

Security Asst

November 21, 1962.

TOP SECRET

I attach a copy of the Top Secret note of the Prime Minister's talk with the Foreign Secretary and General Strong on Monday.

You can get in touch with General Strong, who is Director of the Joint Intelligence Bureau, Ministry of Defence, at Whitehall 8474, extension 400.

TJBligh

Lieutenant-Colonel
The Rt. Hon. Sir Michael Adeane, G.C.V.O., K.C.B.

TOP SECRETNOTE FOR THE RECORD

The Prime Minister saw the Foreign Secretary and General Strong at 3.00 p.m. on Monday, November 19. I was present.

General Strong had been in the United States for the period October 13/25, i.e. the period immediately before and during the first part of the Cuban crisis.

General Strong said that it became clear to the authorities from intelligence sources and refugees that there was a build-up on Cuba of rockets from Russia. Whether these rockets were surface-to-air missiles or whether they were ground-to-ground, it seemed desirable to try and seek more information by aerial reconnaissance. A large number of meetings were held over the weekend at levels up to Rusk and Macnamara, and it was decided to tell the President when he returned to Washington on Tuesday, October 16. The immediate point then necessary for decision was whether to step up aerial reconnaissance.

General Strong said that the President had a number of discussions with about fourteen or fifteen people present. These included Dillon, McCone, R. Kennedy, Taylor, Nitze, Rusk, McG. Bundy, Bill Bundy, Cline, amongst others. The intellectuals, that is to say, Nitze, Rusk, the two Bundys, and Cline, argued against the existence of the Russian rockets in Cuba and cast doubt on such photographic evidence as was then available. They thought it unlikely that the rockets were there since they all seemed to hold preconceived ideas that Russia would never put offensive missiles into Cuba.

General Strong added that constant reference was made during these discussions to the article which McG. Bundy had written for the magazine "Foreign Affairs" (Vol. 41, No. 1, October 1962). Time and time again the general argument put forward in this article was used to illustrate some point or other. The intellectuals tended to twist facts to meet the article's hypothesis. General Strong said that be this as it may the moving spirit behind all the meetings was McG. Bundy. He seemed to initiate them and to decide what matters should be discussed at them, and seemed to be acting much more like a senior adviser on foreign affairs than like a super private secretary.

But as a result of these meetings it was decided to step up the aerial reconnaissance, largely as a result of pressure to do so from the scientists (!). On Friday, October 19, the President was out of Washington but he returned on the morning of Saturday, October 20, and was presented with a great deal more material which was then generally accepted as demonstrating that there were offensive missiles in Cuba. It was then necessary for the Americans to decide what they should do. Here again it did not seem to be a matter of great importance to the U.S. Administration how many missiles were in Cuba, where they were sited, whether the nuclear warheads were already there or on the way, or whether the missiles would ever be used. The main point, as the President and his advisers saw it, was did the existence of the offensive missiles in Cuba mean evidence of a change in Russian policy? Was Khrushchev issuing a challenge? Discussion on this question led them

to believe that Khrushchev was indeed changing his policy. All their thinking about Cuba was therefore really related to what Khrushchev was planning to do elsewhere as part of this change of policy, especially in Berlin.

The President was faced with three possible courses of action:

- (a) to do nothing;
- (b) to invade Cuba;
- (c) to demand the withdrawal of the Russian missiles and take such steps as he could to bring pressure to bear, e.g. the quarantine.

It was difficult to say whether anyone was advising the President to do anything. Dillon and McCone argued for the strong line - an invasion. R. Kennedy and Taylor were known to have favoured the moderate line. General Strong did not know what view Rusk had taken, or indeed whether anyone cared whether he had a view or not.

The American military authorities advised the President that they were doubtful whether they could carry out a quick and successful invasion of Cuba. This point, said the Foreign Secretary, seemed to be of great significance. If the Americans were not confident of an immediate military success in Cuba, how much less confident were they likely to be of operations a long way from their homeland. The Prime Minister thought it likely that Taylor remembered the difficulties of amphibious operations from the Second World War.

The President had concluded that if he adopted either course (b) or (c) above the Russians were likely to react in Berlin. The Americans were prepared to go it alone

either without consulting their allies or irrespective of what their allies said had the Russians reacted against any action in Cuba by moving against Berlin. General Strong thought that the American Government were prepared for their action in Cuba to escalate into the nuclear. It seemed to him that the U.S. Administration was over-confident that they had pinpointed the position of all the main sites of inter-continental ballistic missiles in the Soviet Union, and they hoped they would be able to take these out with a pre-emptive attack by their bombers. This point seemed to the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary to be of the utmost importance and would be a suitable subject for the Prime Minister to discuss at his next meeting with President Kennedy. He would warn the President of the dangers that would flow from over-confidence on this score. In the first place they could not know for certain where the I.C.B.M. sites were; and even if they did it was extremely rash to suppose that with bombers they would be able to get through in sufficient numbers to take out the I.C.B.M.s. The situation would of course be different with Polaris and Minuteman.

The Prime Minister asked General Strong if he knew or had heard of any channel of communication between Washington and Moscow other than the diplomatic channel. General Strong said that he had no knowledge on this but there seemed to be a general feeling that there were a number of channels between the two capitals.

November 19, 1962

J.B.