Las Villa Province in Central Cuba. In addition to the sites found on August 29, the total number rose to thirteen with the current report. Carter believed that 25 sites provided Cuba with a complete missile defense against approaching aircraft. Reconnaissance also showed one advanced Soviet MiG-21 fighter¹³⁷, and possibly the parts to assemble nineteen more. Rusk asked Carter to convey his thanks for suggesting the creation of contingency plans with Latin American allies, and promised to take it under advisement. At the end of the telegram, Carter informed McCone of the decision to halt further U-2 flights pending an investigation.¹³⁸

On September 10, Carter sent another message to McCone, updating him on the search for the missing U-2. Despite a detailed search, intelligence had yet to find any sign of the U-2 and had no information on the fate of the pilot. There was no evidence of any mechanical malfunction, leaving either pilot error or attack as the primary possibilities. Carter pointed out the interesting fact that the Soviet Union failed to take advantage of the incident as in previous incidents, but the community had no other information on the Soviet reaction. Carter assured McCone that the Board of National Estimates (BNE) received his previous comments on Cuba,

¹³⁴ Pachter, *Collision Course*, 7. See also Friendly, *Operation: ANADYR*, 99-116.

¹³⁵ Carter, "Carter to McCone, Cable, 8 September 1962 [Excerpt]," in McAuliffe, *CIA Documents*, 55-56.

¹³⁶ Fursenko and Naftali, *One Hell of a Gamble*, 210-220.

¹³⁷ The Mikoyan-Gurevich MiG-21 was the advanced interceptor designed to attack American fighter/bombers. The fighter had a range over 500 nautical miles, and could reach speeds close to Mach 2. The presence of this fighter in Cuba added to the risk of low-level reconnaissance flights.

¹³⁸ Carter, "Carter to McCone, Cable, 8 September 1962," in McAuliffe, *CIA Documents*, 56-57.

and promised to add his ideas to their analysis. In response to McCone's suggestion on using PROJECT KELLY¹³⁹ over Cuba, Carter argued that the program might be usable in April of the following year.¹⁴⁰

McCone was apprehensive of the president's decision to halt U-2 flights over Cuba. While he believed that the U-2 incident was distressing, in his mind, the U-2 remained the best intelligence-gathering method available to the intelligence community. In his September 10 response to Carter, McCone believed that the danger of an incident always existed with the U-2, stating, "I pointed out to Special Group Pacif [sic] and higher authority that an incident was inevitable." Once again, McCone took the opportunity to make his views on missiles in Cuba known to Carter. It was in this telegram that McCone gave his reasoning for the placement of missiles in Cuba. McCone wrote, "[it is] Difficult for me to rationalize extensive costly defenses being established in Cuba as such extremely costly measures to accomplish security and secrecy not consistent with other policies...It appears to me quite possible measures now being taken are for the purpose of insuring secrecy of some offensive capability such as MRBMs to be installed by Soviets after present phase completed and country secured from overflights." McCone concluded his message with a remark on how the beautiful weather helped make that determination and urged Carter to have the BNE study the possibility in detail.¹⁴¹

Later that afternoon, Kirkpatrick attended the White House meeting on Cuban overflights and sent notes from the meeting in the daily cable to McCone. According to Kirkpatrick, Bundy called the meeting to share with the CIA the administration's concern over the Cuban overflight

¹³⁹ PROJECT KELLEY was the CIA designation for the A-12 Strategic Reconnaissance aircraft, the predecessor to the SR-71 'Blackbird'. The A-12 was designed to penetrate enemy airspace at speeds in excess of Mach 2.5 to reduce the risk to the aircraft.

¹⁴⁰ Kirkpatrick, "Action Generated by DCI Cables," in McAuliffe, *CIA Documents*, 40. See also Carter, "Carter to McCone, Cable, 10 September 1962 [Excerpt]," in *ibid.*, 57-59.

¹⁴¹ McCone, "McCone to Carter and Elder, 10 September 1962," in *ibid.*, 59.

program. Bundy informed the group that Rusk questioned Carter, stating, “How do you expect me to negotiate on Berlin with all these incidents.” Rusk then analyzed the proposal for two more overflights to over the areas that the August 29 and September 5 flights missed. The risk of a third incident convinced Rusk to allow for peripheral flights around the island and over international waters. Rusk authorized four flights, two peripheral and two over international waters, to limit the risk to the safety of the pilots. At the end of the meeting, Kirkpatrick noted that Bundy and Rusk agreed that the overflights would continue if no further incidents occurred.¹⁴²

While the Special Group considered the future of U-2 flights over Cuba, Carter sent McCone’s recommendations to the DD/I and requested that the BNE create the necessary analysis. Carter sent another memorandum to McNamara asking for further reconnaissance over the Banes site. The U-2 could not effectively photograph this site, meaning that other reconnaissance aircraft might be useful. On September 11, Washington also received the first official Soviet response to the President’s September ultimatums and the U-2 incidents, which Carter sent to McCone along with the BNE’s response. According to the Soviets, any American attack on Cuba would unleash a global war. The Soviet government believed the United States had plans to invade Cuba, and took steps to boost its defenses.¹⁴³ On the subject of the presence of missiles in Cuba, the BNE viewed the placement of SAMs in Cuba as “reasonably explained by other than desire to hide later buildup.” The report argued that the Soviets might place missiles in Cuba, but that the risk involved was not equal to the dangers of American

¹⁴² Kirkpatrick, “Memorandum, White House Meeting on 10 September 1962 on Cuban Overflights,” in *ibid.*, 61-62. See also “Memorandum Prepared in the Central Intelligence Agency for the Executive Director,” September 10, 1962, U.S. Department of State, *FRUS*, Vol. X, http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/frus.html (accessed June 30, 2010).

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

intervention. The BNE promised to include their preliminary report in the Special National Intelligence Estimate.¹⁴⁴

While McCone and the Board of National Estimates argued over Soviet intentions, the intelligence community continued analyzing the photography. On September 13, intelligence reports provided more information on the suspicious missile site near Banes. It stated that the facility appeared to be a cruise missile battery, possibly the SS-N-1, the SS-N-2, or the SS-C-1.¹⁴⁵ The report showed the location of similar missile sites near Bay of Pigs and other beaches, which led to the analysis that their placement coincided with probable invasion locations from American troops.¹⁴⁶

When McCone learned of the SSM site at Banes, he immediately repeated his statement that the present construction projects were the prelude to the introduction of nuclear missiles in Cuba. Despite the Agency assessment that the Soviets sent only defensive weapons to Cuba, McCone once again wrote, “Also I continue to be concerned that the establishment of defensive equipment and installations is merely a prelude to the location of an offensive weapons capability.”¹⁴⁷ Carter responded to McCone’s telegram immediately, informing him that intelligence reports showed that Soviets had twenty-nine ships bound for Cuba. Refugee reports showed the movement of SAM equipment, and other sources showed the arrival of more torpedo

¹⁴⁴ Kirkpatrick, “Action Generated by DCI Cables,” in McAuliffe, *CIA Documents*, 41. See also Carter, “Carter to McCone, Cable, 11 September 1962,” in *ibid.*, 63-64.

¹⁴⁵ Office of Current Intelligence, CIA, “Analysis of Suspect Missile Site at Banes, Cuba,” September 13, 1962, NSA, *Cuban Missile Crisis Revisited*, DNSA; <http://www.nsarchive.chadwyck.com> (accessed September 7, 2010). The SS-N-1 Scubber was the NATO codename for the Soviet P-1 Strela cruise missile. It entered service aboard Soviet destroyers in 1958, and in shore installations. It had a range of 22 nautical miles and could carry either nuclear or conventional warheads. The SS-N-2 Styx was the NATO codename for the Soviet P-15 Termit cruise missile. It entered service in 1960, and had the ability to engage ships at 22 nautical miles, similar to the P-1 Strela (SS-N-1 Scubber). The SS-C-1 was the NATO codename for the P-5S coastal defense missile similar to the P-1 Strela and the P-15 Termit, and had an extremely long range of 250 nautical miles.

¹⁴⁶ Office of Current Intelligence, CIA, “Analysis of Suspect Missile Site at Banes, Cuba,” September 13, 1962, NSA, *Cuban Missile Crisis Revisited*, DNSA; <http://www.nsarchive.chadwyck.com> (accessed September 7, 2010).

¹⁴⁷ McCone, “McCone to Carter, Cable, 13 September 1962,” in McAuliffe, *CIA Documents*, 67-69.

boats and anti-submarine ships. Carter made no comment on McCone's statement about the missiles, but Kirkpatrick confirmed that Carter took the comments to the BNE and kept the Special Group informed on McCone's fears.¹⁴⁸

McCone made repeated requests to the BNE to study the prospects for the Soviet Union placing missiles in Cuba. When McCone received word of the Soviet comments comparing their aid to Cuba with American aid to nations surrounding the Soviet Union, he again urged the Board to study the feasibility of the Soviets secretly sending offensive weapons to Cuba. He made the comment "we must carefully study the prospect of MRBM's in Cuba" to show how strongly he believed that the Soviets would introduce those weapons.¹⁴⁹ McCone believed that the Soviets would use Cuba similar to how the United States used Britain, Italy, and Turkey. He argued that the CIA and rest of the intelligence community had the responsibility to keep the government informed of the dangers if the Soviets chose to take the risk. From the press report McCone received, the director believed that the estimate needed to include a usable distinction between the terms "offensive" and "defensive" weapons. If nuclear weapons did exist in Cuba, McCone suggested a study on how long the Soviets needed to install the missiles and asked the board to consider regions of the island where the SAM defenses would hinder overflights. McCone concluded that the estimate should include all these elements and include alternative plans of action should they find missiles in Cuba.¹⁵⁰

The rift between the analysts and McCone became apparent with the release of the BNE's report on Cuba. While McCone's suspicions of Soviet intentions in Cuba continued to grow as he received more intelligence reports, a majority of the intelligence community believed that the Soviets did not intend to take such a risk in light of the expected American response. On

¹⁴⁸ McCone, "McCone to Carter, Cable, 13 September 1962," in *ibid.*, 67-69.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁰ McCone, "McCone to Carter, Cable, 16 September 1962," in *ibid.*, 77-78.

September 16, Carter sent a copy of McCone's cables to Cline. After Cline reviewed the cable, he stated, "An introduction of MRBMs was unlikely because of the risk of U.S. intervention."¹⁵¹ On September 19, the BNE released their assessment of the military buildup in Cuba with the Special National Security Estimate 85-3-62. This estimate stated that the purpose of the Soviet military buildup in Cuba was to strengthen Castro's regime by creating an advanced air defense and coastal defense network to thwart any invasion. The board believed there was a great temptation for the Soviet Union to introduce nuclear weapons into Cuba, and other offensive weapons such as IL-28 bombers, submarines, and short-range SSMs. The report stated, "The Soviet Union could derive considerable military advantage from the establishment of Soviet medium and intermediate range ballistic missiles in Cuba."¹⁵² It stressed, however, that it would be incompatible with Soviet practice to date and with Soviet policy.¹⁵³

When McCone received the Special Estimate from Carter on September 19, he viewed it with skepticism, but acknowledged that he had no hard evidence of missiles. McCone responded to the estimate on September 20, in which he made several recommendations to Carter. He believed that the Board should re-evaluate their conclusion on the risk of the Soviet Union placing nuclear missiles in Cuba. McCone believed that, "An offensive Soviet Cuban base will provide Soviets with most important and effective trading position in connection with all other critical areas and hence might take an unexpected risk in order to establish such a position."¹⁵⁴ At the end of his cable, McCone wanted to have the most recent Cuban intelligence documents with him to discuss with the Bundy during a scheduled meeting in Paris. Later that day, McCone received word from Kirkpatrick that Carter passed his requests to Cline, and the Intelligence

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² "Conclusions of Intelligence Estimate on Soviet missile base in Cuba," September 19, 1962, NSA, *Cuban Missile Crisis Revisited*, DNSA; <http://nsarchive.chadwyck.com> (accessed June 15, 2010).

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

Director made no changes to the estimate, because the intelligence community endorsed and released it.¹⁵⁵

As McCone traveled back from Europe, the intelligence community received a series of reports on the presence of missiles on the island. On September 20, the CIA received a report dated September 9 that Claudio Morinas, Castro's personal pilot, made the statement "there will be many mobile ramps for intermediate-range rockets."¹⁵⁶ Another agent sent a report on September 12, which the CIA received on September 27. The agent reported a large convoy of vehicles headed for the San Cristobal area of Cuba, with trailers seventy feet in length, believed to be carrying large missiles.¹⁵⁷ A similar report arrived in Washington on October 1, detailing another large convoy in the Pinar Del Rio with eight large trailers, carrying "huge tubes" larger than the flatbed.¹⁵⁸ These detailed reports from reliable sources led some analysts in the CIA to study the possibility of the trailers transporting SS-4 "Sandal" missiles.¹⁵⁹

McCone viewed these reports as confirmation that the U.S. needed to increase surveillance of the island. During the Special Group meeting on October 4, McCone urged the administration to authorize a series of U-2 reconnaissance flights. Robert Kennedy began the meeting reiterating President Kennedy's concern with the lack of success in the subversion of Castro's regime. McCone told Robert Kennedy that one of reasons for the problems in MONGOOSE was the hesitation of the government to risk American assets. After a brief argument, the group agreed to re-consider the limitations placed on the U-2. McCone encouraged

¹⁵⁵ "Special National Security Estimate 85-3-62, 'The Military Buildup in Cuba,' 19 September 1962 [Excerpt]," in McAuliffe, *CIA Documents*, 94-95.

¹⁵⁶ "CIA Information Report, 18 September 1962," in *ibid.*, 103-105.

¹⁵⁷ "CIA Information Report, 20 September 1962," in *ibid.*, 107-108.

¹⁵⁸ "CIA Information Report, 27 September 1962," in *ibid.*, 109.

¹⁵⁹ Richard Lehman, "Excerpt from Memorandum for Director of Central Intelligence, 'CIA Handling of the Soviet Buildup in Cuba,' 14 November 1962," in *ibid.*, 101. The SS-4 Sandal was the NATO codename for the R-12 Soviet MRBM. The missile had a range of 1,080 nautical miles, capable of hitting targets as far north as Maryland if placed in Cuba.

the group to authorize flight plans to include complete coverage of the island along with the approved peripheral flights. Because of the limited number of flights and the peripheral coverage, McCone noticed a large gap over Western Cuba overlooked since September 5. The group agreed with McCone, and proposed that the members prepare a plan of action and submit their proposal during their next scheduled meeting. They decided that the new overflights were justified by stating the flights were, “in the interest of our own security and the security of the Western hemisphere.”¹⁶⁰

McCone understood the need for more U-2 flights, and made those concerns known to members of the administration. On October 5, McCone reiterated his concerns in a meeting with Bundy. After discussing the conclusions of the Special Group, McCone stated, “the decisions to restrict U-2 flights had placed the United States Intelligence Community in a position where it could not report with assurance the development of offensive capabilities in Cuba.”¹⁶¹ While Bundy did not believe the Soviets would take that risk, McCone argued “it [was] most probable that Soviet-Castro operations would end up with an established offensive capability in Cuba including MRBMs.”¹⁶² McCone believed that Bundy shared the views of most of the intelligence community, but he could not agree with their recommendations. He wanted the president to authorize complete coverage of the island with the U-2. The meeting ended with the agreement to review the situation in more detail over the weekend.¹⁶³

While the administration did not believe the Soviets would place missiles into Cuba, President Kennedy made a public statement that the U.S. would conduct overhead reconnaissance of the island. Kennedy also met with the Special Group when they made their

¹⁶⁰ McCone, “Memorandum of MONGOOSE Meeting Held on Thursday, October 4, 1962,” in *ibid.*, 111-112.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶² *Ibid.*

¹⁶³ McCone, “Memorandum of Discussion with Mr. McGeorge Bundy, Friday, October 5, 1962, 5:15 PM,” in *ibid.*, 115-117.

decision on October 9 to launch a series of U-2 flights covering the western portions of Cuba. The Group agreed on two purposes for the next flight: to test the readiness of the SAM defense system and cover the areas reported from the intelligence agents in Cuba in late September. From October 10 to October 13, the weather halted the U-2 flight, but on October 14, the U-2 covered areas around Havana, and was the first flight to discover the presence of nuclear missiles in Cuba, the missiles that McCone believed the Soviets might place in Cuba.¹⁶⁴

McCone came to the Central Intelligence Agency as a successful manager with strict anti-communist ideals and great insight into intelligence. When the intelligence community received the first reports of the Soviet military buildup in Cuba, McCone correctly argued that the present buildup was the first phase in the establishment of a nuclear missile base on the island. He justified this belief through his understanding of the strategic situation between the Soviet Union and the United States. He believed that while the risk was great to the operation, it also provided the Soviet Union a way to balance many of their objectives without risking reprisal from either Cuba or the United States. While McCone took a lengthy honeymoon during the crucial month before the crisis began, he pushed Deputy Director Carter to continue his efforts to keep the administration from being surprised if intelligence confirmed his beliefs. McCone continued to encourage Washington officials and the BNE to consider that the Soviets saw the great advantage to having nuclear missiles in Cuba, sending several cables to Carter and other CIA officials. While the BNE believed that the Soviets would not risk placing offensive weapons in Cuba, several reports from intelligence sources led several analysts to agree with McCone that they needed more reconnaissance flights. After arriving back from his honeymoon, McCone pushed the Special Group and the administration to authorize a new series of flights to cover the

¹⁶⁴ “Editorial Note,” U.S. Department of State, *FRUS*, Vol. XI, http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/frus.html (accessed September 8, 2010). See also “Memorandum, U-2 Overflights of Cuba, 29 August Through 14 October 1962,” in McAuliffe, *CIA Documents*, 136.

island. When the U-2 covered the island on October 14, it found the MRBM missile sites under construction. The photographs from the U-2 confirmed McCone's fears and launched the Cuban Missile Crisis. Had it not been for McCone's continued efforts, the missiles would have been operational before their discovery by the United States.

CHAPTER TWO: John McCone and the EXCOMM

After learning of the October 14 U-2 flights, McCone pushed the Kennedy administration to remove Castro and his communist government from power. Continuing his crusade against Castro, McCone joined several prominent members of the Executive Committee of the National Security Council (EXCOMM) in proposing a surgical strike against missile sites followed by an invasion.¹⁶⁵ McCone had the job of briefing the administration on daily intelligence reports and construction efforts in Cuba.¹⁶⁶ His greatest contribution to the intelligence effort was his coordination and integration of all the major civilian intelligence agencies during the Crisis to reduce the time required for analysis. He also had the job of briefing former President Eisenhower on the situation in Cuba, and pushed for briefings with the allies. Despite his emotional calls against negotiations with the Soviet Union, McCone's efforts to coordinate and integrate intelligence reports allowed the president to have a detailed picture on the status of the Soviet missiles, allowing Kennedy to make informed decisions when dealing with the Kremlin.¹⁶⁷

On October 14, a U-2 reconnaissance flight found several Soviet MRBMs construction sites in Western Cuba. The U-2, piloted by Air Force Major Richard Heyser, collected 928 images during its brief flight over Cuba.¹⁶⁸ When the film arrived at the National Photographic Intelligence Center (NPIC), analysts found three MRBM sites near San Cristobal, with eight MRBM transporters located adjacent to those sites.¹⁶⁹ On October 15, intelligence analysts

¹⁶⁵ Ball, *Past is Another Pattern*, 290.

¹⁶⁶ May and Zelikov, eds., *The Kennedy Tapes*, 118.

¹⁶⁷ Polmar and Gresham, *DEFCON-2*, 107.

¹⁶⁸ "Editorial Note," U.S. Department of State, *FRUS*, Vol. XI, http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/frus.html (accessed June 30, 2010).

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

reported that the missiles were either SS-3 “Shyster”¹⁷⁰ or SS-4 “Sandal” ballistic missiles, with a maximum range of 1,100 nautical miles. The report stipulated that there was no evidence precisely when the missiles arrived in Cuba, but their judgment was that they arrived sometime in September.¹⁷¹ The decision to place missiles in Cuba showed the determination of the Soviets to deter any American intervention against Castro’s regime, by increasing the risk and costs of such a conflict. The report concluded that the Soviet leadership must have known that it would complicate the relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union, and that the presence of missiles in Cuba threatened the large military bases and urban areas in the southeastern United States.¹⁷² The Strategic Air Command (SAC) had eighteen bomber and tanker bases within that range, and an Inter-continental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) silo. The Navy had three major bases and other smaller facilities from Panama to Puerto Rico that the missiles had the range to reach. The biggest target that the missiles could reach was Washington D.C.¹⁷³

When the U-2 discovered the missiles, McCone was on the West Coast preparing to bury his stepson.¹⁷⁴ Because McCone needed to escort the body from California back to Seattle for burial, Carter replaced him in meetings with the National Security Council, while Cline replaced him at the Commonwealth-US Intelligence Methods Conference.¹⁷⁵ When Cline returned from the conference, he met with a delegation of intelligence analysts who informed him of the presence of missiles in Cuba. Because McCone was on the West Coast and Carter was at an informal gathering in McLean, Virginia, Cline spent much of the evening studying the

¹⁷⁰ The SS-3 “Shyster” is the NATO Codename for the Soviet R-5 missile, the first missile to achieve nuclear capability. It was a medium range ballistic missile with a range 650 nautical miles, but was considered obsolete by 1962.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Brugioni, *Eyeball to Eyeball*, 189.

¹⁷⁵ Cline, “Memorandum for the Record,” in McAuliffe, *CIA Documents*, 148-151. See also Brugioni, *Eyeball to Eyeball*, 189.

intelligence reports before attending the gathering. When Carter received word from Cline about the intelligence report on Cuba, Carter authorized its dissemination to members of the United States Intelligence Board (USIB) and to McCone. McCone received news of the U-2 report from Walter Elder, his deputy in Washington, where he reported to the DCI, “That which you alone said would happen did.”¹⁷⁶

On Tuesday, October 16, President Kennedy called a meeting in the Oval Office.¹⁷⁷ Carter took McCone’s place on the committee during the first meeting, where he briefed the President and members of the cabinet on the intelligence from the October 14 flight.¹⁷⁸ McNamara, Rusk, Ball, Gilpatric, Taylor, Vice President Johnson, Dillon, Robert Kennedy, Bundy, Sorensen, and Kenneth O’Donnell, President Kennedy’s Special Assistant, all attended the briefing. Rusk made the comment that McCone saw the possibility of missiles back in August, and related the conversation with McCone about the Soviets using Cuba like the United States used Turkey.¹⁷⁹ Rusk proposed several courses of action for the group to consider. He first proposed a series of air strikes, followed by an invasion of the island.¹⁸⁰ He also proposed a warning to Castro and steps to isolate Cuba from the rest of the Free World.¹⁸¹ McNamara argued that if they attacked Cuba, they must attack before the missiles became operational, while Taylor confirmed that a surprise attack was essential to that attack. Kennedy authorized several

¹⁷⁶ Brugioni, *Eyeball to Eyeball*, 206.

¹⁷⁷ Marshall S. Carter, “Memorandum for the Record,” 17 October 1962, in McAuliffe, *CIA Documents*, 145-147. See also “Transcript of Meeting at the White House,” 16 October 1962, *FRUS*, Vol. XI, http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/frus.html (accessed June 30, 2010).

¹⁷⁸ Fursenko and Naftali, *One Hell of a Gamble*, 420.

¹⁷⁹ Marshall S. Carter, “Memorandum for the Record,” 17 October 1962, in McAuliffe, *CIA Documents*, 145-147. See also “Transcript of Meeting at the White House,” 16 October 1962, *FRUS*, Vol. XI, http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/frus.html (accessed June 30, 2010).

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*

U-2 flights to cover the island, and asked for a report linking the Cuban situation with other Latin American nations and European allies.¹⁸²

After the meeting, President Kennedy decided to create a special committee to devise a plan of action regarding the presence of Soviet missiles in Cuba. The members of the committee would meet every day to determine the course of action, taking the name EXCOMM, an abbreviation of the Executive Committee of the National Security Council.¹⁸³ When McCone arrived back in Washington, he immediately became an active member of EXCOMM, along with Former Secretary of State Dean Acheson, George Ball, Bundy, Dillon, Gilpatric, Robert Kennedy, McNamara, Rusk, Taylor, Ted Sorensen, the Special Counsel to the President, and Llewellyn Thompson, the Ambassador to the Soviet Union.¹⁸⁴ On the evening of October 16, McCone met with Albert Wheelon, the Deputy Director of Science & Technology (DD/S)¹⁸⁵ and Chairmen of the Guided Missile & Astronautics Intelligence Committee (GMAIC) and Arthur Lundahl, the Director of the NPIC, to create procedures for handling and reporting information concerning Cuba.¹⁸⁶ He also approved the transfer of information to the NPIC in order to reduce the time it took to create intelligence reports, and established a joint committee of the major intelligence boards to release several estimates on the reports.¹⁸⁷ At 10:30 PM, McCone concluded his day with a briefing with the president for further study of the photographs.

McCone's managerial skills once again became apparent when he decided to delegate some of his authority to his deputies to allow him to focus on EXCOMM. McCone stood down as Chairmen of the USIB because of the conflict of interest as a member of EXCOMM charged

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Robert Kennedy, *Thirteen Days: A Memoir of the Cuban Missile Crisis* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1969), 30-31.

¹⁸⁴ Schlesinger, Jr., *Robert Kennedy and His Times*, 507. See also Kennedy, *Thirteen Days*, 30-31.

¹⁸⁵ Phillip Taubman, *Eisenhower, The CIA, and the Hidden Story of America's Space Espionage* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2003), 35.

¹⁸⁶ Brugioni, *Eyeball to Eyeball*, 238.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

with reviewing their reports, passing that duty to Carter.¹⁸⁸ He gave Lundahl greater authority at the NPIC by passing most of the intelligence directly to their offices to reduce the time it took to prepare estimates. Albert Wheelon, Chairmen of the GMAIC, took on an added role of preparing joint estimates from the major intelligence boards after it came to Lundahl. When Lundahl received the information, he passed it immediately to Cline, who then passed that information to McCone. When Carter received the information in the USIB meetings, he passed their recommendations to EXCOMM. McCone's delegation of authority gave him more leeway in making recommendations during EXCOMM meetings, while still receiving the raw intelligence from his deputies and the estimates from the intelligence board.¹⁸⁹

Before meeting with EXCOMM on Wednesday, October 17, McCone prepared a list of talking points. McCone argued, "The establishment of medium-range strike capability in Cuba by the Soviets was predicted by me in a least a dozen reports since the Soviet buildup was noted in early August."¹⁹⁰ McCone also believed the purposes of the missiles were to give Cuba an offensive power to use if attacked and to enhance the "Soviet strike capability against the United States."¹⁹¹ McCone believed that another motive was to intimidate other Latin American nations, notably Mexico, from aiding in efforts against Castro. While the Soviets installed the missiles in Cuba, the defensive capabilities of the island continued to expand, a point that McCone reiterated from his earlier concerns about such an expensive missile defense system. For McCone, there was no doubt that despite the number of Cubans working at the sites, the missiles themselves remained entirely under Soviet control.¹⁹² The United States could not allow missiles to remain

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 283-284.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ John McCone, "Memorandum for Discussion Today, October 17, 1962, 'The Cuban Situation,'" in McAuliffe, *CIA Documents*, 161-164.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Ibid.

in Cuba, but McCone stipulated that they could not launch a surprise attack if they wanted international pressure on the Soviet Union. McCone proposed sending a warning to the Soviets giving them twenty-four hours to remove the missiles, and proceed with a massive air attack if the Soviets refused.¹⁹³

The first meeting of EXCOMM focused on the choices available to the United States regarding the Cuban situation.¹⁹⁴ Ball argued that any military action in Cuba would limit their options with their NATO allies. Further, he believed that the U.S government needed to consider that Khrushchev might not know what was going on in Cuba. Ball and Maxwell Taylor agreed that it might just be a ploy by Khrushchev to provoke an American response. McNamara avoided taking a position during the first meeting, wanting more time to study on all the facts available. Current intelligence reports showed fifty or sixty MiG-17 and MiG-19 fighters in Cuba.¹⁹⁵ Soviet ships delivered parts for IL-28 bombers, along with at least one MiG-21 interceptor. The report confirmed three MRBM sites under construction, which could be ready in two weeks.¹⁹⁶ The report showed no evidence of nuclear warhead storage sites, and failed to determine if the Soviets intended to place conventional or nuclear warheads on the missiles. McCone received reports from Lundahl on a number of crates of unknown purpose, and at least twenty-eight Soviet ships en route to Cuba with similar cargo. McCone argued several points from his notes, including how strongly he believed that the Soviets were using missiles in Cuba to force the United States to trade their bases in Europe. McNamara believed that they needed more

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ John McCone, "Memorandum of Meeting attended in Secretary Ball's Conference Room...at 08:30, 17 October," in *ibid.*, 159-160.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

information on the command and control of the missiles in Cuba, and McCone promised more facts throughout the day.¹⁹⁷

McCone and Bundy left immediately after the meeting to confer with the president in the White House. The meeting focused on the intelligence-gathering actions for that day, along with the proposed plans of action to remove the missiles.¹⁹⁸ The discussion was brief because of the short amount of time between meetings scheduled for that day; so, McCone only referred to several of his warnings that he proposed in his memorandum.¹⁹⁹ McCone believed that Kennedy “seemed inclined to act promptly if at all, without warning, targeting on MRBM’s and possibly airfields.”²⁰⁰ When Kennedy made the statement that a congressional resolution granted the president the right to attack Cuba, Bundy agreed, confirming to McCone the president’s intent on action. Kennedy entrusted McCone with the role of briefing former President Eisenhower on the Cuban situation.²⁰¹

McCone immediately departed for Gettysburg, Pennsylvania to brief Eisenhower. The DCI met with Eisenhower to review the developments in Cuba, including all the current intelligence on the Soviet military buildup and the U-2 photographs of the MRBM sites.²⁰² McCone followed Kennedy’s order not to promote a position during his meeting with Eisenhower, presenting many the proposals of EXCOMM members.²⁰³ Eisenhower had no problem believing that the Soviets would place offensive weapons in Cuba, because he had dealt

¹⁹⁷ McCone, “Memorandum, 17 October 1962,” in McAuliffe, *CIA Documents*, 159-160. See also Fursenko and Naftali, *One Hell of a Gamble*, 227.

¹⁹⁸ John McCone, “Brief Discussion with the President-9:30 AM-17 October 1962,” in McAuliffe, *CIA Documents*, 165.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁰¹ McCone, “Brief Discussion,” in McAuliffe, *CIA Documents*, 165. See also Soapes interview, 38.

²⁰² John McCone, “Conversation with General Eisenhower-Wednesday, 17 October 1962,” in McAuliffe, *CIA Documents*, 167-168.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*

with the same ideas during his last year in office.²⁰⁴ The former president criticized the failure at the Bay of Pigs and the failure of MONGOOSE to remove Castro from office, especially during the months before the Soviets sent weapons to Cuba. He believed that an ultimatum to Castro and Khrushchev would fail, and that a blockade would bring difficulties of its own.²⁰⁵ McCone believed that Eisenhower favored military action to cut off the Cuban government with an invasion, ending the situation with limited bloodshed. McCone promised to keep him informed and consult him, whether or not he received a message from Kennedy.²⁰⁶

McCone immediately returned to Washington to attend afternoon and evening EXCOMM meetings. During the meetings, the group once again discussed plans of action for Cuba. Ambassador Charles Bohlen, who joined EXCOMM during the first few days, argued against any military action in Cuba, because it would divide their allies and subject the United States to criticism around the world.²⁰⁷ Rusk believed that the administration should ask Congress for a declaration of war against Cuba, but keep their options open afterwards. Ball emphasized the time constraints on action, meaning that the quicker they acted the less risk it imposed on the United States. Kennedy wanted to know how America's allies, notably Turkey, Italy, and Britain might respond to an American response to missiles in Cuba. McNamara did not believe the missiles were that great a threat to the United States, and Gilpatric supported his opinion. McCone stated, "That McNamara's facts were not new as they had appeared in estimates months ago."²⁰⁸ To McCone, the presence of those missiles in Cuba was of great military importance, while McNamara downplayed that point.²⁰⁹ When Bohlen and Thompson

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ McCone, "Memorandum of Meeting, Wednesday, October 17th, at 8:30 AM, and again at 4:00 PM, 19 October 1962," in *ibid.*, 169-173.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

questioned Soviet actions in Cuba, McCone believed that Berlin was just one of several reasons for the missiles being in Cuba, but that Berlin was not the primary reason for their existence. Despite their disagreement on the military importance of the missiles, McNamara, McCone, and Taylor agreed that talks with the Soviets gave Khrushchev the time to prepare the missiles for launch and to camouflage the sites.²¹⁰

After considering the military option, the group moved to the pros and cons of a naval blockade. The group argued over a partial or total blockade, with McCone pointing the strengths of a total blockade.²¹¹ Before the group adjourned for dinner, McCone once again argued that the primary goals of action in Cuba were to dispose of the missile sites and remove Castro's government from power. Rusk took charge when the meeting continued later that evening, stating that, "The United States cannot accept operational MRBMs in Cuba."²¹² Talks gave the Soviets the time they needed to prepare the missiles, leaving the option of air strikes as the primary means of achieving their goals. Rusk proposed a timetable that began with a briefing of key allies followed by a series of sorties against the sites. McCone and Taylor supported the military strike option, while Bohlen continued to support the diplomatic route. Thompson and Martin supported the blockade option, while the rest of the group remained neutral on the issue, including Gilpatric, Johnson, Bundy, and Sorensen. Despite the difference in opinions, the group prepared plans for each option, including the consequences of each, allowing each member to promote his own views.²¹³

While McCone spent much of the evening in conference with EXCOMM, Wheelon prepared a memorandum for McCone containing the first in a series of combined intelligence

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Ibid.

²¹³ Ibid.

from the NPIC along with the Guided Missile and Astronautics Intelligence Committee (GMAIC) and the Joint Atomic Energy Intelligence Committee (JAEIC). Based on the photographs from the U-2 flight on October 14 and the two flights from October 15, the committee found at least one Soviet missile regiment with eight launchers and sixteen MRBM missiles at two launch sites in Cuba. Because the committee believed the Soviets had 650-850 of such missiles, it estimated that there were probably between sixty and eighty stationed in Cuba.²¹⁴ Further analysis of the photography showed two other MRBM launch sites under construction, bringing the total to three. The photographs from the October 14 and 15 missions showed remarkable building progress, including the appearance of erectors for the missiles along with temporary buildings and vehicles. The report stipulated that if the missiles were of the 1,020 nautical mile range, the first of them could be operational immediately if needed.²¹⁵ However, because the photos did not show the missile silhouette facing upwards, the committee argued that the Soviets might not have the warheads in place for use. If not ready immediately, the committee agreed that the missiles could become operational in a matter of days.²¹⁶

McCone also received an intelligence report from Lundahl on the October 15 flight. On the second flight on October 15, the U-2 found what appeared to a probable IRBM site under construction, previously reported as military equipment. The photographs showed an erector already in place with six missiles in the vicinity. While the report did not stipulate that the missiles were in fact IRBM, the construction site itself confirmed to previous Soviet emplacements in Eastern Europe. Lundahl met with McNamara at his home the next morning, which led McNamara to call McCone expressing his concern about the IRBM sites. Both

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

McNamara and McCone agreed that this intelligence “demanded more prompt and decisive action,” and promised to bring it up at EXCOMM meeting later that morning.²¹⁷

During the morning meeting on Thursday, October 18, McCone briefed EXCOMM on the intelligence reports he received Wednesday evening and on his meeting with Eisenhower. After briefing the group on the report from Wheeler, Lundahl delivered his report on the October 15 photography. The president asked Lundahl if a novice could see that the pictures showed MRBM missiles, and Lundahl believed that they must have low-level photography for the public to understand the images. Rusk’s opinion changed to promoting action against Cuba, viewing the island now as a “formidable military threat.”²¹⁸ Rusk proposed a quick strike against the missile sites, believing it to be the best option despite the risk of retaliation. Thompson and Bohlen reiterated their previous objections to immediate military action, with Thompson pushing for a declaration of war from Congress if the group authorized military action, and proposed a blockade instead.²¹⁹ McCone, Dillon and Taylor suggested immediate military strikes, because they believed that diplomatic efforts would limit the options. McNamara and Ball argued that a strike without warning would lead to Soviet retaliation somewhere in the world.²²⁰ The group agreed that the president should confront Andrei Gromyko, the Soviet minister of Foreign Affairs, on the presence of offensive missiles in Cuba. Kennedy requested that the group study the advantages and disadvantages to either a blockade or air strike against Cuba.²²¹

McCone joined many EXCOMM members in promoting the air strike option to remove the missiles from Cuba. Because McCone believed that the missiles would be operational within

²¹⁷ Arthur Lundahl, “Additional Information-Mission 3102, 18 October 1962,” in *ibid.*, *CIA Documents*, 181-182. See also McCone, “Memorandum for the File, 19 October 1962,” in *ibid.*, *CIA Documents*, 183.

²¹⁸ McCone, “Memorandum for the File,” October 19, 1962, U.S. Department of State, *FRUS*, Vol XI, http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/frus.html (accessed June 30, 2010).

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²²⁰ *Ibid.*

²²¹ *Ibid.*

the week, he supported the air strikes option over the blockade.²²² One of the reasons he feared the Soviet missiles was his belief that the Soviet military gave more control to their battlefield commanders.²²³ The intelligence reports from October 18 solidified his beliefs, and led other members such as Dillon, Taylor, Acheson, and Bundy, along with the Joint Chiefs, to support the air strike option.²²⁴ McCone even suggested that an air strike alone could not remove all the missiles. He proposed an invasion of Cuba to remove the missiles and Castro's government.²²⁵ By the end of the Thursday meetings, however, many EXCOMM members had moved away from the air strike option, due largely to arguments by Robert Kennedy and McNamara about the historical impact of a surprise attack.²²⁶ After hearing the attorney general's arguments, Rusk and Bohlen became more outspoken in their opposition to the air strikes, and instead pushed for the blockade options. McCone, while becoming more open to the idea of a blockade, also took a strong stance against Ambassador Adlai Stevenson's suggestion that the United States confront the Soviet Union at the United Nations.²²⁷ He continued to emphasize the problems with a blockade, and during the evening meeting with the president, supported the air strike option. By the end of the meeting, the consensus that existed earlier in the meetings broke down, leading the president to order them to return to their arguments, scheduled to continue on Friday morning.²²⁸

McCone showed his support for the air strike during the meeting with the president, but understood that the group favored the blockade option.²²⁹ Before his meeting on Friday morning, McCone sent a message to the USIB, and requested an intelligence estimate to assist him in

²²² Schlesinger, Jr., *Robert Kennedy and His Times*, 507.

²²³ Len Scott, *The Cuban Missile Crisis and the Threat of Nuclear War: Lessons From History* (New York: Continuum, 2007), 95.

²²⁴ Ball, *Past is Another Pattern*, 290-292.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*

²²⁶ Kennedy, *Thirteen Days*, 38-40.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*

²²⁸ *Ibid.*

²²⁹ McCone, "Memorandum to USIB Members, 19 October 1962," in McAuliffe, *CIA Documents*, 193-194.

future meetings. McCone believed that the group favored a blockade, and that the United States should declare war on Cuba only as a last resort. The limited blockade sought to prevent more weapons arriving in Cuba and to become a total blockade if Castro and the Soviets continued construction on the missile sites.²³⁰ McCone believed that continued surveillance was critical to either option, because it provided crucial information on the status of the missiles. McCone argued that if they chose the blockade option, it would begin with a public announcement from the president and limited notification of allies on Monday, October 22.²³¹ It seemed to McCone that the air strike option was on hold until after they attempted the blockade, because many in the group believed an air strike and invasion was unwise. Those who supported the blockade believed it gave the administration the ability to increase or decrease pressure according to the situation, and provoke a less severe Soviet reaction. McCone argued, “The obvious disadvantages are the protracted nature of the operation...the action does not reverse the present trend of building an offensive capability within Cuba nor does it dispose of the existing missiles, planes and nuclear weapons.”²³² However, the air strike option was a dangerous option in itself, because of the possibility of severe international reaction, and the possibility of a Soviet escalation. McCone wanted the board to give him the assistance he needed to choose the best options for the United States.²³³

Following McCone’s request, the USIB released a Special National Intelligence Estimate on October 19, which analyzed the possible Soviet reactions to American actions regarding Cuba.²³⁴ The board argued that the major Soviet objective in Cuba was “to demonstrate that the

²³⁰ Ibid.

²³¹ Ibid.

²³² Ibid.

²³³ Ibid.

²³⁴ “Special National Intelligence Estimate 11-18-62, ‘Soviet Reactions to Certain US Courses of Action on Cuba,’ 19 October 1962,” in McAuliffe, *CIA Documents*, 197-200.

world balance of forces has shifted so far in their favor that the U.S. can no longer prevent the advance of Soviet offensive power even in its own hemisphere.”²³⁵ It also hypothesized that the Soviets might be using the missiles to force the United States into negotiations in Europe. If the United States did nothing about the missiles, the Soviet Union would introduce strategic nuclear weapons, contributing greatly to the Soviet strategic capabilities.²³⁶ If the administration chose to warn the Soviets, the board concluded, “We do not believe the Soviets would halt the deployment.”²³⁷ They would ask for negotiations on other foreign bases, and push for a resolution to the Berlin situation. If Kennedy chose to warn the Soviets, it would hinder the surprise air strike option. If he chose a blockade, the Soviets would “exert strong direct pressures elsewhere to end the blockade.”²³⁸ If the United States launched an invasion of Cuba, it would force the Soviets to respond and possibly start a war. However, the board considered the Soviet decision to launch a war unlikely; instead, they believed they would launch an attack against Berlin.²³⁹

Cline reported on the board’s intelligence estimate during the Friday morning EXCOMM meeting.²⁴⁰ After hearing the report, Rusk argued that the president needed a legal framework if he launched a military invasion of Cuba. After deliberations, many in the group supported the idea of rationalizing action in Cuba as self-defense. On the issue of a warning, McCone stipulated that a warning did not improve their position and possibly hindered it.²⁴¹ If they decided to support a defensive blockade of Cuba, it would involve force, which the United Nations charter prohibited except in certain situations. Martin proposed a solution to the United

²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ Ibid.

²³⁷ Ibid.

²³⁸ Ibid.

²³⁹ Ibid.

²⁴⁰ Leonard C. Meeker, “Record of Meeting,” October 19, 1962, U.S. Department of State, *FRUS*, Vol. XI, http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/frus.html (accessed September 21, 2010).

²⁴¹ Ibid.

Nations Charter: a unanimous vote from the Organization of American States (OAS). It would give the president a legal framework for an air strike, invasion, or blockade.²⁴²

After the group discussed the legal ramifications of the actions for Cuba, it renewed its disagreements on either an air strike or a blockade.²⁴³ According to Robert Kennedy, “the strain and the hours without sleep were beginning to take their toll.”²⁴⁴ Bundy questioned the reasons why the group recommended a blockade to the president the night before. He asked for further deliberations on both suggestions, because of the problems inherent with both. A blockade did not remove the missiles, meaning they needed something more substantial. He moved to support the air strikes, because he supported decisive action.²⁴⁵ Acheson agreed, and stated, “Khrushchev has presented the United States with a direct challenge, we were involved in a test of wills, and the sooner we got to a showdown the better.”²⁴⁶ Dillon and McCone agreed with Acheson, which divided the group once again. Taylor believed that supporting a blockade would be “a decision to abandon the possibility of an air strike.”²⁴⁷ He supported the air strike option, an option that required the president to make a quick decision.²⁴⁸

While many of the group migrated back to air strikes, McNamara supported the blockade alternative but suggested that the military prepare for the air strikes if the president chose that option. Robert Kennedy also supported the blockade, because an air strike had too many implications for international opinion, and went against the traditions of the United States. Besides killing many Cubans, it would kill many Soviet personnel as well. Arguments continued into the afternoon, when Rusk pointed out that the group’s duty was to present the president with

²⁴² Ibid.

²⁴³ Kennedy, *Thirteen Days*, 44-46.

²⁴⁴ Ibid., 44.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ Kennedy, *Thirteen Days*, 44-45.

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

the best options for his consideration. He proposed two working groups, each tasked with writing papers on the advantages and disadvantages to their assigned option. Johnson headed the blockade group, composed of Thompson, Martin, Gilpatric, and Meeker, while Bundy was to head the air strike group, which contained Dillon, Acheson and Taylor. Despite his belief that the air strike option posed the best course of action for the president, McCone remained off the air strike group due to his position in the intelligence community.²⁴⁹

During the course of the day, McCone shifted his support away from the air strike option, but did not fully support the blockade.²⁵⁰ After the two groups deliberated on their course of action, the EXCOMM reconvened at 4:00 AM. At that time, each group voiced their proposal, after which each member showed their support or criticism for the plan.²⁵¹ The group began with the blockade proposal, where criticism led to many changes in the original plan. First, the group agreed there was not enough time to have everything ready for the president to make an address on Sunday. Legally, Thompson stipulated that they needed twenty-four hours between Kennedy's address and enforcement of the blockade, to allow the Soviet commanders the time needed to inform their ships.²⁵² The blockade plan also contained a list of actions needed to ensure success of the operation, including a scenario that mapped out the blockade and international reactions.²⁵³ Around 6:00 PM, the group moved to the air strike proposal, where Bundy detailed the plan in a relatively short time, allowing the group to attack their plan as

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

²⁵⁰ Brugioni, *Eyeball to Eyeball*, 311. See also "Minutes of the 505th Meeting of the National Security Council," October 20, 1962, U.S. Department of State, *FRUS*, Vol. XI, http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/frus.html (accessed September 21, 2010).

²⁵¹ McCone, "Record of Meeting," October 19, 1962, U.S. Department of State, *FRUS*, Vol. XI, http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/frus.html (accessed September 21, 2010). See also, Kennedy, *Thirteen Days*, 44-45.

²⁵² McCone, "Record of Meeting," October 19, 1962, U.S. Department of State, *FRUS*, Vol. XI, http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/frus.html (accessed September 21, 2010).

²⁵³ Kennedy, *Thirteen Days*, 44-45.

well.²⁵⁴ After each group voiced their plans, there was general agreement that either option posed its own risks, including the possibility of the Soviets forcing the United States to give up the missile bases in Turkey and Italy.²⁵⁵ At this point, McNamara made an important statement that calmed many of the air strike proponents. He stated, “An air strike could be made some time after the blockade was instituted in the event the blockade did not produce results as to the missile bases in Cuba.”²⁵⁶ When Robert Kennedy voiced his support for McNamara’s proposal towards the end of the meeting, McCone noted a great shift in the group towards a blockade.²⁵⁷

Later on Friday evening, the joint intelligence committee released another evaluation based on the ten separate U-2 missions from October 14 to October 17. The committee reported that the October 16 flights confirmed the existence of three MRBM sites and two IRBM sites.²⁵⁸ Current intelligence showed the sites manned by Soviet personnel, but they did not know if regional forces or Soviet high command had direct control of their use. One key component to the Wednesday intelligence was the identification of a nuclear warhead storage site near the most completed construction site at Guanajay.²⁵⁹ The committee believed that the warheads could already be in Cuba, despite the lack of photography on an operational nuclear storage site. At present, intelligence photographs showed twenty-four launchers when completed, each with the ability to fire multiple missiles. More missiles arrived during the week onboard the freighter *Poltava*.²⁶⁰ Of the twenty-six SAM sites located in Cuba, intelligence reported 16 operational batteries. For the coastal defense sites, the committee believed two were operational.²⁶¹ The most

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

²⁵⁵ Nash, *The Other Missiles of October*, 147.

²⁵⁶ McCone, “Record of Meeting,” October 19, 1962, U.S. Department of State, *FRUS*, Vol. XI, http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/frus.html (accessed September 21, 2010).

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

²⁶⁰ Ibid.

²⁶¹ Ibid.

startling revelation came from “several refugee reports indicating the presence of tactical (FROG²⁶²) missiles in Cuba.”²⁶³ With the increased rate of deployment during the past week of reconnaissance, the committee believed that the Soviets were trying to “achieve quick operational status and then a complete site construction” as soon as possible.²⁶⁴

McCone received an addendum to the Joint Evaluation from Lundahl that same evening, indicating the presence of both MRBM and IRBM missile sites.²⁶⁵ The following morning, McCone met with Dave Boyle, one of the NPIC ballistic missile experts, who showed him the construction sites that conformed to previous IRBM sites in Eastern Europe. Following that briefing, McCone traveled with Cline and Lundahl to another meeting with the president at 2:30.²⁶⁶ This meeting had a particular importance because the president, his advisors, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the regular EXCOMM members were meeting to give their reports on blockade or air strikes.²⁶⁷ McCone instructed Cline to brief the group on the Joint Evaluation from October 19, and Lundahl showed the locations of both the MRBM and IRBM sites. Current intelligence showed sixteen SS-4 MRBMs, aimed towards the central United States.²⁶⁸ McNamara argued that despite the disagreements in the group on plans of action, the military commanders were ready to implement either option.²⁶⁹ The blockade option “aimed at preventing any addition to the strategic missiles already deployed to Cuba and eventually to

²⁶² FROGs (Free Rocket Over Ground) was a series of battlefield nuclear weapons designed to eliminate a large number of an invasion force or land force with limited risk to Soviet/Cuban defenses. This weapon nullified the advantages of an amphibious assault by inflicting enormous casualties to the men and their equipment.

²⁶³ “Joint Evaluation of Soviet Missile Threat in Cuba, 19 October 1962,” in McAuliffe, *CIA Documents*, 203-209.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁵ Lundahl, “Additional Information – Mission 3107, 19 October 1962,” in *ibid.*, 209.

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.* See also “Minutes of the 505th Meeting of the National Security Council,” October 20, 1962, U.S.

Department of State, *FRUS*, Vol. XI, http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/frus.html (accessed September 21, 2010).

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

eliminate these missiles.”²⁷⁰ Following the investigation, they would negotiate for removal of all missiles in Cuba, which might include a trade with the missiles in Turkey and Italy. One of the key problems with the blockade was the length of time it took to achieve their objective of removing the missiles from Cuba. The blockade also risked “serious political trouble in the United States” and a weakening of the U.S. international position.²⁷¹ However, the blockade did have the advantage of doing less damage to America’s allies in Europe, and allowed the United States to maintain its traditions against surprise attacks and leadership in the Free World. Taylor and the Joint Chiefs opposed the blockade option and argued, “Now was the time to act because this would be the last chance we would have to destroy the missiles.”²⁷²

After arguments from Rusk, Ball, and Taylor, and Sorensen, Bundy detailed the air strike proposal.²⁷³ Robert Kennedy informed the president that the plan had the support of Bundy, Taylor, the Joint Chiefs, while Dillon and McCone supported parts of the plan.²⁷⁴ Taylor argued that the air strikes gave them the chance to take out the missiles, the IL-28 bombers, and the SAM sites. McNamara again cautioned the president that an air strike might not remove all the missiles, which Taylor countered with the argument that not removing those weapons meant the United States had to invent new procedures for dealing with military threats. Robert Kennedy argued that the air strikes were an option if the blockade failed, which McCone supported. McCone argued that Kennedy should issue an ultimatum “that if the missiles were not dismantled within seventy-two hours, the United States would destroy the missiles by air attack.”²⁷⁵ McCone along with Dillon suggested that a long blockade without action gave the

²⁷⁰ Ibid.

²⁷¹ Ibid.

²⁷² Ibid.

²⁷³ Ibid.

²⁷⁴ Ibid.

²⁷⁵ Ibid.

Cubans the time needed to fire the nuclear missiles at the United States, and threatened their relationship with their Latin American allies. A limited use of force in a blockade made it much more difficult for a military strike because of the time needed to implement the blockade and measure its effectiveness.²⁷⁶

Towards the end of the meeting, Stevenson again argued for a diplomatic solution involving the United Nations. This had the effect of turning most of the Council's attentions from their own opinions to criticize Stevenson's position.²⁷⁷ Taylor, Dillon and McCone argued against the diplomatic solution as well as Stevenson's claim that there might be no nuclear weapons in Cuba. While McCone admitted there was no photographic evidence of nuclear warheads in Cuba, he referred to Stevenson as the "St. Thomas of the generation."²⁷⁸ When Robert Kennedy pushed to have Stevenson replaced on the UN council, McCone suggested John McCloy, which the president approved.²⁷⁹ McCone also requested that the president allow the CIA to send copies of the aerial photography to allies in Western Europe, even suggesting sending a CIA officer along with the brief.²⁸⁰ He suggested Tidwell to brief the Canadian government first, giving the administration the chance to gain support from its allies before taking action. Kennedy requested that Ball, Johnson, and Martin prepare a detailed timeline for briefing all the groups suggested by McCone.²⁸¹ The president concluded the meeting by authorizing plans for both options, as well as informing the group of his decision to address the nation on Monday evening.²⁸²

²⁷⁶ Ibid.

²⁷⁷ Brugioni, *Eyeball to Eyeball*, 319-321.

²⁷⁸ Ibid. According to Brugioni, McCone was a devout Catholic, which meant he used the term as an insult. The insult refers to Thomas the Apostle, when Thomas saw Jesus' return, would not believe it until he touched the wounds in Jesus' hand (John 20:24-29).

²⁷⁹ Ibid.

²⁸⁰ Ibid.

²⁸¹ Kennedy, *Thirteen Days*, 50.

²⁸² Brugioni, *Eyeball to Eyeball*, 319-321.

By the end of the meeting, Kennedy had made his decision that the blockade was the best option available. As the administration informed key allies about the missiles, McCone secured more intelligence reports and estimates from the intelligence committees. The USIB released another Special National Security Estimate while EXCOMM deliberated with the president. After the committee reported on the current status of the weapons in Cuba, along with the purposes of these weapons, the group analyzed the options provided by McCone's notes, providing several consequences to each action. If the United States failed to confront the Soviets on the missiles, the Soviets most likely would continue the buildup indefinitely.²⁸³ It believed no action by the Kennedy administration would provide encouragement to communist movements around the world and cause considerable damage to American power. A simple warning would not remove the missiles, and perhaps would lead to negotiations for concessions.²⁸⁴ On the issue of the blockade, even a total blockade would not prevent the Soviets from using submarines to deliver nuclear warheads. The presence of a blockade would place considerable pressure on the Soviet government. It would require direct action to remove Castro's regime, not a blockade.²⁸⁵ If the president chose the air strike option, it would have a much greater chance of provoking the Soviet Union, by forcing the Soviets to attack the United States somewhere in the world. General war became a real possibility if the United States chose to attack, but the board stipulated that they did not believe the Soviet Union would directly attack the United States.²⁸⁶

McCone also received the Joint Committee's analysis on the U-2 flights up to October 18. At the two MRBM sites first discovered, it appeared that they were nearly ready for

²⁸³ Ibid.

²⁸⁴ Ibid.

²⁸⁵ Ibid.

²⁸⁶ Ibid.

deployment, with visible signs of launch crews, missiles, and other military equipment.²⁸⁷ The committee argued that according to the recent photography, “an emergency operational capability to launch some of the missiles on hand with about 8 hours [of preparation] could now exist at the four MRBM sites.”²⁸⁸ If construction proceeded at the current pace, the committee believed all the missiles at Site 1 and Site 2 would be ready for launch by Thursday, October 25. At the third MRBM site in the Sagua La Grande region, photography showed portions of the missile regiment arrived on October 17, but was not ready for more than an emergency deployment before November 1. The speed of construction at the fourth MRBM site in the Guanajay area showed a much higher construction rate than previous Soviet efforts, with control bunkers, blast walls, and concrete all visible from the photography. However, the board did not believe that the missiles would be ready for launch at the IRBM sites until December. The last flight on October 17 also confirmed the presence of nuclear storage sites under construction, along with an unidentified SSM site in the Remedios area.²⁸⁹

Before McCone met with Kennedy on Sunday morning, October 21, he received another detailed report from Carter and the USIB, which confirmed that two missile sites were operational.²⁹⁰ Similar to their October 20 Special estimate, Carter informed McCone that the construction efforts and presence of guided missiles in Cuba meant that the Soviets had been planning the operation for at least a year.²⁹¹ Reports showed that the parts to assemble 22 light bombers and 40 MiG-21 fighters were present in Cuba.²⁹² Carter confirmed the joint committee’s report there was no evidence of an operational nuclear storage site to date, but stipulated they

²⁸⁷ “Supplement 1 to Joint Evaluation of Soviet Missile Threat in Cuba, 20 October 1962,” in *ibid.*, 227-234.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁰ “Evaluation of Offensive Threat to Cuba,” with cover memorandum, Carter to Members of United States Intelligence Board, 21 October 1962,” in *ibid.*, 235-239.

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*

²⁹² *Ibid.*

might also be in Cuba already, coming through the Port of Mariel and passing through several checkpoints near the missile sites.²⁹³ Along with twenty-four SAM sites and three coastal defense missile sites, current intelligence showed twelve guided missile patrol boats in Cuba.²⁹⁴

After receiving all the reports from the USIB and the Joint Committee and having a brief conversation with Eisenhower, McCone attended an EXCOMM meeting with Kennedy later that morning. According to McCone, McNamara and Taylor argued that the air strikes themselves would only destroy ninety percent of the missiles and that an advance warning would give the Soviets time to move the missiles to undisclosed locations.²⁹⁵ General Walter Sweeney²⁹⁶ detailed the plans for the air strike per the president's suggestion, and the group decided that an air strike must include missile sites, airfields, and SAM sites. Taylor and McNamara argued that if the president decided to authorize the attacks, they must begin by Monday morning. The president then asked for McCone's opinion, and McCone advised against a surprise attack, agreeing with Robert Kennedy's reasoning from the prior meetings.²⁹⁷ McCone reiterated his opinion that the President should issue a public statement that the United States would remove the missiles if intelligence showed they were not removing them.²⁹⁸

At 4:30 PM, McCone met in private with the president on Eisenhower's recommendations on the blockade. He noted that he received an intelligence report from Lundahl that morning, followed by his meeting with Eisenhower. McCone and Eisenhower discussed the procedures for either the blockade or the air strike option, to which the former President

²⁹³ Ibid.

²⁹⁴ Ibid.

²⁹⁵ McCone, "Memorandum of Meeting with the President, Attorney General, Secretary McNamara, General Taylor, and Mr. McCone, 10:00 AM-10/21/62," in *ibid.*, 241-242.

²⁹⁶ General Walter Sweeney served in the United States Air Force as the Commander-in-Chief of the Tactical Air Command during the Cuban Missile Crisis.

²⁹⁷ McCone, "Memorandum of Meeting with the President, Attorney General, Secretary McNamara, General Taylor, and Mr. McCone, 10:00 AM-10/21/62," in *ibid.*, 241-242.

²⁹⁸ Ibid.

supported the air strikes from a military point of view but not from the broader international considerations. Eisenhower believed that the air strikes by themselves were never conclusive, and a surprise attack set a precedent to the world that other nations might follow.²⁹⁹ Eisenhower agreed that the situation called for a warning to the Soviets prior to either option and favored the use of a blockade and eventual air strikes if the Soviets kept the missiles in Cuba. McCone told Kennedy that because Eisenhower had only certain information on the Soviet buildup, it was important to understand that his opinion represented “a flash judgment rather than considered judgment” on the former President’s part.³⁰⁰

After the briefing, Kennedy requested that McCone also brief Vice President Johnson. At 8:30 PM, McCone had Lundahl brief the Johnson on the current photography from Cuba and discussed the president’s proposed speech. Johnson believed a surprise attack was the best option and questioned the use of a blockade followed by air strikes and invasion.³⁰¹ He believed that a warning limited the effectiveness of the air strikes, and argued that the blockade might not work. McCone countered Johnson’s arguments with his briefing paper from the October 20 EXCOMM meeting. After learning of EXCOMM’s conclusions and Eisenhower’s recommendations, Johnson agreed to accept the blockade option.³⁰²

After his meeting with Johnson, McCone received another evaluation from the Joint Committee, focused on the status of the missile sites in Cuba. Based on the missions of October 18 and 19, the committee believed that the current MRBM sites had the ability to launch eighty missiles, with each launcher reloading once.³⁰³ Photographs showed eight Soviet missile regiments, each with eight launchers and at least sixteen missiles each. It was clear to the

²⁹⁹ Ibid.

³⁰⁰ Ibid.

³⁰¹ Ibid.

³⁰² Ibid.

³⁰³ Ibid.

committee that the Soviets wanted to have all the sites ready for full operation, rather than prepare the sites for emergency launches.³⁰⁴ Lundahl provided McCone with the readout from the last mission on October 19, which showed another confirmed MRBM site, bringing the total to five MRBM sites and two IRBM sites in Cuba. Each site showed missile trailers, erectors, and support vehicles, with construction at each site continuing at an accelerated pace.³⁰⁵

McCone requested that Cline prepare a briefing for the president during the afternoon meeting with EXCOMM on the intelligence readouts received over the past week. He reported on seventeen separate U-2 flights from October 14 to October 20, which confirmed twenty-four launchers for MRBM missiles at six sites, and 12 launchers for IRBM sites located at three bases. Photography showed between over thirty missiles currently in Cuba, with no evidence of IRBMs among them.³⁰⁶ The report showed four MRBM sites believed to be operational, with the remaining two sites expected to be operational by October 25. McCone also informed EXCOMM that the CIA received a report that a fleet of Soviet submarines was en route to Cuba and expected to arrive within the week.³⁰⁷ Kennedy ordered the group to “sing one song in order to make clear that there was now no difference among his advisers as to the proper course to follow.”³⁰⁸ Kennedy then read a list of questions, asking the group to prepare answers should the press ask the members. Because the blockade plans allowed shipments of food and medicine to continue to Cuba, the president stipulated that the group should show the differences between the Cuban blockade and the Berlin blockade.³⁰⁹ McNamara agreed with Kennedy that the Defense Department should prepare for air strikes and the invasion should the blockade fail, but did not

³⁰⁴ “Supplement 2 to Joint Evaluation of Soviet Missile Threat in Cuba, 21 October 1962 [Excerpt],” in *ibid.*, 261-262.

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁶ Cline, “DD/I Notes for DCI for NSC Briefing at 3 PM in Cabinet Room, 22 October 1962,” in *ibid.*, 271-273.

³⁰⁷ “Minutes of the 507th Meeting of the National Security Council,” October 22, 1962, U.S. Department of State, *FRUS*, Vol. XI, http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/frus.html (accessed September 23, 2010).

³⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

want to authorize activation of the reserves. Kennedy argued that he chose the blockade option over the air strike option because the air strikes would not remove all the missiles.³¹⁰ Failure to destroy all the missiles would allow the Soviets time to use the remaining missiles to attack the United States. However, because they might use air strikes in the future, the president agreed with Bundy not to discuss that fact with the public.³¹¹

The president had his final briefing with EXCOMM and members of the Senate at 5:00 PM before he addressed the nation. Having made his decision to authorize the blockade, the meeting centered on the Soviet responses to the blockade. McCone had the task of repeating to the group the intelligence reports from that morning, and the president reviewed the situation over the last 8 days. After informing the attendees of the steps taken regarding Cuba, Senator Richard Russell of Georgia wanted Kennedy to consider stronger steps than currently taken.³¹² Similar to Vice President Johnson, Russell believed a warning message hindered their options in Cuba. McNamara described for Russell that an attack on Cuba would follow the blockade should it fail.³¹³ Other members of the group began asking questions, pertaining to the impact of the blockade versus the air strikes. Arkansas Senator J. William Fulbright also questioned the president's decision to impose a blockade instead of invading Cuba, while Congressman Carl Vinson of Georgia urged Kennedy to strike with the maximum force available. Except for the members of EXCOMM, most of the attendees of the meeting challenged the president's decision.³¹⁴ According to McCone, "the president took issue with Fulbright, stating that he felt that an attack on these bases...would involve large numbers of Soviet casualties and this would

³¹⁰ Ibid.

³¹¹ Ibid.

³¹² Ibid.

³¹³ Ibid.

³¹⁴ Ibid.

be more provocative than a confrontation with a Soviet ship.”³¹⁵ Slightly angered but determined in his course, the president left the meeting to prepare for the speech that would set the stage for one of the crucial confrontations of the Cold War.

The United States discovered the missiles in Cuba while McCone traveled to the West Coast to bury his stepson. When he arrived back in Washington on October 17, he immediately delegated his authority as head of the intelligence community to his deputies, to allow the major intelligence-gathering services to issue reports on intelligence at a quickened pace. He helped establish the Joint Committee on Recent Intelligence, authorized Lundahl to take over the analysis of U-2 photography at the NPIC, requested that Cline brief EXCOMM on the intelligence, and ordered Carter to take over his place as Chairmen of the USIB. These decisions allowed him to concentrate on the policy decisions during EXCOMM meetings while still receiving intelligence reports as they arrived. McCone spent much of the first week of the crisis in meetings with EXCOMM, determining what course of action Kennedy needed to take to ensure the removal of the missiles from Cuba. He also had the important role of briefing former President Eisenhower on the situation. Because of McCone’s coordination of intelligence organization during the first week of the crisis, Kennedy and EXCOMM had the information they needed to make informed decisions when dealing with the Soviet government.

³¹⁵ Ibid.

CHAPTER THREE: John McCone and the Climax of the Cold War

After a week of lengthy deliberations with EXCOMM, President Kennedy decided that the best course of action to confront the Soviet missile threat in Cuba was to initiate a blockade of Cuba. The president informed the American public of his decision during a televised address on Monday evening, October 22. For the next week of the crisis, McCone continued to receive detailed intelligence estimates and reports from the committees he established at the beginning of the crisis. He kept many members of Congress and the press informed on the crisis, and gave U.S. Ambassador Stevenson the support of his deputies Ray Cline and Arthur Lundahl to answer any questions on the evidence presented during the United Nations discussions. Because of his own personal involvement in EXCOMM and the strain of the crisis, McCone requested that Cline prepare official CIA briefings containing all current intelligence. After Khrushchev made his decision to end the crisis by removing the missiles, McCone pressed the intelligence community and the administration to maintain its intelligence mission in Cuba to insure that the Soviet Union was removing the missiles as pledged. By early November, the intelligence community confirmed to McCone that the Soviets were indeed removing the offensive weapons from Cuba, and the crisis officially ended. McCone briefed members of Congress and the press, advised the government on the intelligence, and advocated continued intelligence operations in Cuba until the Soviets removed the missiles.

In his radio and television on Monday night, October 22, the president assured the people that the government “has maintained the closest surveillance of the Soviet military buildup on the island of Cuba.”³¹⁶ The president confirmed that the United States had conclusive evidence

³¹⁶ John F. Kennedy, “Radio and Television Report to the American People on the Soviet Arms Buildup in Cuba,” October 22, 1962, John F. Kennedy Library, *Speeches and Press Releases*, <http://www.jfklibrary.org/Historical+Resources/Archives/Reference+Desk/Speeches/Speeches+of+John+F.+Kennedy.htm> (accessed September 28, 2010).

of offensive missile sites in Cuba. He told the American people that his administration received the first reports of the missiles on Tuesday morning, October 15, and increased the surveillance of Cuba thereafter. He explained that the MRBM sites in Cuba had the ability to launch nuclear warheads at Washington, D.C., the Panama Canal, Cape Canaveral, along with any city in the southeastern United States and Central America. The sites still under construction were for IRBMs, each with twice the range of the MRBMs, able to attack targets from Canada to Peru.³¹⁷ He stressed the establishment of a missile base in Cuba represented a serious threat to the security of the Western Hemisphere, and that the Kremlin had deliberately lied by claiming earlier “that the arms buildup in Cuba would retain its original defensive character.”³¹⁸

Because of the pace of construction and the size of the project in Cuba, the president believed the Soviets must have made the decision long before the introduction of the missiles. Kennedy confirmed, “Only last Thursday, as evidence of this rapid offensive buildup was already in my mind, Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko told me in my office that he was instructed to make it clear once again...that Soviet assistance to Cuba pursued solely the purpose of contributing to the defense capabilities of Cuba.”³¹⁹ Because of the presence of missiles in Cuba, the president insisted, “Neither the United States nor the world community can tolerate deliberate deception and offensive threats on the part of any nation, large or small.”³²⁰ If the Soviets maintained the missiles in Cuba, they represented a “clear and present danger” designed to be “a deliberately provocative and unjustified change in the status quo which cannot be accepted by any country.”³²¹

³¹⁷ Ibid.

³¹⁸ Ibid.

³¹⁹ Ibid.

³²⁰ Ibid.

³²¹ Ibid.

After Kennedy described the Soviet buildup in Cuba, he detailed the American response to Soviet actions. He promised to halt the Soviet buildup with a “strict quarantine of all offensive military equipment under shipment to Cuba.”³²² If needed, the government could expand the quarantine to include other types of cargo but would not restrict the flow of food and supplies to the island. While the Navy instituted the blockade, the administration planned to continue the increased surveillance of Cuba, and if the Soviets continued construction of the missiles, resolution of the crisis might require further action. To discourage the Soviet government from underestimating the resolve of the United States, Kennedy argued, “It shall be the policy of this Nation to regard any nuclear missile launched from Cuba against any nation in the Western Hemisphere as an attack by the Soviet Union on the United States.”³²³ In case the situation escalated, the president placed the military on standby alert and removed non-essential personnel from Guantanamo Bay. Kennedy also called for a meeting with the Organization of American States (OAS) to consider the threat to their nations and to give the United States the legal means to protect the hemisphere. Finally, he urged Khrushchev to remove the missiles from Cuba that threatened the stability of the region and relations between the United States and the Soviet Union. Kennedy left no doubt that the United States and its people faced a difficult task, but argued that the United States did not enter the fight for victory, but for freedom and peace in the hemisphere and the world.³²⁴

While the president addressed the nation, the Joint Committee released their daily evaluation on the intelligence gathered from the U-2 flights of October 20. For the first time in

³²² Ibid.

³²³ Ibid.

³²⁴ Ibid.

the crisis, the U-2 photography did not discover any new missile sites under construction.³²⁵ However, the photography showed an increased number of missiles and launchers at the sites. The readout showed three additional MRBMs and four additional launchers, bringing the total to thirty-three MRBMs along with twenty-three launchers.³²⁶ The U-2 discovered another SAM site as well, bringing the total to twenty-four operational SAM sites.³²⁷ The photography showed no IRBMs in Cuba, and still no information on the presence of nuclear warheads.³²⁸ The National Security Agency (NSA) also released an intelligence report that showed several Soviet ships had reversed course during the evening and headed back to the Soviet Union.³²⁹ McCone received word of these reports the following morning, before his meeting with EXCOMM.

After McCone received the intelligence reports from the NSA and the Joint Committee, he promised to bring them up during his EXCOMM briefing. Along with a report on Soviet ships, McCone showed increased evidence that the Soviets controlled the missile sites in Cuba without Cuban personnel. McCone then asked Lundahl to show the group the photographs from the recent U-2 missions.³³⁰ Lundahl confirmed that the missions from October 14-20 covered ninety-seven percent of the island, and showed several MRBM launchers possibly ready for launch in a matter of minutes.³³¹ Robert Kennedy asked why intelligence reports failed to discover the operational missiles earlier, to which McCone argued that the rapid pace of

³²⁵ “Supplement 3 to Joint Evaluation of Soviet Missile Threat in Cuba, 22 October 1962 [Excerpt],” in McAuliffe, *CIA Documents*, 281-283.

³²⁶ *Ibid.*

³²⁷ *Ibid.*

³²⁸ *Ibid.*

³²⁹ Brugioni, *Eyeball to Eyeball*, 392.

³³⁰ McCone, “Memorandum of Meeting of Executive Committee of the NSC, 10:00 a.m., October 23, 1962,” in McAuliffe, *CIA Documents*, 283-285. See also “Minutes of Meeting of the Executive Committee of the National Security Council, U.S. Department of State, *FRUS*, Vol. XI, http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/frus.html (accessed August 30, 2010).

³³¹ “Minutes of Meeting of the Executive Committee of the National Security Council,” October 23, 1962, U.S. Department of State, *FRUS*, Vol. XI, http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/frus.html (accessed August 30, 2010).

construction led to the sudden discovery of the operational launchers.³³² McCone asked the group to allow him to brief certain members of the Senate and members of the press, which EXCOMM approved.³³³ The committee then discussed the steps needed to establish the blockade. McNamara wanted to inform the Soviets on the exact time the blockade was to begin, and created plans to intercept the closest Soviet ships when the blockade began.³³⁴ The president decided that if the OAS approved the blockade, it would begin on Wednesday morning, October 24.³³⁵

Following this discussion, the group considered the implications of the Soviets deciding to initiate a blockade or launch an attack against the United States or NATO. McCone believed that the Soviets might launch a blockade of West Berlin, and had a greater chance of capitulating before the Cubans.³³⁶ McNamara wanted a policy in place to inform the chain of command so they could quickly respond to any attack.³³⁷ If the Soviets launched an attack on the reconnaissance planes, the president approved the use of attack aircraft to destroy any SAM site that engaged them. Taylor ordered eight attack aircraft be ready to launch immediately, and the Navy prepared to conduct search and rescue operations in case the pilot survived the attack. To limit the U-2's vulnerability to fighters, Kennedy authorized the CIA and Department of Defense to monitor air traffic in and around Cuba, and keep the U-2 away from any reported buildup.³³⁸

³³² Ibid.

³³³ McCone, "Memorandum of Meeting of Executive Committee of the NSC, 10:00 a.m., October 23, 1962," in McAuliffe, *CIA Documents*, 283-285.

³³⁴ "Minutes of Meeting of the Executive Committee of the National Security Council, U.S. Department of State, *FRUS*, Vol. XI, http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/frus.html (accessed August 30, 2010).

³³⁵ Ibid.

³³⁶ Beschloss, *Crisis Years*, 489-490.

³³⁷ McCone, "Memorandum of Meeting of Executive Committee of the NSC, 10:00 a.m., October 23, 1962," in McAuliffe, *CIA Documents*, 283-285. See also "Minutes of Meeting of the Executive Committee of the National Security Council," October 23, 1962, U.S. Department of State, *FRUS*, Vol. XI, http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/frus.html (accessed August 30, 2010).

³³⁸ Ibid.

The group also authorized several low-level reconnaissance flights to prepare the ordnance required to destroy the missile sites.³³⁹

Stevenson argued that it was extremely important that the National Photographic Intelligence Center (NPIC) and his office continue to receive new reconnaissance pictures as soon as possible. McCone agreed to send copies of the relevant photography to Stevenson.³⁴⁰ Ball conveyed to the group Stevenson's concerns about not having enough evidence to bring to the United Nations Security Council meeting. Stevenson proposed one large map showing the locations of the missile sites, photographs of the construction, a list of all the missile sites, and prior images gathered from U-2 reconnaissance over IRBM and MRBM sites in the Soviet Union. McCone decided to accept all of Stevenson's requests except for the prior photographs of missiles in Soviet territory, and ordered Lundahl and Cline to report to the UN to answer Stevenson's questions.³⁴¹ After McCone's suggestion to send Lundahl and Cline to the UN, Bundy suggested that each member of EXCOMM have a staff member as an aide. The group accepted McCone's suggestion to have Carter confer with members of the State Department and the Department of Defense to find the best candidates for the positions.³⁴²

At the conclusion of the EXCOMM meeting, McCone returned to CIA headquarters to brief members of the press.³⁴³ He answered questions from Arthur Krock³⁴⁴ on the blockade, other options open to the president, and some of the background leading up to that decision.³⁴⁵ After his briefing, McCone stated, "Krock seemed in general agreement with the course of

³³⁹ Ibid.

³⁴⁰ Ibid.

³⁴¹ Ibid.

³⁴² Ibid.

³⁴³ John McCone, "Meetings with Mr. Krock, Mr. David Lawrence, and Mr. Scott, 23 October 1962," in McAuliffe, *CIA Documents*, 287.

³⁴⁴ Arthur Krock was a political writer and analyst for the *New York Times* from 1932 to 1966.

³⁴⁵ McCone, "Meetings with Mr. Krock, Mr. David Lawrence, and Mr. Scott, 23 October 1962," in McAuliffe, *CIA Documents*, 287. See also Arthur Krock, "In the Nation: Preparations were anything but secret," October 23, 1962, *New York Times*, 35.

action.”³⁴⁶ Later that afternoon, McCone received calls from David Lawrence³⁴⁷ and Paul Scott³⁴⁸ on the Cuban situation. McCone showed them several photographs to convince them the evidence existed for their actions in Cuba.³⁴⁹ Lawrence and Scott wanted to know why the intelligence community did not know sooner about the buildup in Cuba, and how Senator Kenneth Keating³⁵⁰ received intelligence information in August and September.³⁵¹ McCone explained the reasons for the intelligence problems and the timing of the President’s response, but said nothing about Keating’s statements.³⁵² Lawrence and Scott argued that members of the administration informed the press that no offensive weapons were in Cuba, even after the White House received the contrary reports during the prior week.³⁵³ The two columnists believed that the White House briefings over the last week misled the press, and they questioned the decision to have those briefings.³⁵⁴

McCone had another conversation with Scott, where Scott attacked McCone’s creation of the Board of National Estimates (BNE) because of its failures to predict the placement of missiles in Cuba. Scott told McCone, “I guess we’re going to have to blow you out of this (waters) for not reorganizing your estimating process.”³⁵⁵ He quoted from the October 4 estimate and argued that the estimate misled the government into believing that the Soviets did not

³⁴⁶ McCone, “Meetings with Mr. Krock, Mr. David Lawrence, and Mr. Scott, 23 October 1962,” in McAuliffe, *CIA Documents*, 287. See also Krock, “In the Nation: The Issue’s ‘Death’ Does Not Preclude an Autopsy,” October 25, 1962, *New York Times*, 38.

³⁴⁷ David Lawrence was an editor and columnist for the *U.S. News and World Report*.

³⁴⁸ Paul Scott was a columnist for the *New York Times*.

³⁴⁹ McCone, “Meetings with Mr. Krock, Mr. David Lawrence, and Mr. Scott, 23 October 1962,” in McAuliffe, *CIA Documents*, 287.

³⁵⁰ Senator Kenneth Keating was a Senator from New York during the Cuban Missile Crisis. During the buildup to the crisis, he believed that the Soviets were placing IRBMs into Cuba, and wanted Kennedy to action action. He claimed to receive intelligence reports in late August that confirmed the presence of missiles in Cuba, but the evidence was not accurate since the first missiles did not arrive in Cuba until two weeks after his statements.

³⁵¹ McCone, “Meetings with Mr. Krock, Mr. David Lawrence, and Mr. Scott, 23 October 1962,” in McAuliffe, *CIA Documents*, 287.

³⁵² *Ibid.*

³⁵³ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

intend to place missiles in Cuba.³⁵⁶ He called the estimate “reckless,”³⁵⁷ and “was just another example of how the CIA estimating processes were not objective and served special interests.” Despite the fact that McCone tried for weeks to make the Board consider the possibility of missiles in Cuba, McCone told Scott that he knew nothing of the estimates.³⁵⁸ When he to the CIA, he wrote, “I have been forced to defend the Executive Branch of the Government and CIA against the questions (1) why did we not know about this sooner and (2) did we not estimate or forecast this eventuality.”³⁵⁹

After the clash with Scott, McCone had similar briefings with Senator Bourke Hicklenlooper, Senator Russell, and Congressmen Vinson.³⁶⁰ After briefing Russell, McCone noted that while the senator was outspoken during the meeting with the president on Monday evening, the Georgia Democrat, “indicated a less critical attitude towards Administration policy.”³⁶¹ Russell approved the decision of the administration, but questioned the effectiveness of a blockade and the political consequences for American/Soviet relations.³⁶² He believed that an air strike and invasion were the next crucial steps after the blockade.³⁶³ Senator Hicklenlooper, a Colorado Republican, shared Russell’s support for the president’s speech and choices, as well as concerns that the president’s advisors might pressure Kennedy to take a weaker position in Cuba.³⁶⁴ McCone believed that the speech eased the senator’s concerns, and seemed more satisfied with the president’s course of action than during the meeting on Monday

³⁵⁶ Ibid.

³⁵⁷ Ibid.

³⁵⁸ Ibid.

³⁵⁹ Ibid.

³⁶⁰ McCone, “Meetings with Senator Russell, Senator Hickenlooper, and Chairman Vinson, 23 October 1962,” in *ibid.*, 289-290.

³⁶¹ McCone, “Meetings with Senator Russell, Senator Hickenlooper, and Chairman Vinson, 23 October 1962,” in *ibid.*, 289-290. See also James A. Nathan, *The Cuban Missile Crisis Revisited* (New York: Saint Martin’s Press, 1992), 165.

³⁶² McCone, “Meetings with Senator Russell, Senator Hickenlooper, and Chairman Vinson, 23 October 1962,” in *ibid.*, 289-290.

³⁶³ Ibid.

³⁶⁴ Ibid.

night.³⁶⁵ Congressman Vinson, another Georgia Democrat, felt that the president made an excellent speech, but believed military action was the next step if the blockade failed to produce results.³⁶⁶ Vinson reviewed the naval situation with McCone, and insisted that the blockade be effective, and preparations for a swift attack be in place to remove Castro. After the meetings, McCone pointed out that Vinson and Russell “were very inquisitive as to the position of the joint chiefs.”³⁶⁷ McCone defended Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) Chairmen Taylor and other supporters of the quick action group, as well as the civilian administration’s decision for the blockade. McCone told the men, “It must also be recognized that civilians with broader responsibilities, i.e. military and political as well, necessarily had to moderate the JCS view.”³⁶⁸ While Russell, Hicklenlooper, and Vinson all supported the decision not to launch a surprise attack, Russell “felt that a warning and a following military operation might have been preferable to a blockade.”³⁶⁹ Once again, McCone defended the administration by pointing to the fact that the administration had given the Soviets a clear warning in the speech, while leaving open the option for further action.³⁷⁰

McCone returned to the White House for another EXCOMM meeting at 6:00 PM. It was during this meeting that Kennedy signed the documents authorizing the blockade and other assets needed for the operation.³⁷¹ After McCone showed the preliminary reports from the low-level flights over Cuba, the president approved retaliatory strikes against Soviet defenses if they

³⁶⁵ McCone, “Meetings with Senator Russell, Senator Hickenlooper, and Chairman Vinson, 23 October 1962,” in *ibid.*, 289-290. See also James A. Nathan, *The Cuban Missile Crisis Revisited* (New York: Saint Martin’s Press, 1992), 165.

³⁶⁶ McCone, “Meetings with Senator Russell, Senator Hickenlooper, and Chairman Vinson, 23 October 1962,” in McAuliffe, *CIA Documents*, 289-290.

³⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁷¹ “Record of Action of the Second Meeting of the Executive Committee of the National Security Council,” October 23, 1962, U.S. Department of State, *FRUS*, Vol. XI, http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/frus.html (accessed August 30, 2010). See also McCone, “Memorandum for the Files,” October 23, 1962, in *ibid.*

fired on the reconnaissance aircraft and signed the official document authorizing the Joint Chiefs to take action in the event of an attack.³⁷² Rusk reported that the OAS made a unanimous decision to support the American blockade, giving the United States the legal support needed for the operation.³⁷³ In response to the decision by the OAS, Kennedy told McNamara to review all relevant details with the Fleet Commanders to ensure that the Navy followed his instructions.³⁷⁴ The group discussed the actions needed to combat Soviet resistance, including the failure of a community ship to stop, the refusal then to allow boarding, or the Soviet captain's decision to reverse course.

Assistant Secretary Steuart Pittman³⁷⁵ moved the discussion towards protection of the southeastern United States in the event the president authorized the invasion of Cuba.³⁷⁶ Pittman reported that if the Soviets launched the missiles from Cuba, only 40 million Americans out of 92 million residing in the southeastern United States had a chance of reaching fallout shelters.³⁷⁷ Pittman's reports worried Kennedy.³⁷⁸ In response, Kennedy asked for emergency steps, but McCone believed "that not very much could or would be done; that whatever was done would involve a great deal of publicity and public alarm."³⁷⁹ Because of McNamara's plan to leave the

³⁷² "Record of Action of the Second Meeting of the Executive Committee of the National Security Council," U.S. Department of State, *FRUS*, Vol. XI, http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/frus.html (accessed August 30, 2010). See also McCone, "Memorandum for the Files," in *ibid.* See also Lawrence Burd, "Kennedy Signs Quarantine in Cuba," October 24, 1962, *Chicago Tribune*, 12.

³⁷³ "Record of Action of the Second Meeting of the Executive Committee of the National Security Council," October 23, 1962, U.S. Department of State, *FRUS*, Vol. XI, http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/frus.html (accessed August 30, 2010). See also McCone, "Memorandum for the Files," October 23, 1962, in *ibid.*

³⁷⁴ "Record of Action of the Second Meeting of the Executive Committee of the National Security Council," October 23, 1962, in *ibid.*

³⁷⁵ Steuart Pittman served as the Assistant Secretary of Defense under Dean Rusk, and was responsible for the nation's civil defense programs.

³⁷⁶ "Record of Action of the Second Meeting of the Executive Committee of the National Security Council," October 23, 1962, U.S. Department of State, *FRUS*, Vol. XI, http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/frus.html (accessed August 30, 2010). See also McCone, "Memorandum for the Files," in *ibid.*

³⁷⁷ McCone, "Memorandum for the Files," October 23, 1962, in *ibid.*

³⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

meeting at 7:00, McCone urged the president to allow him to give his intelligence appraisal of the situation, because he believed that some of the items in the reports from the intelligence community might be significant in McNamara's briefing to Fleet Commanders.³⁸⁰

At the conclusion of McCone's intelligence report, Kennedy was satisfied with the plans for the blockade, and signed the executive order authorizing the blockade for Wednesday morning, October 24.³⁸¹ At 6:51 PM, he dispatched a message to Chairman Khrushchev, stating, "I think you will recognize that the steps which started the current chain of events was [sic] the action of your Government in secretly furnishing offensive weapons to Cuba. I hope that you will issue immediately the necessary instructions to your ships to observe the terms of the quarantine."³⁸²

McCone spent the remainder of the evening receiving intelligence estimates and reports he requested from the BNE and the Joint Committee. He received an estimate from Abbott Smith, the Acting Chairman of the BNE, on the blockade's probable effects on Cuba.³⁸³ Smith believed there would be no challenge to the Navy on October 24 and 25, but after that point the Soviets could decide to engage the blockade fleet if their political efforts failed. Smith's summary noted that the Soviets might stage an incident using a ship with non-military cargo and force the United States to attack the vessel. If the attack failed to end the blockade, the board agreed that the Soviets might attack Berlin in retaliation.³⁸⁴ After its analysis of Soviet statements, the report argued that the Soviets wanted to keep their options open by avoiding incidents but would employ submarines to protect the Soviet ships and deliver critical items

³⁸⁰ Record of Action of the Second Meeting of the Executive Committee of the National Security Council," October 23, 1962, U.S. Department of State, *FRUS*, Vol. XI, http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/frus.html (accessed August 30, 2010).

³⁸¹ *Ibid.*

³⁸² *Ibid.*

³⁸³ Abbott Smith, "Memorandum from the Acting Chairman of the Board of National Estimates (Smith) to Director of Central Intelligence McCone," in McAuliffe, *CIA Documents*, 292-298.

³⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

needed to complete the missile construction. If the Soviets decided to retaliate, they would attack either a U.S. ship or the access routes to Berlin, but Smith stipulated that despite the board's recommendations on possible Soviet retaliation, most members of the board believed the Soviets would not take military action.³⁸⁵

McCone also received the daily evaluation from the Joint Committee on the U-2 flights of Monday, October 23. At McCone's suggestion, the committee focused its evaluation on the completion status of the missiles, along with any changes found from the low-level photography.³⁸⁶ The Soviets continued construction at the rapid pace identified during the weekend, and the committee expected the completion of all the MRBM sites within the week.³⁸⁷ Neither the U-2 nor the RF-8s located any additional missiles, transports or launchers on Monday, and showed no new missile sites under construction.³⁸⁸ The new photography also confirmed that while there were no IRBMs present at the construction sites, there were increasing efforts to camouflage equipment at those sites.³⁸⁹ The committee confirmed earlier reports that several ships suspected of carrying missiles had reversed their courses, and it still had not discovered any definite nuclear warhead storage bunkers.³⁹⁰ The committee believed that while there was no evidence of nuclear warheads on the island, several Soviet transport aircraft could also deliver up to ten nuclear warheads at a time while remaining hidden from intelligence.³⁹¹

At 10:00 AM on Wednesday, October 24, EXCOMM met in the situation room at the White House. At the beginning of the meeting, McCone delivered the two intelligence reports he

³⁸⁵ Ibid.

³⁸⁶ "Supplement 5 to Joint Evaluation of Soviet Missile Threat in Cuba, 24 October 1962 [Excerpt]," in McAuliffe, *CIA Documents*, 299-301.

³⁸⁷ Ibid.

³⁸⁸ Ibid.

³⁸⁹ Ibid.

³⁹⁰ Ibid.

³⁹¹ Ibid.

received the prior evening. After McCone's briefing, McNamara outlined his efforts to defend the American bases in the southeastern United States.³⁹² McNamara showed photographs of the dispersal of U.S. aircraft, while Taylor outlined the procedures to decrease the time needed to respond during a missile attack.³⁹³ McNamara then recounted his meetings with Fleet Commanders, and their recommendations for naval interception of suspected ships. McNamara also provided evidence that Soviet submarines escorted some of the ships suspected of carrying missiles, meaning that the president might have to authorize the ships to attack those submarines during the boarding process.³⁹⁴ As the mood in the situation room intensified, McCone reported, "Mr. President, we have a preliminary report which seems to indicate that some of the Soviet ships have stopped dead in the water."³⁹⁵ After hearing McCone's report, Kennedy made the decision to halt the interception of any Soviet ships for at least an hour.³⁹⁶ At the conclusion of the meeting, Kennedy authorized McCone, Rusk, and McNamara to take immediate action to improve communications in the Caribbean area in order to decrease the time needed to formulate a response to any Soviet attack on the blockade fleet.³⁹⁷

Most EXCOMM members spent the rest of the day dealing with the blockade. McCone received several intelligence reports that the Soviet ships had indeed reversed course, along with

³⁹² McGeorge Bundy, "Record of Action of the Third Meeting of the Executive Committee of the National Security Council," October 24, 1962, U.S. Department of State, *FRUS*, Vol. XI, http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/frus.html (accessed August 30, 2010). See also Kennedy, *Thirteen Days*, 67-71.

³⁹³ Bundy, "Record of Action of the Third Meeting of the Executive Committee of the National Security Council," October 24, 1962, U.S. Department of State, *FRUS*, Vol. XI, http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/frus.html (accessed August 30, 2010).

³⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁹⁵ Kennedy, *Thirteen Days*, 67-71. See also Freedman, *Kennedy's Wars*, 198.

³⁹⁶ Bundy, "Record of Action of the Third Meeting of the Executive Committee of the National Security Council," October 24, 1962, U.S. Department of State, *FRUS*, Vol. XI, http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/frus.html (accessed August 30, 2010). See also Kennedy, *Thirteen Days*, 67-71.

³⁹⁷ Bundy, "Record of Action of the Third Meeting of the Executive Committee of the National Security Council," October 24, 1962, U.S. Department of State, *FRUS*, Vol. XI, http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/frus.html (accessed August 30, 2010).

intelligence on the Soviet construction efforts in Cuba.³⁹⁸ The next day, he delivered his all the relevant intelligence as of 6:00 AM that morning. The intelligence reports confirmed that fourteen out of the twenty-two ships presently on course for Cuba reversed their course.³⁹⁹ However, eight ships appeared to be continuing their approach to Cuba, five of which were tankers. Despite the tense situation and repeated threats from the Soviet leadership, McCone confirmed that, “We still see no signs of any crash procedure in measures to increase the readiness of Soviet armed forces.”⁴⁰⁰ Kennedy requested that McCone prepare another intelligence memorandum, detailing the political situation in Cuba and the effectiveness of dropping leaflets over the island.⁴⁰¹ Rusk asked McCone for answers regarding any changes to the course of the ships returning to the Soviet Union, the destination of Soviet ships bound for other nations besides Cuba, and the reaction of the Cuban public to American actions. McCone promised answers to those questions during subsequent meetings.⁴⁰²

After the intelligence briefing, McNamara reported that an American destroyer intercepted the tanker *Bucharest* earlier that morning. The destroyer hailed the vessel asking what it was transporting, and discovered from its captain that it carried petroleum.⁴⁰³ Because it contained only fuel, the group decided to keep the vessel under close surveillance rather than board it.⁴⁰⁴ When the president asked the status of other ships en route to Cuba, McCone informed him that a number of those ships in the Eastern Atlantic had changed course, but needed more time to gather information on the Soviet ships in the Pacific. Due to the success of

³⁹⁸ Ibid.

³⁹⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁰ “Record of Action of the Fourth meeting of the Executive Committee of the National Security Council,” October 25, 1962, in *ibid.*

⁴⁰¹ Ibid.

⁴⁰² “Memorandum for the Files,” U.S. Department of State, *FRUS*, Vol. XI, http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/frus.html (accessed August 30, 2010).

⁴⁰³ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid.

communications with the *Bucharest*, the group decided that the fleet should contact all ships en route to Cuba to determine their cargo.⁴⁰⁵ At the urging of McNamara and McCone, Kennedy also authorized another series of low-level reconnaissance flights over the missile sites, airfields, naval ports, and the suspected nuclear storage sites.⁴⁰⁶

McCone received a plethora of information from the U-2 and RF-8 reconnaissance flights throughout the day. The low-level flights showed that the Soviets had indeed started a crash program to complete construction on the MRBM sites.⁴⁰⁷ The photography also confirmed the presence of a nuclear storage site, probably completed between October 20 and 22. They also found two assembled IL-28 bombers, three under construction, and the crates present indicating an ability to construct twenty more. McCone provided this information to EXCOMM during the afternoon meeting, along with the list of Soviet ships approaching the Panama Canal from the Pacific.⁴⁰⁸ McCone noted that all ships underwent searches as they passed through the port, negating the need for a blockade of the canal as well. On the European front, McCone had no new intelligence on any “unusual developments in Europe.”⁴⁰⁹ McCone then passed the briefing on to Lundahl, who once again showed the photography gathered over the past day of flights.⁴¹⁰

The meeting then moved to diplomatic efforts in the United Nations. Rusk asked the group about the possibility of getting the missiles out of Cuba or at least place them under the control of the United Nations.⁴¹¹ He believed that if the government wished to negotiate with the

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁷ Brugioni, *Eyeball to Eyeball*, 423-424.

⁴⁰⁸ “Summary Record of the Fifth Meeting of the Executive Committee of the National Security Council,” October 25, 1962, U.S. Department of State, *FRUS*, Vol. XI, http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/frus.html (accessed September 20, 2010).

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid.

⁴¹⁰ Brugioni, *Eyeball to Eyeball*, 423-424.

⁴¹¹ “Summary Record of the Fifth Meeting of the Executive Committee of the National Security Council,” October 25, 1962, U.S. Department of State, *FRUS*, Vol. XI, http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/frus.html (accessed September 20, 2010).

Soviets, it needed to keep the pressure on the Soviet Union. It was crucial in the next two days for the American delegation to convince the Soviets to stop the missile buildup in Cuba.⁴¹² If the decision came down to the Security Council vote, Rusk believed it would receive a seven-to-two vote; therefore, to keep the pressure on the Soviet Union during the negotiations, both McNamara and Rusk approved the tightening of the blockade to include non-military equipment.⁴¹³ To limit the possibility of an incident, Rusk suggested the United States purchase the charter and cargo of any steamers en route to Cuba, and offer to let the captain and owner of the ship defect if needed. McCone agreed with Rusk's suggestion, because it would hinder the Soviet economy.⁴¹⁴

When the president joined the meeting, McNamara briefed him on the East German ship, the *Voelker Freundschaft*. It was currently beyond the quarantine line and being trailed by the destroyer *USS Pierce*.⁴¹⁵ Because of the message from Secretary General U Thant to avoid any incidents until after talks concluded at the UN, Kennedy asked if the East German ship fell under the message's request.⁴¹⁶ Bundy argued that U Thant's message did not cover the ship, while McNamara showed how difficult it was to stop a passenger ship.⁴¹⁷ The group decided to allow the ship to pass through the blockade, but decided to tighten the blockade to keep up the pressure on the Soviet Union.⁴¹⁸ It was at this point in the meeting that McCone "reported that some of

⁴¹² Ibid.

⁴¹³ Ibid.

⁴¹⁴ Ibid.

⁴¹⁵ Ibid.

⁴¹⁶ "Summary Record of the Fifth Meeting of the Executive Committee of the National Security Council," October 25, 1962, U.S. Department of State, *FRUS*, Vol. XI, http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/frus.html (accessed September 20, 2010). See also "Mr. U Thant To President Kennedy, October 25, 1962," in Kennedy, *Thirteen Days*, 187-189.

⁴¹⁷ "Summary Record of the Fifth Meeting of the Executive Committee of the National Security Council," October 25, 1962, U.S. Department of State, *FRUS*, Vol. XI, http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/frus.html (accessed September 20, 2010).

⁴¹⁸ Ibid.

the strategic missiles deployed in Cuba are now operational.”⁴¹⁹ With McCone’s statement, the conversation moved from blockade options to the possibility of air strikes and invasion. The president then received a series of documents proposing a series of air strikes against the offensive missile bases and bombers, a complete blockade of all military aircraft and shipments to Cuba, and plans for an invasion of the island to remove Castro and the missiles.⁴²⁰

Following the meeting, McCone received a message from Carter on a MONGOOSE operation scheduled for that week.⁴²¹ Carter informed McCone that the main problem in using MONGOOSE plans was the jurisdictional issues between the intelligence community and the JCS.⁴²² Carter noted that another problem was the length of time it took to approve operations under the MONGOOSE system, time not available in the current crisis.⁴²³ He confirmed that MONGOOSE secured 50 Cuban refugees to infiltrate the island prior to the invasion, to gather as much intelligence as possible.⁴²⁴ The problem was the operation proposed by General Edward Lansdale⁴²⁵ had severe logistical problems.⁴²⁶ In addition, the Cubans assigned to the operation had their own interests in mind, and not that of the greater U.S. strategy for the invasion.⁴²⁷ Carter noted that despite these problems, planning continued on the operation. The preliminary plan for the operation included reconnaissance of the MRBM and IRBM sites, collecting data and establishing a network to deliver that information. Because of the nature of the crisis at that

⁴¹⁹ Kennedy, *Thirteen Days*, 187-189.

⁴²⁰ “Summary Record of the Fifth Meeting of the Executive Committee of the National Security Council,” October 25, 1962, U.S. Department of State, *FRUS*, Vol. XI, http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/frus.html (accessed September 20, 2010).

⁴²¹ Carter, “MONGOOSE Operations and General Lansdale’s Problems, 25 October 1962,” in McAuliffe, *CIA Documents*, 311-312.

⁴²² *Ibid.*

⁴²³ *Ibid.*

⁴²⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴²⁵ General Edwards Lansdale was an U.S. Air Force officer who served as the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Special Operations.

⁴²⁶ Carter, “MONGOOSE Operations and General Lansdale’s Problems, 25 October 1962,” in McAuliffe, *CIA Documents*, 311-312.

⁴²⁷ *Ibid.*

point, Carter believed that the operation had moved beyond the Special Group level, making it difficult to utilize the MONGOOSE plans.⁴²⁸

The Joint Committee's daily evaluation released early on October 26 did little to ease McCone's mind about the problems preparing for an invasion. The board analyzed the nine low-level flights as well as the single U-2 flight. While the photography of the low-level flights of October 25 showed no new missile sites, it did show that Soviets were in a crash building program at four of the MRBM sites, "directed toward achieving a full operational capability as soon as possible."⁴²⁹ The photography also confirmed that the Soviets had made no noticeable effort to dismantle the missile sites and had actually increased their camouflaging efforts over critical equipment. Thankfully, the photography from the low-level flights showed no additional missiles, vehicles, or launch equipment at the missile sites.⁴³⁰ The group believed that the heavy rains of the prior day kept the Soviets from activating the San Cristobal missile site.⁴³¹ However, they expected the site to be operational sometime that day.⁴³² The photography also confirmed that three of the Soviet ships believed to be transporting missiles continued their course towards the Soviet Union.⁴³³

Early on the morning of Thursday, October 26, McCone received the CIA's briefing on the intelligence received during the night.⁴³⁴ McCone once again briefed EXCOMM on that intelligence, which included the present course of several Soviet ships and aircraft en route to Cuba, status of the Soviet armed forces, and the Soviet response to the UN's call for

⁴²⁸ Ibid.

⁴²⁹ "Supplement 6 of Joint Evaluation of Soviet Missile Threat in Cuba, 26 October 1962 [Excerpt]," in *ibid.*, 313-314.

⁴³⁰ Ibid.

⁴³¹ Ibid.

⁴³² Ibid.

⁴³³ Ibid.

⁴³⁴ "Central Intelligence Agency Memorandum, The Crisis, USSR/Cuba, 26 October 1962 [Excerpt]," in *ibid.*, 315-316.

negotiations.⁴³⁵ As of 6:00 AM that morning, McCone confirmed that two Soviet freighters and five tankers remained on course for Cuba.⁴³⁶ One of the freighters, the *Belovodsk*, carried up to twelve Mi-4 helicopters⁴³⁷, and was currently in the North Atlantic.⁴³⁸ The other remaining freighter, the *Pugachev*, was near the Panama Canal, and appeared to have stopped or slowed its progression to Cuba.⁴³⁹ According to the CIA reports, McCone believed that the Soviets and its satellites had increased their alert status, but made no major changes in deployment of forces in Europe. On the political front, sources in the Soviet Union confirmed that Khrushchev accepted U Thant's proposal for U.S.-Soviet negotiations.⁴⁴⁰ McCone noted that the decision to enter negotiations angered Chinese officials, who wanted a stronger response from the Soviets to the crisis.⁴⁴¹ McCone then informed the president that he halted a CIA operation that used submarines to deliver fifty Cuban refugees to the island, pending discussions by the group. Kennedy believed that the Special Group should study the proposal that day, suggesting that the group reintroduce MONGOOSE as part of EXCOMM's deliberations.⁴⁴² Kennedy believed that the JCS and the CIA needed to coordinate all existing plans for possible covert activities as a prelude to invasion. McCone then informed the president that the location of the *SS Oxford*, one of the CIA's communications ships, left it open to attack from the Cuban mainland.⁴⁴³ Kennedy

⁴³⁵ Ibid.

⁴³⁶ Ibid.

⁴³⁷ The Soviet Mi-4 helicopter (NATO Codename: 'Hound') was a transport helicopter designed by Mil Moscow Helicopter Plant. The Soviet Union replaced the Mi-4 with the Mi-8 at the time of the crisis, passing most of the remaining models to Soviet allies in Europe, Middle East, and Cuba. It had the capacity to carry 16 troops up to 300 nautical miles, making it well suited to the Cuban air forces.

⁴³⁸ "Central Intelligence Agency Memorandum, The Crisis, USSR/Cuba, 26 October 1962 [Excerpt]," in McAuliffe, *CIA Documents*, 315-316.

⁴³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴⁴² Ibid.

⁴⁴³ Brugioni, *Eyeball to Eyeball*, 440.

stated that the “Navy should have the authority to control this ship, but it should take into account CIA’s concern.”⁴⁴⁴

McNamara urged the president to issue a statement informing the Soviets of the continuation of surveillance flights over Cuba because of the Soviet decision to continue construction on the missile sites. He wanted both day and night reconnaissance flights to challenge the Soviet air defenses, including dropping flares during the night flights.⁴⁴⁵ When asked his opinion, McCone informed the group that the USIB had recommended against night reconnaissance flights.⁴⁴⁶ Rusk also questioned the effect that night missions might have on the negotiations at the UN.⁴⁴⁷ When McNamara promoted the issue of a warning about the flights, Stevenson supported Rusk’s position on the issue. Due to the efforts of McCone, Rusk, and Stevenson, the president authorized the daylight missions but delayed the night missions.⁴⁴⁸ EXCOMM discussed the objectives of the UN negotiations for that day, including forcing a commitment from the Soviets to halt construction, halt further shipments, and removing the existing missiles from Cuba. To accomplish these goals, the quarantine had to continue, and they had to increase the list of items on the embargo list.⁴⁴⁹ McCone argued that any decision the group made must end with the removal of both Castro and the missiles, because even if they removed the missiles, Castro still could undermine his Latin American neighbors.⁴⁵⁰ Kennedy,

⁴⁴⁴ “Central Intelligence Agency Memorandum, The Crisis, USSR/Cuba, 26 October 1962 [Excerpt],” in McAuliffe, *CIA Documents*, 315-316.

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁶ Brugioni, *Eyeball to Eyeball*, 440.

⁴⁴⁷ “Summary Record of the Sixth Meeting of the Executive Committee of the National Security Council,” October 26, 1962, U.S. Department of State, *FRUS*, Vol. XI, http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/frus.html (accessed September 20, 2010).

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁰ Freedman, *Kennedy’s Wars*, 213, 235.

Bundy, and Rusk agreed that their primary concern was the removal of the missiles from Cuba.⁴⁵¹

Following the EXCOMM meeting, McCone attended a MONGOOSE meeting with the Special Group.⁴⁵² Because of the rift forming between Lansdale and the CIA, McCone held the meeting to coordinate MONGOOSE operations with the JCS plans for the invasion of Cuba.⁴⁵³ McCone argued that because they designed MONGOOSE to create uprisings in Cuba to remove Castro from power, it must remain subordinate to the invasion plans.⁴⁵⁴ He quelled any belief that the CIA failed to give Lansdale the support he needed by confirming that Lansdale would continue as director of the operation.⁴⁵⁵ However, the changes brought by the crisis meant that covert operations needed to compliment invasion strategies, so the military would assume some of the responsibilities previously assigned to MONGOOSE.⁴⁵⁶ While many of the responsibilities shifted to the military, McCone and the rest of the Special Group confirmed that Lansdale was to be in charge of all covert activities in Cuba.⁴⁵⁷ They charged Lansdale to analyze the needs of the government and formulate a procedures based on his available assets.⁴⁵⁸

The strain on McCone and other members of the administration became apparent during the long Friday deliberations.⁴⁵⁹ McCone feared that the continued strain might affect their emotional states, especially after the president authorized the State Department to prepare plans

⁴⁵¹ “Summary Record of the Sixth Meeting of the Executive Committee of the National Security Council,” October 26, 1962, U.S. Department of State, *FRUS*, Vol. XI, http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/frus.html (accessed September 20, 2010).

⁴⁵² McCone, “Memorandum of MONGOOSE Meeting in the JCS Operations Room, October 26, 1962 at 2:30 PM,” in McAuliffe, *CIA Documents*, 319-320.

⁴⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵⁴ McCone, “Memorandum of MONGOOSE Meeting in the JCS Operations Room, October 26, 1962 at 2:30 PM,” in *ibid.*, 319-320. See also Bohning, *The Castro Obsession*, 127-128.

⁴⁵⁵ McCone, “Memorandum of MONGOOSE Meeting in the JCS Operations Room, October 26, 1962 at 2:30 PM,” in McAuliffe, *CIA Documents*, 319-320.

⁴⁵⁶ *Ibid.* See also Bohning, *The Castro Obsession*, 127.

⁴⁵⁷ McCone, “Memorandum of MONGOOSE Meeting in the JCS Operations Room, October 26, 1962 at 2:30 PM,” in McAuliffe, *CIA Documents*, 319-320.

⁴⁵⁸ *Ibid.* See also Bohning, *The Castro Obsession*, 93, 115.

⁴⁵⁹ Brugioni, *Eyeball to Eyeball*, 445-450. See also Kennedy, *Thirteen Days*, 85-90.

for an interim Cuban government once the invasion commenced.⁴⁶⁰ McCone argued that the group should understand that an invasion was “a much more serious undertaking than most people had previously realized.”⁴⁶¹ When the Navy successfully boarded the freighter *Marcula*, the intensity of the situation kept the group from lifting “the feeling of gloom that was settling over our committee and its deliberations.”⁴⁶²

Throughout the day on Friday, McCone and the other members of EXCOMM continued preparations for an invasion. At the same time, Roger Hilsman, the Director of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, received a message from John Scali, an ABC news correspondent.⁴⁶³ In his message, Scali told Hilsman of a meeting with Alexander Fomin⁴⁶⁴ earlier that morning, where Fomin asked if the State Department might be interested in settling the Cuban crisis by dismantling the missile sites in return for an American pledge not to invade Cuba.⁴⁶⁵ Hilsman passed this message to the president, who met with select members of EXCOMM to question the proposal.⁴⁶⁶ McCone urged caution, because he believed, “No Soviet official of that rank could make such a suggestion without Khrushchev’s approval.”⁴⁶⁷ After Kennedy sent his reply to

⁴⁶⁰ Brugioni, *Eyeball to Eyeball*, 445-450.

⁴⁶¹ Kennedy, *Thirteen Days*, 85.

⁴⁶² *Ibid.*

⁴⁶³ “Memorandum from ABC Correspondent John Scali to the Director of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research (Hilsman),” October 26, 1962, U.S. Department of State, *FRUS*, Vol. XI, http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/frus.html (accessed September 20, 2010). See also Hilsman, *To Move a Nation: The Politics of Foreign Policy in the Administration of John F. Kennedy* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1967), 217-219, and Pierre Salinger, *With Kennedy*, (New York: Avon Books, 1967), 274.

⁴⁶⁴ Alexander Fomin (formally Aleksandr Feklisov) was a Soviet spy and Soviet KGB Station Chief during the Cuban Missile Crisis. Khrushchev used Fomin as a means of opening secret negotiations with Kennedy to end the crisis.

⁴⁶⁵ “Memorandum from ABC Correspondent John Scali to the Director of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research (Hilsman),” October 26, 1962, U.S. Department of State, *FRUS*, Vol. XI, http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/frus.html (accessed September 20, 2010). See also Hilsman, *Cuban Missile Crisis*, 121, 127-128 and Fursenko and Naftali, *One Hell of a Gamble*, 270.

⁴⁶⁶ “Memorandum from ABC Correspondent John Scali to the Director of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research (Hilsman),” October 26, 1962, U.S. Department of State, *FRUS*, Vol. XI, http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/frus.html (accessed September 20, 2010).

⁴⁶⁷ Brugioni, *Eyeball to Eyeball*, 445.

Khrushchev confirming his acceptance of the proposal, the group spent the rest of the afternoon awaiting the Kremlin's reply.⁴⁶⁸

When Khrushchev's message arrived at 6:00, EXCOMM gathered to analyze the document. The group agreed it was a very emotional and personal letter written by Khrushchev intended to end the threat of nuclear war.⁴⁶⁹ Khrushchev promised to remove the weapons presently in Cuba and end further arms shipments to the island. He would only do this in exchange for the end of the American blockade of Cuba and a promise not to invade Cuba.⁴⁷⁰ The members of EXCOMM continued their examination of the document into the early morning hours, after which the group decided to allow the State Department to prepare its own analysis because of their emotional and physical condition. The president requested that intelligence sources have their analysis ready for the Saturday morning EXCOMM meeting.⁴⁷¹

The hope felt by many of EXCOMM's members faded when Washington received another statement from the Soviet government.⁴⁷² The second letter added the removal missiles in Turkey to the original agreement, which severely complicated the political situation and increased the intensity of the crisis.⁴⁷³ The intelligence reports coming from Cuba did little to calm nerves.⁴⁷⁴ Early Saturday morning, the Joint Committee released its report that five of the MRBM sites were operational, and could launch all their missiles within six to eight hours.⁴⁷⁵ Despite Khrushchev's letter, photography showed no halt to construction on the missile sites.⁴⁷⁶

⁴⁶⁸ Kennedy, *Thirteen Days*, 86.

⁴⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 86-87.

⁴⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 91.

⁴⁷² *Ibid.*, 91-93.

⁴⁷³ Kennedy, *Thirteen Days*, 91-93. See also "U.S. Bars Any Deal With Turkey," October 28, 1962, *Washington Post*, A1.

⁴⁷⁴ Kennedy, *Thirteen Days*, 93.

⁴⁷⁵ "Supplement 7 to Joint Evaluation of Soviet Missile Threat in Cuba, 27 October 1962 [Excerpt]," in McAuliffe, *CIA Documents*, 323-325.

⁴⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

Another U-2 photographed a FROG missile launcher near Remedios, and a probable nuclear storage bunker adjacent to the launchers at each site.⁴⁷⁷ Intelligence failed to determine if the ships approaching the blockade changed their course during the night or the status of Soviet troops.⁴⁷⁸ CIA intelligence sources also reported on the mobilization of Cuban and Soviet units in Cuba, but stipulated that these units were under orders not to take action unless the United States attacked.⁴⁷⁹ Other intelligence reports confirmed the activation of all twenty-four SAM sites, and the presence of Soviet submarines near the quarantine line.⁴⁸⁰

The tense situation reached its breaking point on Saturday, October 27. McCone started the meeting once again with a briefing on current intelligence.⁴⁸¹ After McCone informed EXCOMM that most of the MRBMs were operational, most of the members “seemed to be holding their breath.”⁴⁸² McNamara also confirmed that the freighter *Graznyy* was closing on the blockade line, and he recommended that the Navy intercept it.⁴⁸³ To warn the Soviets against approaching the line, the president requested that U Thant inform the Soviet delegation of the established quarantine line.⁴⁸⁴ When McNamara asked for more intelligence missions, Kennedy

⁴⁷⁷ “Supplement 7 to Joint Evaluation of Soviet Missile Threat in Cuba, 27 October 1962 [Excerpt],” in McAuliffe, *CIA Documents*, 323-325.

⁴⁷⁸ “Central Intelligence Agency Memorandum, The Crisis, USSR/Cuba, 27 October 1962 [Excerpt],” in *ibid.*, 326-329.

⁴⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸¹ “Summary Record of the Seventh Meeting of the Executive Committee of the National Security Council,” October 27, 1962, U.S. Department of State, *FRUS*, Vol. XI,

http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/frus.html (accessed September 29, 2010). See also Kennedy, *Thirteen Days*, 93. See also Brugioni, *Eyeball to Eyeball*, 458-462. See also Sorensen, *Kennedy*, 712-716.

⁴⁸² Brugioni, *Eyeball to Eyeball*, 458. See also Lawrence Burd, “Reds Speed Cuban Missile Buildup,” October 27, 1962, *Chicago Tribune*, A1.

⁴⁸³ Brugioni, *Eyeball to Eyeball*, 458.

⁴⁸⁴ “Summary Record of the Seventh Meeting of the Executive Committee of the National Security Council,” October 27, 1962, U.S. Department of State, *FRUS*, Vol. XI,

http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/frus.html (accessed September 29, 2010). See also Kennedy, *Thirteen Days*, 93. See also Brugioni, *Eyeball to Eyeball*, 458-462. See also Sorensen, *Kennedy*, 712-716.

authorized two missions for that day.⁴⁸⁵ However, McCone countered McNamara's request for night missions, because of Carter and Lundahl's reports that it would have no great benefit to the intelligence mission.⁴⁸⁶ Kennedy chose to keep the flights grounded for the time being, but he requested they remain on standby in case he needed to alter the plans.⁴⁸⁷ The group then discussed the missile bases in Turkey. Ball and Paul Nitze⁴⁸⁸ argued that removing the missiles would be difficult politically.⁴⁸⁹ Nitze recommended that the group focus on Cuba, and not on the U.S. bases in other nations.⁴⁹⁰ Rusk and Bundy believed they should not link Cuba to Turkey, because the Soviet missiles remained in Cuba.⁴⁹¹ The president noted that he considered removal of the missiles several days prior, but the second letter from the Soviets eliminated the possibility of quietly removing the missiles.⁴⁹² Dillon believed that the second letter from the Soviets was a stalling tactic designed to give Soviet personnel time to complete construction on the MRBM sites.⁴⁹³

⁴⁸⁵ "Summary Record of the Seventh Meeting of the Executive Committee of the National Security Council," October 27, 1962, U.S. Department of State, *FRUS*, Vol. XI, http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/frus.html (accessed September 29, 2010).

⁴⁸⁶ Brugioni, *Eyeball to Eyeball*, 458-462.

⁴⁸⁷ "Summary Record of the Seventh Meeting of the Executive Committee of the National Security Council," October 27, 1962, U.S. Department of State, *FRUS*, Vol. XI, http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/frus.html (accessed September 29, 2010). See also Fursenko and Naftali, *One Hell of a Gamble*, 283.

⁴⁸⁸ Paul Nitze served as the Secretary of Defense for International Security Defense during the Cuban Missile Crisis.

⁴⁸⁹ "Summary Record of the Seventh Meeting of the Executive Committee of the National Security Council," October 27, 1962, U.S. Department of State, *FRUS*, Vol. XI, http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/frus.html (accessed September 29, 2010). See also Weisbrot, *Maximum Danger*, 162, 198.

⁴⁹⁰ "Summary Record of the Seventh Meeting of the Executive Committee of the National Security Council," October 27, 1962, U.S. Department of State, *FRUS*, Vol. XI, http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/frus.html (accessed September 29, 2010).

⁴⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹² Kennedy, *Thirteen Days*, 93.

⁴⁹³ "Summary Record of the Seventh Meeting of the Executive Committee of the National Security Council," October 27, 1962, U.S. Department of State, *FRUS*, Vol. XI, http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/frus.html (accessed September 29, 2010).

When Kennedy left the meeting with Sorensen, the rest of the group discussed how to handle the differences between Khrushchev's letter and the Soviet letter released afterwards.⁴⁹⁴ The president believed that the primary goal must be to end the construction on the missile sites, and proposed opening negotiations with the Turkish government to remove the missiles.⁴⁹⁵ McNamara and Rusk noted that while the nuclear warheads remained under U.S. control, the Turks owned the missiles.⁴⁹⁶ McCone argued that the missiles were obsolete, but wanted to add more ballistic submarine patrols if they decided to remove the missiles.⁴⁹⁷ Because of the political problems in removing the missiles, Kennedy believed that the missiles in Turkey were of great military value with the presence of Soviet missiles in Cuba.⁴⁹⁸ He proposed a meeting with the Turkish government to explain the situation and the possible need to remove the JUPITER missiles to stop a war.⁴⁹⁹

Saturday afternoon created more problems for EXCOMM to consider. Rusk reported to the group that a U-2 penetrated Soviet airspace over Siberia because of a navigation error.⁵⁰⁰ McNamara also reported that the Air Force aborted the first U-2 flight over Cuba because of a mechanical problem. Other reports also showed that the U-2 afternoon flight over Cuba encountered ground fire and was overdue.⁵⁰¹ After discussing their response in negotiations with

⁴⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁵ "Summary Record of the Seventh Meeting of the Executive Committee of the National Security Council," October 27, 1962, U.S. Department of State, *FRUS*, Vol. XI, http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/frus.html (accessed September 29, 2010). See also Nash, *The Other Missiles of October*, 147-148.

⁴⁹⁶ "Summary Record of the Seventh Meeting of the Executive Committee of the National Security Council," October 27, 1962, U.S. Department of State, *FRUS*, Vol. XI, http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/frus.html (accessed September 29, 2010). See also "Turkey Denies Talk on Rocket Removal," October 26, 1962, *New York Times*, 17.

⁴⁹⁷ Freedman, *Kennedy's Wars*, 213.

⁴⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁹ Ibid, 235.

⁵⁰⁰ "Summary Record of the Eighth Meeting of the Executive Committee of the National Security Council," October 27, 1962, U.S. Department of State, *FRUS*, Vol. XI, http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/frus.html (accessed September 29, 2010). See also Dobbs, *One Minute to Midnight*, 258.

⁵⁰¹ Fursenko and Naftali, *Khrushchev's Cold War*, 488-489.

the Soviets, the group also decided to send a letter to Khrushchev accepting his initial proposal and ignoring the second message's proposal to remove the missiles in Turkey.⁵⁰² The letter also emphasized the American position that the Soviets must cease construction on the missiles.⁵⁰³

At this point in the meeting, McCone received a report that the Soviets attacked a U-2 with a SAM missile, destroying the aircraft and killing the pilot. After hearing this report, the group began a discussion on how and when to launch attacks on Cuba.⁵⁰⁴ McNamara recommended that the group examine the plans for air strikes against Cuba. Rusk "recommended that mobilization measures be authorized immediately."⁵⁰⁵ General Taylor suggested that if the Soviets refused to stop construction, the president should implement operational plans to launch air strikes on Monday morning, followed by an invasion seven days later. McNamara believed that if the Soviets launched attacks against the reconnaissance aircraft on Sunday, the United States should launch immediate attacks against the SAM sites. The president agreed but refused to make a definite decision on how to attack the SAM sites.⁵⁰⁶ When the group asked about the status of Soviet forces, McCone confirmed that the East German forces remained in their defensive positions, and had made no advances towards Berlin.⁵⁰⁷

The last hours of the crisis brought the United States and the Soviet Union from the brink of war to its successful conclusion. Kennedy ordered EXCOMM to hold another meeting later that evening. During that meeting, he approved the activation of several of the air force reserves. If the Soviets attacked the reconnaissance flights scheduled for Sunday, he authorized the Air

⁵⁰² "Summary Record of the Eighth Meeting of the Executive Committee of the National Security Council," October 27, 1962, U.S. Department of State, *FRUS*, Vol. XI, http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/frus.html (accessed September 29, 2010).

⁵⁰³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰⁷ Brugioni, *Eyeball to Eyeball*, 472.

Force to destroy the SAM sites.⁵⁰⁸ Finally, if the Soviets continued construction, he would authorize the beginning of air strikes on Cuba for Monday morning. Later that night, the Joint Committee reported that all twenty-four MRBM launchers were operational, and the Soviets appeared to be dispersing their equipment to defend against air attacks.⁵⁰⁹ The photography also showed a nuclear storage site at each of the missile complexes, as well as the port possibly used to transport those warheads to the sites. The CIA confirmed that construction on the missile sites continued at a rapid pace, and that the Cuban military units remained at high alert.⁵¹⁰ However, intelligence sources established that the Soviets had yet to change the deployment of their armed forces, which led McCone to believe that the Soviets wanted to avert the possibility of war by downplaying their traditional rhetoric against the United States. Khrushchev confirmed McCone's belief that the Soviets did not want to start a war when he made the decision to withdraw the missiles from Cuba on Sunday morning, October 28.⁵¹¹

Khrushchev's decision to withdraw the missiles from Cuba lowered the threat of war. *Washington Times* reporter James Reston referred to this moment as "following the normal pattern of the cold war. When one giant demonstrates its willingness to risk a major war...the other giant pulls back."⁵¹² However, the American government required confirmation before it would lift the blockade. At the morning meeting of EXCOMM, Rusk congratulated the members

⁵⁰⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁹ "Supplement 8 to Joint Evaluation of Soviet Missile Threat in Cuba, 28 October 1962 [Excerpt]," in McAuliffe, *CIA Documents*, 337-339. See also Howard Simons, "Reds Could Fire Missiles in 15 Minutes, Bases Indicate," October 28, 1962, *Washington Post*, A25.

⁵¹⁰ "Central Intelligence Agency Memorandum, The Crisis USSR/Cuba, 28 October 1962 [Excerpt]," in *ibid.*, 341-343.

⁵¹¹ "Message from Chairman Khrushchev to President Kennedy," October 28, 1962, U.S. Department of State, *FRUS*, Vol. XI, http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/frus.html (accessed September 29, 2010). See also Kennedy, *Thirteen Days*, 110. See also Lawrence Burd, "Kennedy Offers to Negotiate If Reds Abandon Missile Sites," October 28, 1962, *Chicago Tribune*, 1.

⁵¹² James Reston, "To Deal or Not to Deal: That's The Question," October 28, 1962, *New York Times*, 184.

of the committee for their help in resolving the crisis.⁵¹³ The group agreed to halt the reconnaissance flights scheduled for the day and prepared statements to the public and to the negotiators at the United Nations.⁵¹⁴ The group also ordered McCone to release all pertinent intelligence information to the UN delegation and send CIA experts along to answer any questions.⁵¹⁵ To protect the intelligence sources and his deputies, he authorized Cline to send Bill Tidwell⁵¹⁶ and Colonel David Parker⁵¹⁷ to conduct the briefing.⁵¹⁸ He also wanted to protect the intelligence sources used in the crisis and convinced EXCOMM to send older intelligence photographs to the UN.⁵¹⁹ McCone believed that the United States needed to maintain its pressure on the Soviet Union during the negotiations, in order to maintain their position until the Soviets removed the missiles.⁵²⁰ Over the next several days, McCone pushed EXCOMM to continue surveillance of Cuba to determine if the Soviets were removing the missiles from Cuba.⁵²¹ On November 1, when the Air Force grounded the remaining Agency U-2s, McCone pushed EXCOMM to allow the flights to continue.⁵²² When some members of EXCOMM viewed reports from refugees that the Soviets had indeed began removing the missiles, McCone

⁵¹³ “Summary Record of the Tenth Meeting of the Executive Committee of the National Security Council,” October 28, 1962, U.S. Department of State, *FRUS*, Vol. XI, http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/frus.html (accessed September 29, 2010).

⁵¹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵¹⁵ Walter Elder, “Memorandum of Executive Committee of NSC Meeting on Sunday, 28 October 1962 Dictated by the Undersigned based on Debriefing of DCI,” in McAuliffe, *CIA Documents*, 347.

⁵¹⁶ Bill Tidwell served in the CIA as the Assistant to the Deputy Director for Intelligence (Planning) during the Cuban Missile Crisis.

⁵¹⁷ Colonel David Parker was the Deputy Director of the National Photographic Interpretation Center (NPIC) during the Cuban Missile Crisis.

⁵¹⁸ Elder, “Memorandum of Executive Committee of NSC Meeting on Sunday, 28 October 1962 Dictated by the Undersigned based on Debriefing of DCI,” in McAuliffe, *CIA Documents*, 347. See also Brugioni, *Eyeball to Eyeball*, 502, 510, 562.

⁵¹⁹ Elder, “Memorandum of Executive Committee of NSC Meeting on Sunday, 28 October 1962 Dictated by the Undersigned based on Debriefing of DCI,” in McAuliffe, *CIA Documents*, 347.

⁵²⁰ Brugioni, *Eyeball to Eyeball*, 519.

⁵²¹ “Memorandum for the Director, “Your Briefings of the NSC Executive Committee, 3 November 1962,” in McAuliffe, *CIA Documents*, 353-355. See also Brugioni, *Eyeball to Eyeball*, 514.

⁵²² “Memorandum for the Director, “Your Briefings of the NSC Executive Committee, 3 November 1962,” in McAuliffe, *CIA Documents*, 353-355.

pushed for more reconnaissance flights to confirm the information. Finally, on November 2, the photography confirmed the dismantling of the missiles, officially ending the crisis.⁵²³

McCone spent much of the time after the president's public address receiving the most up to date intelligence to bring to EXCOMM meetings. McCone had the important task of briefing members of the press and Congress on the situation. He also provided deputies to answer questions during the UN talks, despite his personal belief that the talks hurt the diplomatic standing of the United States. Thanks largely to the changes he made to the intelligence process during the first week of the crisis, he provided the first reports of the course changes in Soviet ships, giving Kennedy the time to halt any action against those ships. When McCone realized the strain on himself and the rest of the EXCOMM, he had his deputies prepare detailed intelligence memorandums containing the most recent intelligence reports. These groups allowed McCone to confirm for EXCOMM that while the Soviets continued construction, their armed forces remained in their defensive posture, eliminating some of the concern within the group. When Khrushchev chose to remove the missiles, McCone protected the intelligence sources and his deputies from the public eye, which allowed those sources to continue their efforts to determine whether the Soviet was withdrawing the missiles. His management during the last days of the crisis allowed the group to maintain detailed surveillance on the removal of the missiles, and pinpoint definitively that the Soviets were removing the missiles.

⁵²³ Ibid.

CONCLUSION

John McCone had a profound impact on the discovery of Soviet missiles in Cuba, the establishment of intelligence committees during the crisis, and the gathering of intelligence following the crisis. During the summer and fall of 1962, he maintained that the Soviet Union might place nuclear weapons into Cuba.⁵²⁴ He believed that Khrushchev wanted to place missiles in Cuba as a way to solve the Soviet Union's strategic goals and secure Castro's communist government.⁵²⁵ McCone made his concerns clear to President Kennedy and other members of the administration before leaving on his honeymoon in late August 1962. During his honeymoon, he called for more reconnaissance flights over Cuba, and remained informed of the situation through his deputy. When he returned from his honeymoon, he still found gaps in the reconnaissance over western portions of Cuba and immediately requested more overflights.⁵²⁶ After the president finally authorized more, the October 14 flight discovered several Soviet missiles in Cuba. Because of McCone's "crusade"⁵²⁷ during the summer and fall of 1962, the United States confirmed that the Soviet Union had placed nuclear missiles in Cuba.

When McCone learned of the October 14 U-2 flights, he wanted the Kennedy administration to remove Castro and his communist government from power. McCone joined several prominent members of EXCOMM in proposing a surgical strike against missile sites followed by an invasion.⁵²⁸ During the first days of the crisis, McCone favored immediate action against Cuba, but realized that the blockade best served their immediate goals while limiting the risk of war. McCone provided daily intelligence reports in EXCOMM meetings, keeping

⁵²⁴ McCone, Memorandum for the File, "Discussion in Secretary Rusk's Office at 12 o'clock, 21 August 1962," NSA, *Cuban Missile Crisis*, DNSA, <http://www.nsarchive.chadwyck.com> (accessed June 12, 2010).

⁵²⁵ Brugioni, *Eyeball to Eyeball*, 146.

⁵²⁶ James and Hubbell, *Strike in the West*, 9.

⁵²⁷ Fursenko and Naftali, *One Hell of a Gamble*, 198.

⁵²⁸ Ball, *Past is Another Pattern*, 290.

Kennedy and his cabinet informed on construction efforts in Cuba.⁵²⁹ He expedited the time between receiving intelligence reports from Cuba by creating several intelligence committees and delegating his authority to his deputies, Carter, Cline, and Lundahl. McCone also briefed Eisenhower on the situation, and reported to Kennedy on Eisenhower's recommendations. McCone's efforts to coordinate and integrate intelligence reports permitted the president to have a detailed picture on the status of the Soviet missiles, allowing him to make informed decisions.⁵³⁰ Kennedy based much of his decision on blockading Cuba on the recommendations from McCone and the rest of EXCOMM.⁵³¹

After Kennedy's address to the nation on October 22, McCone spent much of the time gathering intelligence reports and evaluations to bring to his meetings with EXCOMM. He also briefed members of the press and Congress on the president's decision to launch a blockade. During the negotiations with the Soviet Union, he provided deputies to answer questions during the UN talks, despite his personal belief that the talks hurt the standing of the United States. Because of the changes he made to the intelligence process during the first week of the crisis, he provided the first reports of the course changes in Soviet ships, giving Kennedy the time to halt any action against those ships. When the strain started to affect his decisions, McCone had his deputies prepare detailed intelligence memorandums containing the most recent intelligence reports. The groups McCone established allowed him to confirm for EXCOMM that while the Soviets continued construction, their armed forces remained in their defensive posture. When Khrushchev chose to remove the missiles, McCone protected the intelligence sources and his deputies from the public eye, which allowed those sources to continue their efforts to determine whether the Soviet was withdrawing the missiles. His management of the intelligence sources

⁵²⁹ May and Zelikow, eds., *The Kennedy Tapes*, 118.

⁵³⁰ Polmar and Gresham, *DEFCON-2*, 107.

⁵³¹ *Ibid.*

during the last days of the crisis allowed those sources to maintain a detailed surveillance of the removal of the missiles, and pinpoint definitively that the Soviets were removing them.

When the crisis ended in the 1962, scholars focused on the reasons why the crisis happened.⁵³² The historians of this period relied on interviews, memory, and previous surprise attacks on the United States as evidence for their conclusions.⁵³³ In the late 1960s and 1970s, members of EXCOMM began to release memoirs on the crisis, and actual intelligence training to emphasize the timeline, intelligence methods, and the problems facing the Kennedy administration during the crisis.⁵³⁴ In the 1980s, the release of several more memoirs and classified documents allowed historians to construct detailed pictures of the event.⁵³⁵ After the Cold War ended in 1991, both the United States and the Soviet Union released several declassified documents, which led to a resurgence in scholarship.⁵³⁶ The new scholarship that emerged in the period focused on the mindset of government officials, the Soviet motivations for their actions, and the steps the Soviet Union took to keep their operation in Cuba a secret.⁵³⁷

Despite the importance of McCone's role in the intelligence community and the EXCOMM, no historical works focus on connecting his influence before, during, and after the crisis. Most historians viewed McCone as the primary reason that the United States found the missiles, but otherwise focused their studies on the larger crisis itself. While McAuliffe's *CIA Documents* provide many of the CIA's internal memorandums, it does not contain all the

⁵³² Wohlstetter, "Cuba and Pearl Harbor, Hindsight and Foresight," 690-707. See also Sorensen, *Kennedy*, 663-673.

⁵³³ Ibid.

⁵³⁴ Marchetti and Marks, *The CIA and the Cult of Intelligence*, 306-312. See also Bundy, *Danger and Survival*, 415-420 and Kennedy, *Thirteen Days*, 80-120.

⁵³⁵ Robert McNamara, *Blundering into Disaster* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986). See also Raymond L. Garthoff, "The Meaning of Missiles," *The Washington Quarterly* 5, No. 4 (Autumn, 1982): 76-82 and Garthoff, *Reflections on the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1989).

⁵³⁶ Fursenko and Naftali, *One Hell of a Gamble*, 163-220. See also Nathan, *The Cuban Missile Crisis Revisited* and Nash, *The Other Missiles of October: Eisenhower, Kennedy, and the Jupiters*.

⁵³⁷ Nathan, *Anatomy of a Missile Crisis*, 74-78. See also Hilsman, *The Cuban Missile Crisis*, 18-66 and Beschloss, *Crisis Years*, 413-430.

sources. The *Foreign Relations of the United States* database offers the transcripts of EXCOMM meetings and official memorandums, but suffers from the lack of context similar to McAuliffe. The personal memoirs from EXCOMM participants and intelligence officials give insight into the mindset and actions of the participants, but remain limited in their interpretations. Even with the declassified documents, memoirs, and histories on the crisis, nothing connects McCone's participation from the discovery of the Soviet military buildup in Cuba to the resolution of the crisis.

When the majority of the intelligence community and the government failed to predict the introduction of missiles into Cuba, McCone pressed for a re-evaluation of that belief. When the president needed a group of advisors to help make decisions on the crisis, McCone served as one of the key members of that group. He established new intelligence committees to expedite the release of that information to Washington, allowing Kennedy to make informed decisions in Cuba. When Khrushchev made the decision to remove the missiles from Cuba, McCone took on the responsibility of overseeing the intelligence sources he created during the crisis to determine if indeed the Soviets were removing the missiles from Cuba. Because of his personal efforts to discover the truth behind the buildup in Cuba and the role he took during the crisis, McCone's involvement in the Cuban Missile Crisis is one of the key facets to understanding how the crisis began and the role the U.S. government had in ending the conflict.

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