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Dear Prime Minister:

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I am sending you this most private message to give you advance notice of a most serious situation and of my plan to meet it. I am arranging to have David Bruce report to you more fully tomorrow morning, but I want you to have this message tonight so that you may have as much time as possible to consider the dangers we will now have to face together.

Photographic intelligence has established beyond question, in the last week, that the Soviet Union has engaged in a major buildup of medium-range missiles in Cuba. Six sites have so far been identified, and two of them may be in operational readiness. In sum, it is clear that a massive secret operation has been proceeding in spite of the repeated assurances we have received from the Soviet Union on this point.

After careful reflection, this Government has decided to prevent any further buildup by sea and to demand the removal of this nuclear threat to our hemisphere. When he sees you tomorrow, Ambassador Bruce will have at hand the substance of a speech which will give on Monday evening, Washington time.

This extraordinarily dangerous and aggressive Soviet step obviously creates a crisis of the most serious sort, in which we shall have to act most closely together. I have found it absolutely essential, in the

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interest of security and speed, to make my first decision on my own responsibility, but from now on I expect that we can and should be in the closest touch, and I know that together with our other friends we will resolutely meet this challenge. I recognize fully that Khrushchev's main intention may be to increase his chances at Berlin, and we shall be ready to take a full role there as well as in the Caribbean. What is essential at this moment of the highest test is that Khrushchev should discover that if he is counting on weakness or irresolution, he has miscalculated.

I venture to repeat my hope that the nature of this threat and of my first decision to meet it be held most privately until announced events are made known.

Sincerely,  
John F. Kennedy

The Right Honourable Harold Macmillan

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