

CASE STUDY

THE CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS*

Linda K. Miller and Mary McAuliffe

Editorial note: The documents reproduced in this article have been approved for release through the Historical Review Program of the Central Intelligence Agency. September 16, 1992. HRP: 92-9.

Introduction

During the immediate post-World War II period, an increased level of hostility developed between two former allies, the United States and the Soviet Union. In time, the hostility became so severe that both nations feared the other might launch a military offensive.

Both nations thus embarked upon a military buildup to deter the other from attacking. The buildup included strengthening alliances as well as military might. The United States had bases located in Turkey near Russian borders, but the Russians lacked a base close to the United States.

In 1959, Fidel Castro seized power in Cuba and later established ties with the Soviet Union. The United States soon severed diplomatic relations with Cuba. Attempts to overthrow Castro, including the invasion at the Bay of Pigs in 1961, failed and Castro continued to advocate revolutionary communism in Central America.

In the fall of 1962, the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), John McCone, was informed that Soviet ships were delivering missiles to Cuba. Photographs from U-2 planes revealed that the Soviet missile installations were already in place in Cuba. Thus began the Cuban Missile Crisis.

Objectives

The material for this lesson plan came from recently released documents from the CIA on the Cuban Missile Crisis. The role of the CIA is to gather intelligence for the President. This activity gives the student an inside look into the collecting of intelligence for President Kennedy during the Cuban Missile Crisis.

At the conclusion of this lesson the student will be able to:

1. Identify methods that the CIA used in gathering intelligence.
2. Analyze documents to identify factual information and points of view.
3. Compare and contrast different types of evidence.

Opening the Lesson

Review the timetable of Soviet military buildup in Cuba (Document 2). Explain to the students that they will be investigating methods that the CIA used to gather intelligence which revealed that a military buildup was taking place. Project a transparency of the U-2 over flights and explain that this is one way intelligence was gathered (Document 1).

Cuban Missile Crisis Background Information

In 1960, scarcely a year after assuming power in Cuba, Fidel Castro declared his support for the Soviet Union. The United States now had a Soviet satellite approximately ninety miles from its shores. In the spring of 1961, it responded to this situation by attempting to invade Cuba at the Bay of Pigs, in hopes of toppling the Castro regime. The plan did not work and indeed was a disaster for the new President, John F. Kennedy, as well as for the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). Following this failure, the Kennedy administration actively pursued other measures toward the same goal. These measures, collectively known as Operation MONGOOSE, were clandestine and interagency in nature, directed by General Edward Lansdale (then Assistant for Special Operations to the Secretary of Defense) and carried out by CIA's Task

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Force W, headed by William Harvey. MONGOOSE's purpose was to sabotage, with the ultimate goal of destabilizing Castro's regime. In addition to sabotage operations under MONGOOSE, the United States also responded to the Cuban threat with attempts on Castro's life - attempts which had been going on since Eisenhower's presidency and which continued unabated under Kennedy's.

It was against this background that John A. McCone in late July and early August 1962 began to notice intelligence reports indicating a large and unexplained buildup of Soviet equipment and personnel in Cuba. McCone, who in 1962 was Director of Central Intelligence, was a very successful west coast engineer and businessman who had served as Secretary of the Air Force under Truman and chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission under Eisenhower. McCone took great interest in the Soviet buildup in Cuba and did what every good intelligence analyst is supposed to do; he imagined himself in the other fellow's shoes. In this case, the other fellow was Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev, and McCone asked himself what Khrushchev might be planning.

If, proposed McCone, Khrushchev knew that the Soviets did not in fact possess the superiority they claimed in strategic missiles, and if Khrushchev knew that the United States was aware of the falsity of these claims, then what could the Soviet premier do to rectify the situation? Khrushchev had few intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) with which to directly threaten the United States from the Soviet Union. But he had an abundance of medium and intermediate-range ballistic missiles (MRBMs and IRBMs). None of these could reach the United States from Soviet soil. Nevertheless, McCone conjectured, if Khrushchev could find a piece of real estate within firing range of the United States, yet outside firing range of the USSR, might he not be tempted to redress the strategic balance by installing medium-range ballistic missiles there?

Cuba, McCone correctly guessed, was that piece of real estate. And the stakes were high. Once Khrushchev had his offensive missiles in place in Cuba, the Soviet premier would be able to demand negotiation on his terms on any subject of his choice, including Berlin.

It was a compelling and, as it proved, accurate scenario. But McCone could not get anyone else interested. He had only a hunch, not concrete evidence, and was not able to persuade either the White House or his own top analysts. The White House had been hearing too much about missiles in Cuba from Republicans responding to Cuban refugees, who in turn had been issuing warnings since 1960 - long before any Soviet military equipment even went in. All of these rumors had so far proven false. McCone's own

top analysts on CIA's Board of National Estimates had similar reservations about his theory. The Soviets had never before placed offensive missiles outside the Soviet Union, and these analysts thought it unlikely that they would start doing so now, especially in such a confrontational location.

In four meetings with top Administration officials, including two with the president, McCone attempted to warn about what he feared the Soviets were planning. Then, believing he had made his point, he left for France on honeymoon with his second wife. He departed in late August and was gone for a month.

Shortly after McCone left, a U-2 flight over Cuba took photos showing that the Soviets were putting in surface-to-air missiles (SAMs) there. McCone, who learned of the news in France, believed this discovery corroborated his theory. His top analysts, however, did not agree. Pointing out that these were defensive rather than offensive missiles, they argued that the Soviets were putting in SAMs to defend Cuba from U.S. attack. More likely, McCone replied, was that the Soviets planned to use their SAMs to discourage the United States from flying its U-2s over Cuba, thus effectively blinding the U.S. to the presence of Soviet offensive missiles when they arrived. His analysts did not find this reasoning persuasive.

During the month while McCone was away, not only were SAMs discovered in Cuba, but refugee and agent reports flooded the CIA warning yet again of the suspected presence of offensive missiles there. But there had been so many of these reports and for so long, with none proven correct, that CIA headquarters viewed them with skepticism. This skepticism now was reinforced by the SAMs' presence, giving grounds to the assumption that any missiles thereafter sighted in Cuba simply were defensive rather than offensive weapons.

When McCone returned in late September, he discovered that no one had believed him. He also discovered that, due to the State Department's fears of a shutdown and an international incident, U-2 flights over Cuba had actually been curtailed. After 10 September, U-2's no longer flew over western Cuba, where the SAMs were. McCone was furious, warning that he could not properly advise the National Security Council on the presence or absence of offensive missiles in Cuba without full overflight coverage of these areas - the places where he thought it most likely we would find offensive missiles going in.

He had made his point. Still, he received no quick response. A delay of almost five days followed McCone's ultimatum, during which the oversight group in charge of such requests considered all alternative

means of conducting aerial reconnaissance. Following that, bad weather and in-fighting between the CIA and the Air Force over who would fly the plane delayed the flight still further.

But on 14 October 1962, a lone U-2 under Air Force command photographed the stunning evidence that the Soviets were indeed placing medium-range ballistic missiles in Cuba. McCone's hunch had turned into reality.

Once the missiles were discovered, the CIA and the entire intelligence community performed admirably, providing up-to-the-minute intelligence to the President and his innermost circle of advisers (the National Security Council Executive Committee, or Ex Comm). The intelligence community identified the missiles and evaluated their operational readiness on a day-to-day and even hour-to-hour basis. Much of this intelligence came from aerial photography, which increased dramatically after the missiles' discovery. Other intelligence, especially identification of the missiles and evaluation of their operational readiness, came from material codenamed IRONBARK, which Col. Oleg Penkovsky of Soviet Army Intelligence (GRU) had earlier passed to the West.

As a result, the intelligence community could tell the President that he had sufficient time to make a thoughtful decision. This was an extremely important factor, since it allowed the leader of the free world to evaluate his options and, ultimately, step back from the brink. Still, without John McCone's insight and persistence, the intelligence community might not have discovered the missiles in time to provide the president with the timely warning he needed to make a peaceful solution to the crisis possible.

Procedures

After analyzing the background information, the students will have an opportunity to investigate how intelligence was gathered and how President Kennedy was informed. Divide the class into four groups. Give each group a different document (use Documents 8, 11, 13, 40). In their respective groups, have students answer the following questions for their document:

1. Identify the format of the document (letter, cable, memo).

2. Identify the author.
3. Describe the topic of the document.
4. Summarize issues presented in the document.
5. Identify the method of intelligence gather (photograph, interview, etc.)
6. Using the document, what can you conclude about the Cuban Missile Crisis at this stage of the crisis?

After completing the questions, each group then makes an oral report on their findings to the class using quotes from their documents to back up their points.

Closing the Lesson

Using the information from all the documents, have the students write their own intelligence estimate on the crisis to the President. Include the following: state the problem, explain the status of the buildup, describe courses of action and the consequences of those actions, and present a conclusion.

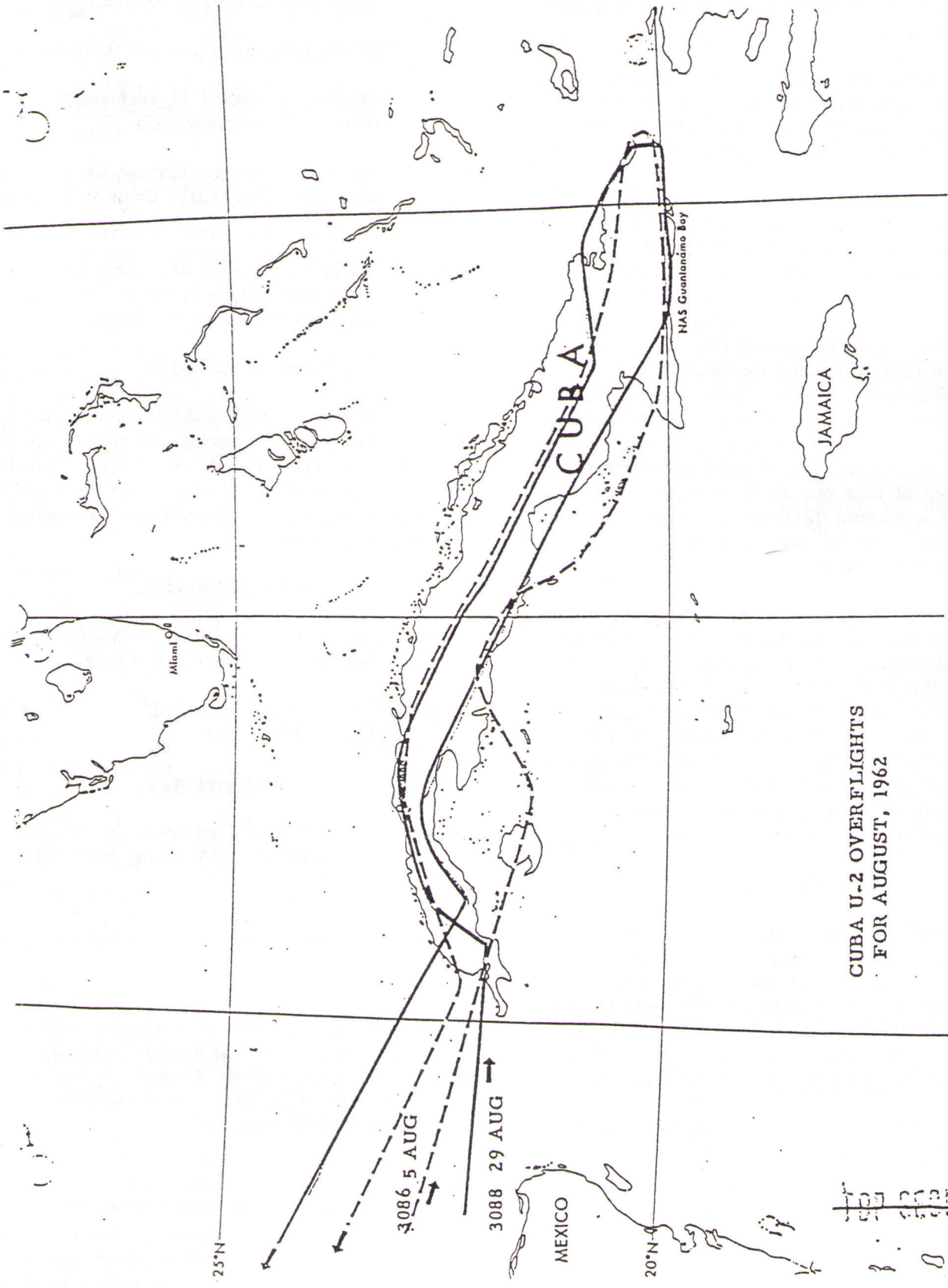
For Further Reading

- Robert Kennedy. *Thirteen Days: A Memoir of the Missile Crisis*. New York: Norton, 1969.
- Ellie Abel. *The Missile Crisis*. Philadelphia: J.B. Lippencot Co., 1966.

Bibliography

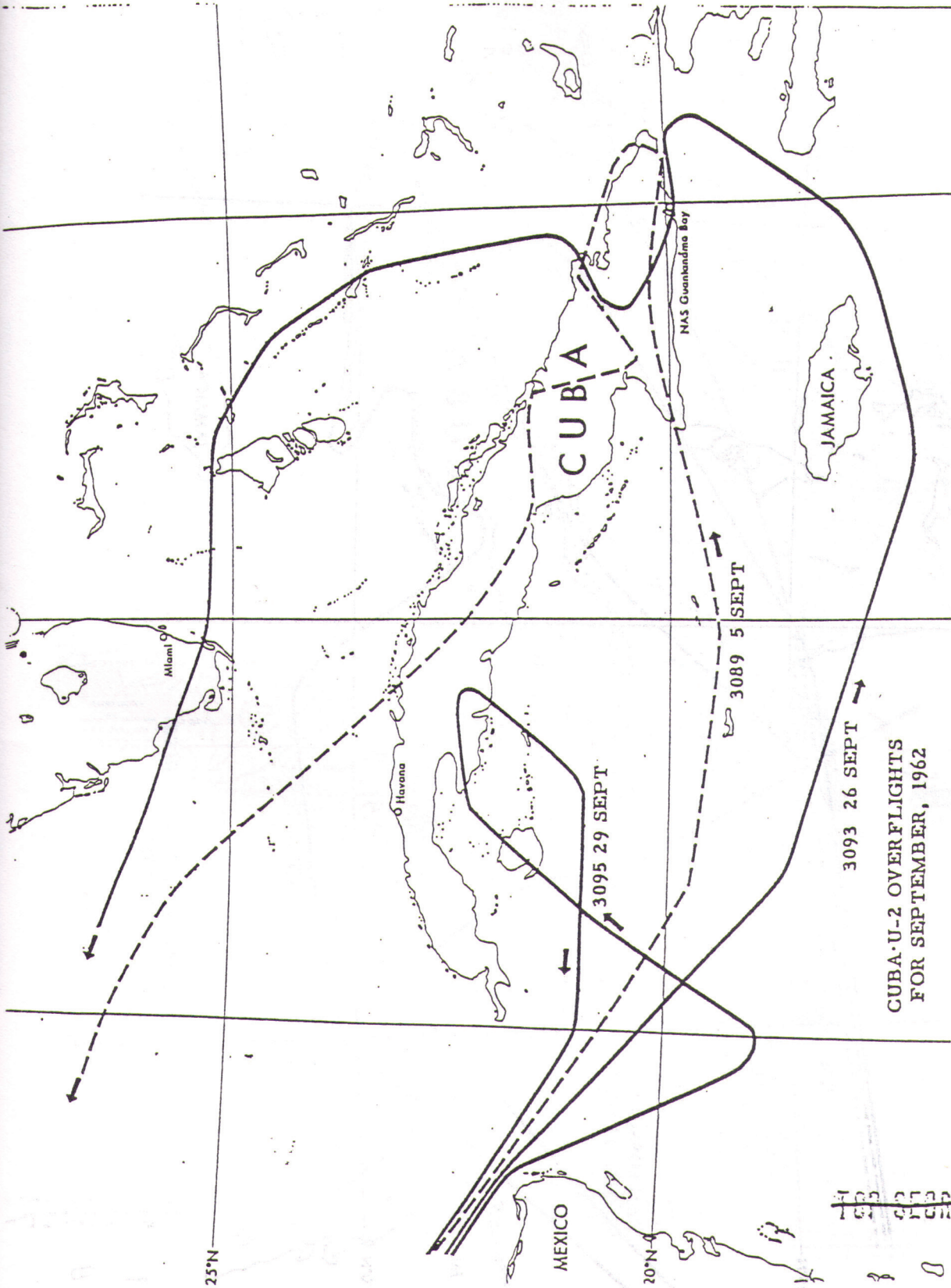
- McAuliffe, Mary. *CIA Documents on the Cuban Missile Crisis*. CIA History Staff, October 1992.

Linda Miller as an American government teacher in Fairfax, Virginia. She has received many teaching awards, including Virginia Council for the Social Studies Teacher of the Year. Mary McAuliffe is the Deputy Chief, CIA History Staff.



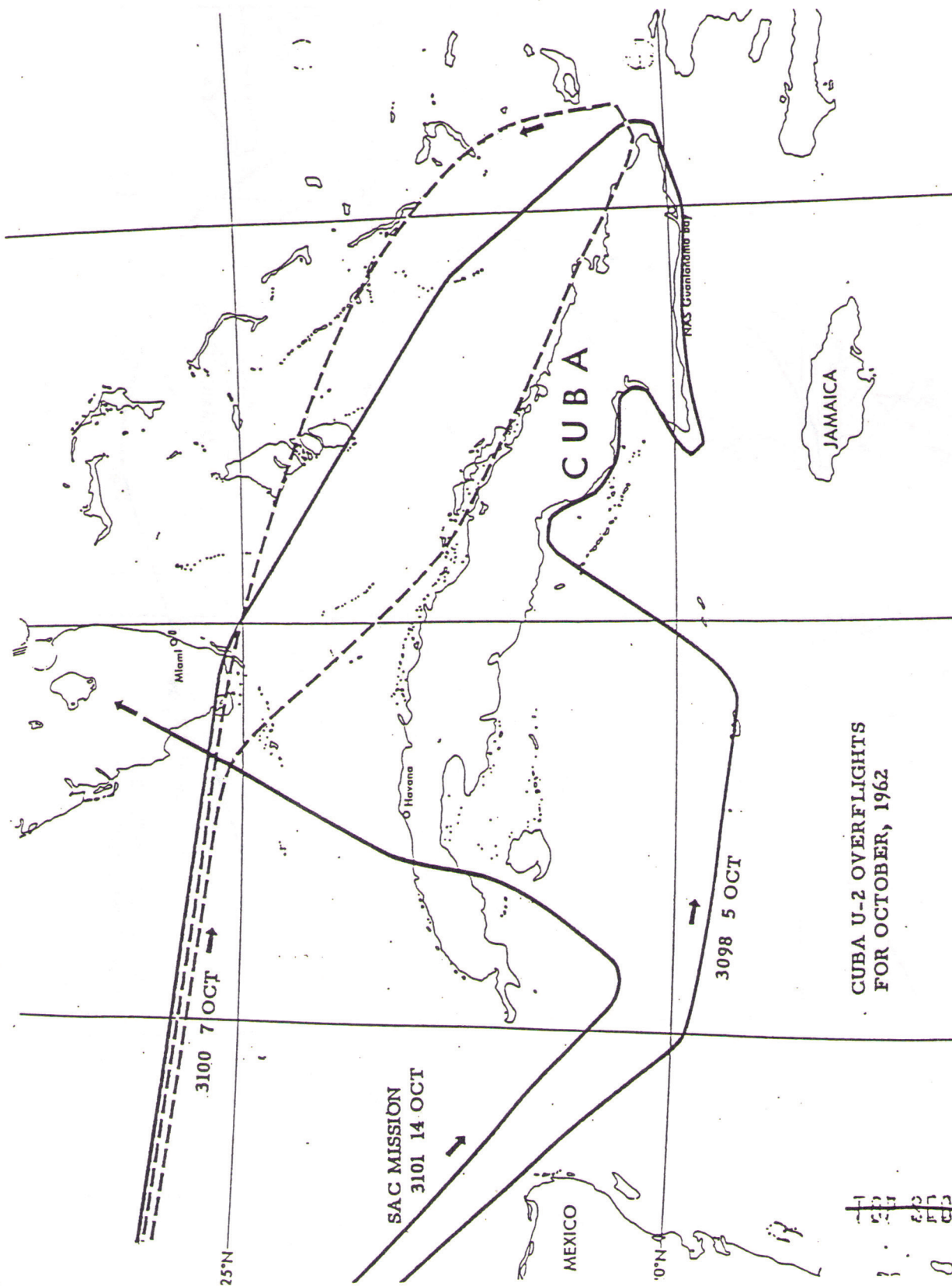
CUBA U-2 OVERFLIGHTS
FOR AUGUST, 1962

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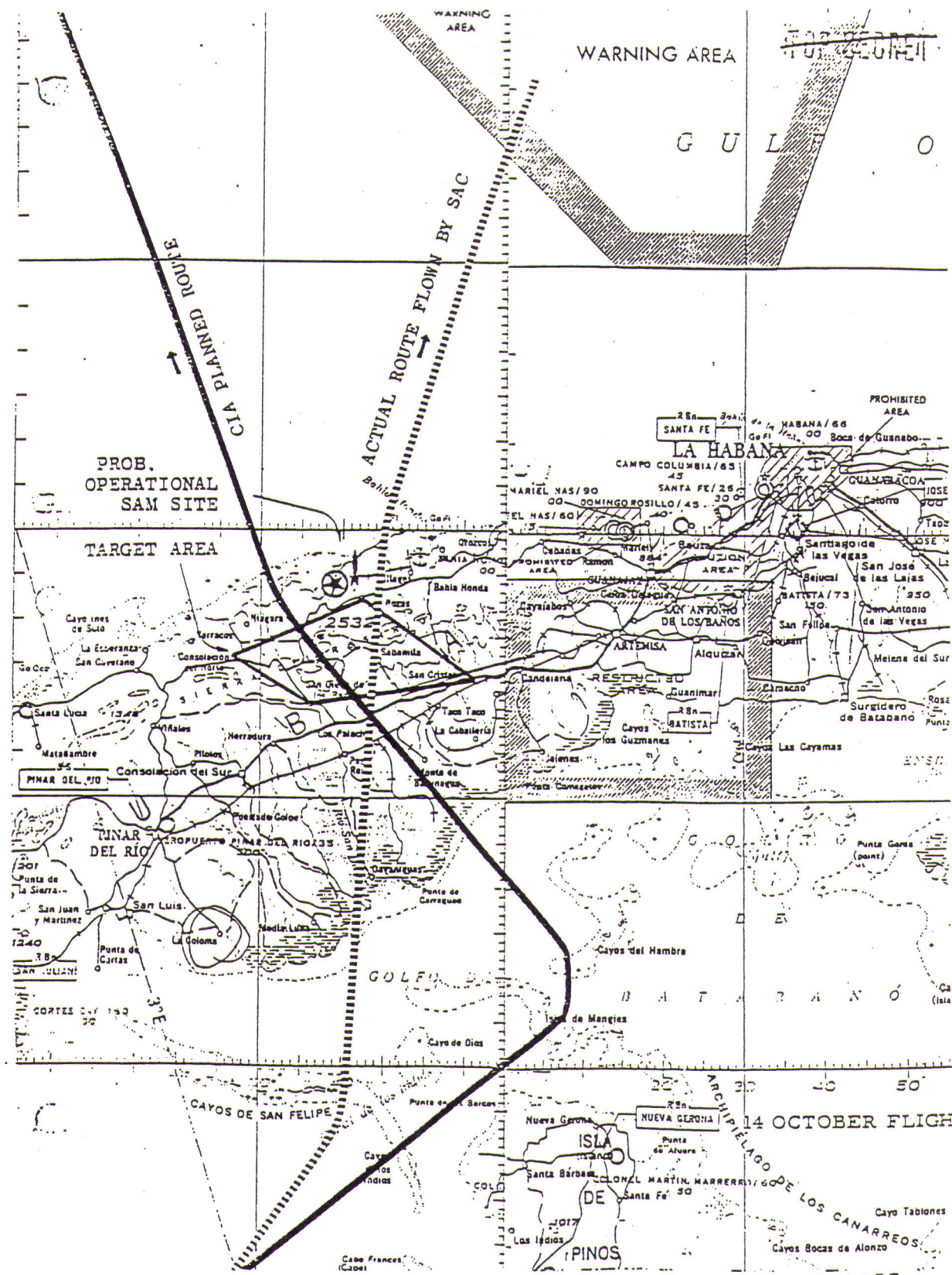
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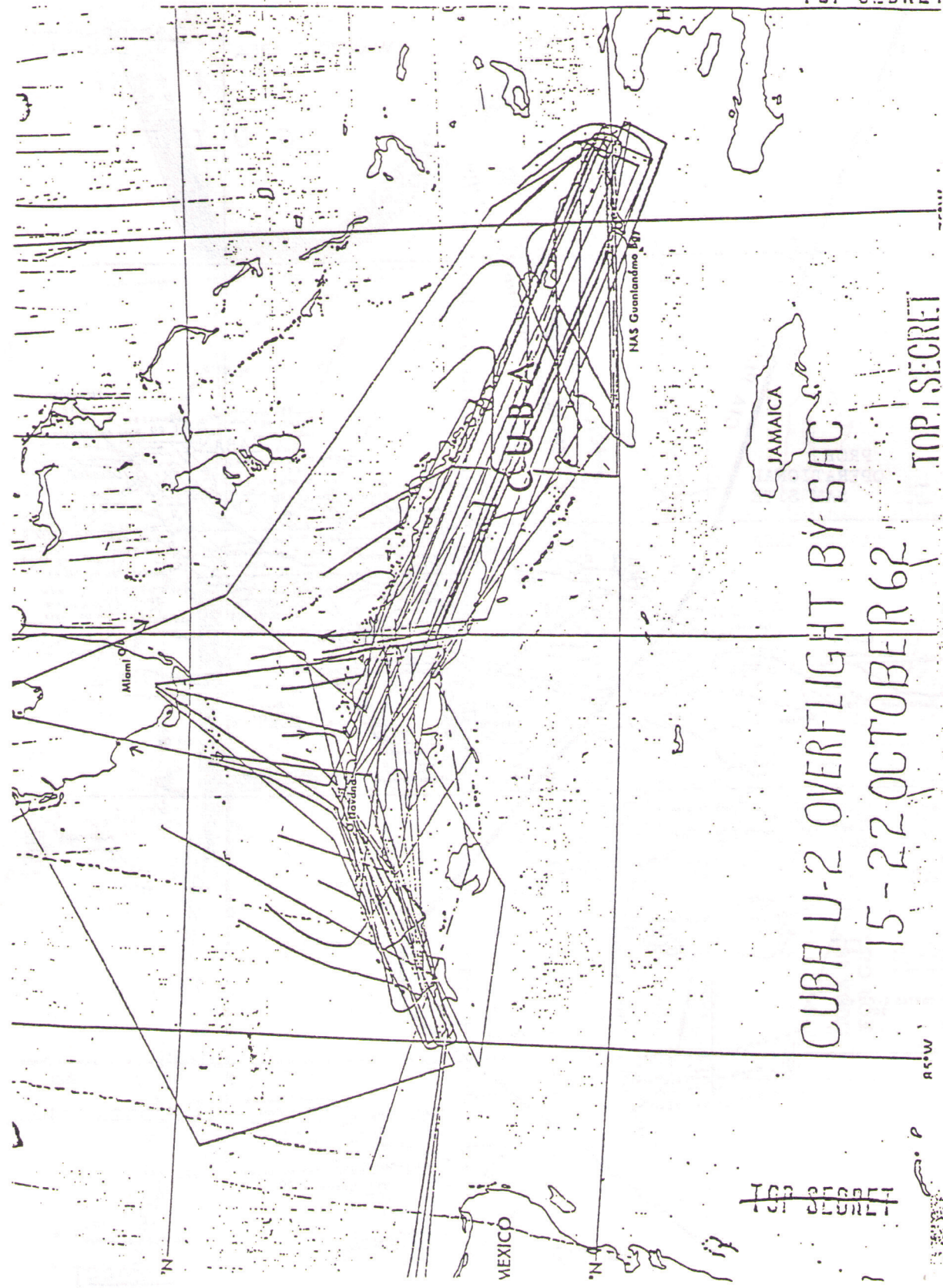
CUBA U-2 OVERFLIGHTS
FOR OCTOBER, 1962

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CUBA U-2 OVERFLIGHT BY SAC

15-22 OCTOBER 62

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SUMMARY CONTENTS

[REDACTED]
24 October 1962

1. We do not believe the measures to achieve a higher degree of action readiness for Soviet and bloc forces are being taken on a crash basis. Communist reaction to the US quarantine action against Cuba has not gone beyond the highly critical but uncommitting statement issued yesterday by the Soviet government.

2. Surveillance of Cuba indicates continued rapid progress in completion of IRBM and MRBM missile sites. No new sites have been discovered. Buildings believed to afford nuclear storage are being assembled with great rapidity. Cuban naval units have been ordered to blocking positions at Banes and Santiago Bays.

3. Survey of Soviet shipping shows 16 dry cargo and 6 tanker ships en route to Cuba. Of these 22, nine are in positions which would permit arrival by the end of October. Three ships have hatches suitable for missile handling [REDACTED]

4. Official world reaction shows a generally favorable response to the US action, particularly in Latin America. The OAS representatives approved a resolution endorsing the quarantine without opposition, one abstention was due to lack of instructions.

5. There are no indications of any Soviet aircraft movements to Cuba.

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]

INFORMATION REPORT INFORMATION REPORT

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

This material contains information affecting the National Defense of the United States within the meaning of the Espionage Laws, Title 18, U.S.C. Secs. 793 and 794, the transmission or revelation of which in any manner to an unauthorized person is prohibited by law.

~~C-O-N-F-I-D-E-N-T-I-A-L~~

COUNTRY Cuba

SUBJECT Soviet and Rebel Army Convoy

REPORT NO. [REDACTED]

DATE DISTR. 1 Oct 62

NO. PAGES 1

REFERENCES [REDACTED]

DATE OF INFO. 17 Sep 62

PLACE & DATE ACQ. [REDACTED]

THIS IS UNEVALUATED INFORMATION

SOURCE: Cuban national, A 12 853 974, 47 years old.

Source: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Traveled on business throughout the island a great deal. Four years of schooling, average intelligence.

1. On 17 Sep 62, about 2100 hours, while traveling by automobile from Havana toward my home in [REDACTED] Pinar del Rio, I observed a convoy of 10 motorcycles, 16 trucks, and eight trailers proceeding southwest on the Central Highway toward Pinar del Rio. Since I was traveling in the same direction as the convoy, I passed what were the last units of the convoy at the entrance to Guanajay, Havana [Grid coord 270360, Sheet 3684 I, Series E723], and then passed the leading element of the convoy immediately after Artanica, Pinar del Rio [Grid coord 190235, Sheet 3684 III, Series E723]. Although the vehicles were scattered over a distance, I am of the opinion they were all part of the same convoy.
2. The leading element of the convoy was five motorcycles driven by unarmed Rebel Army soldiers whose function appeared to be clearing the civilian traffic ahead. The motorcycles were followed by six MAZ-502 trucks, each carrying about 30 Rebel Army soldiers armed with 9 mm submachine guns M-25 and rifles. Since it was dark, I could not see who the drivers of the trucks were.
3. The trucks were followed by eight Soviet-built flatbed-type trailers approximately 32 feet long, seven of which were carrying what looked like huge tubes extending over the entire length of the flatbed and completely covered with canvas. I could not distinguish what the eighth trailer was carrying since it was completely covered with canvas. However, I did notice what looked like large metal prongs sticking out from under the canvas at the rear of the trailer. Although I don't know too much about it, it looked like a piece of radar equipment.
4. The trailers were followed by six MAZ-502 trucks, each carrying about 30 Rebel Army soldiers, also armed with rifles and 9 mm submachine guns M-25. The trucks were in turn followed by five motorcycles driven by unarmed Rebel Army soldiers. Because of darkness and rain I could not distinguish who the drivers of any of the vehicles in the convoy were.

Collector's Note: [REDACTED]

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~~C-O-N-F-I-D-E-N-T-I-A-L~~

GROUP 1
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downgrading and
declassification

STATE	ARMY	NAVY	AIR	FBI	AEC				
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INFORMATION REPORT INFORMATION REPORT

ORIG E. H. KNOCHE TS-874
UNIT O/DCI
EXT 7805
DATE 4 SEPTEMBER 1962

CLASSIFIED MESSAGE

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PAGE 1 OF 1

ROUTING	
1	4
2	5
3	6

TO [REDACTED]
FROM: DIRECTOR
CONF: BCI 1-2
INFO: S/C 3-4

8
DCI
01
PRIORITY
DEFERRED
ROUTINE
OUT 72756
PRIORITY

TO [REDACTED] INFO

CITE DIR 33894

PRIORITY
EYES ONLY [REDACTED] FROM [REDACTED]
Mc CONE *CARTER*

1. CUBAN READOUT CONFIRMS EIGHT AND PROBABLY NINE SAM RPT SAM SITES UNDER CRASH CONSTRUCTION. EIGHT OF NINE SITES NOTED WILL BLANKET ENTIRE WESTERN HALF OF ISLAND. NINTH IS ON EAST COAST AND WE EXPECT OTHERS WILL BE BUILT TO COVER ENTIRE COUNTRY. CONSTRUCTION PROCEEDING SO QUICKLY WE LOOK FOR SOME TO BE OPERATIONAL WITHIN NEXT WEEK OR TEN DAYS. READOUT ALSO SHOWED EIGHT TORPEDO BOATS WITH DUAL, RADAR-GUIDED, MISSILE LAUNCHERS. SUCH MISSILES HAVE ESTIMATED RANGE OF ABOUT 15 MILES FOR A 2,000- POUND HI-EXPLOSIVE PAYLOAD WITH GOOD ACCURACY. PRESUME YOU KNOW OF WEEKEND COMMUNIQUE IN WHICH MOSCOW CLAIMS RIGHT TO EXTEND MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO CUBA WHILE DANGER OF INVASION PERSISTS. ALL THIS CREATES NEW ATMOSPHERE. PRINCIPALS MEETING WITH PRESIDENT TODAY TO DISCUSS WHITHER NOW, AND WITH HILL LEADERSHIP AT WHITE HOUSE THIS AFTERNOON.

RELEASING OFFICER

COORDINATING OFFICERS

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AUTHENTICATING OFFICER

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Copy No. *[Signature]*

CLASSIFIED MESSAGE

PAGE 2 OF 4

ORIG
UNIT
EXT
DATE

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ROUTING	
1	4
2	5
3	6

TO

FROM: DIRECTOR

CONF:

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DEFERRED

ROUTINE

OUT 72756

TO

INFO -2-

CITE DIR 33894

2. DONOVAN IS BACK FROM HAVANA WITH NEW PRICE LIST FROM FIDEL. LATTER WILL SETTLE FOR THREE MILLION CASH AND 25 MILLION IN FOOD AND MEDICINE. DONOVAN TO CONFER WITH HURWITZ AND ATTY GEN BEFORE RETURNING TO HAVANA LATER THIS WEEK. WORD WE HAVE IS THAT FIDEL WANTS TO COMPLETE ALL ARRANGEMENTS QUICKEST, WITHIN TEN DAYS. OUTLOOK IS FOR AGENCY TO BE ASKED TO HELP OUT. WE WILL INSURE CLEARANCE ON THE HILL PRIOR TO ANY INVOLVEMENT.

3.

4.

RELEASING OFFICER

COORDINATING OFFICERS
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AUTHENTICATING OFFICER

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~~C-O-N-F-I-D-E-N-T-I-A-L~~

COUNTRY Cuba REPORT NO. [REDACTED]
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 NO. PAGES 1
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 PLACE & DATE ACQ. [REDACTED] *Q77 (BE) MGD*

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1

Collector's Note: [REDACTED]

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GROUP 1
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STATE ARMY NAVY AIR FBI AEC

INFORMATION REPORT INFORMATION REPORT

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SC-08458-62
3 September 1962

Copy 2 of 3

MEMORANDUM FOR: Acting Director of Central Intelligence
SUBJECT : Recent Soviet Military Activities in Cuba

1. U-2 photography of 29 August confirms extensive Soviet military deliveries to Cuba in recent weeks. Surface-to-air missile (SAM) sites, guided missile boats, and additional land armaments were observed.
2. The photography shows eight SAM sites being set up. One probable assembly area has been identified and SAM equipment has been located at one additional site.
 - A. The small amount of permanent construction at these sites and the speed of the work indicates the program is proceeding on a crash basis.
 - B. Some of these sites could be operational within a week or two.
 - C. A minimum of 125 technically trained personnel will be required to operate each site.
 1. This figure excludes security and support personnel.
 2. No indications that Cubans are trained for SAMs. Soviet personnel doubtless will man the sites for at least the 9 to 12 months while Cubans are being trained.
3. Additional SAM sites probably will be set up in the near future.
 - A. All sites now confirmed are in the Western one-third of the island.
 1. The one area of SAM activity in Oriente province probably will be followed by several others in the vicinity.
 2. Defector and clandestine reports from Las Villas province indicate that at least two sites will be located there, but no confirmation or definite locations thus far.

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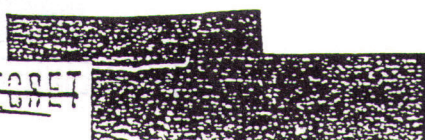


SC-084-58-62

Page 2

- B. The pattern now emerging suggests as many as 24 sites may eventually be set up -- enough to blanket the entire island.
4. At least 8 Komar-class missile boats have been delivered to Cuba in recent weeks.
- A. These PT-like boats carry two missile launchers each, with the radar guided missile effective against surface targets to ranges of between 15 and 17 miles. The missile carries a 2,000 lb. HE warhead.
 - B. Some Cuban naval personnel have received training in the USSR, but it is not known if this included Komar training.
 - C. These boats are in addition to 13 or more torpedo boats and 6 submarine chasers delivered by the USSR earlier this year.
5. The photography shows that current deliveries to Cuba also contain land armaments, including tanks and possibly self-propelled guns.
- A. Reports indicate other shipments have contained artillery, tanks, and possibly combat aircraft, but these are not confirmed.
 - B. The photography of 29 August turned up the highest number of MIG aircraft yet noted, some 37.
 - 1. We believe Cuba's aircraft inventory includes approximately 60 MIG jet fighters, including at least a dozen MIG-19s.
 - 2. No MIG-21s or any type of bomber have been noted.
6. Soviet shipments of military equipment and personnel to Cuba show no sign of letting up.
- A. About 16 Soviet dry-cargo ships are now en route to Cuba, of which at least 10 probably are carrying military equipment.

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1. Total number of military or military-related shipments to Cuba since the current deliveries began in mid-July may be as high as 65.
 2. Routine Soviet deliveries of economic aid and trade goods are being made largely on Western ships.
- B. At least 1,700 Soviet military technicians arrived in Cuba in late July and early August in connection with these military activities.
1. Most of these Soviets appear to be involved in setting up SAM facilities but thus far we cannot conclude that this is their only objective.
- C. At least 1,300 more Soviets are arriving unannounced this week; no reports on their activities so far.
1. Still additional bloc personnel probably have arrived on some of the cargo ships.

RAY S. CLINE
Deputy Director (Intelligence)

Annex A Surface-to-Air Missile Deployment in Cuba
Annex B Description of Komar-Class Missile Boat
Annex C Cuba's Air Defense Capabilities
Annex D Sigint Collection
Annex E USSR-Cuban Communique of 2 September

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SECTION II

TIMETABLE OF SOVIET MILITARY BUILD-UP IN CUBA

(July - October 1962)
(All dates approximate)

<u>Date</u>	<u>Western Cuba</u>	<u>Central Cuba</u>	<u>Eastern Cuba</u>
25-31 July	Upsurge of Soviet arms shipments begins arriving in western Cuban ports.		
1-5 August	Construction begins on SAM sites at Matanzas, Havana, Mariel, Bahia Honda, Santa Lucia, San Julian, & La Coloma.		
5-10 August			
10-15 August			
15-20 August	Soviet armored groups arrive at Santiago de las Vegas and Artemisa.	Upsurge of Soviet arms shipments begins arriving in central Cuban ports.	
20-25 August		Construction begins on SAM site at Cienfuegos.	
25-31 August			
1-5 September	Construction begins on Guanajay IRBM sites.	Construction begins on SAM sites at Sagua la Grande, Caibarien, & Sancti Spiritus.	

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<u>Date</u>	<u>Western Cuba</u>	<u>Central Cuba</u>	<u>Eastern Cuba</u>
5-10 September		Soviet armored group arrives at Remedios.	
10-15 September			
15-20 September	Construction begins at San Cristobal MRBM sites.	Construction begins at Remedios IRBM site.	Upsurge of Soviet arms shipments begins arriving in eastern Cuban ports. Soviet armored group arrives at Holguin.
20-25 September			Construction begins on SAM sites at Los Angeles, Chaparra and Jiguani.
25-30 September		Construction begins at Sagua la Grande MRBM sites.	Construction begins on SAM sites at Manati, Senado, and Manzanillo.

NOTE: Construction of the remaining SAM sites, which apparently were considered less vital than those listed above to the protection of offensive missile bases in Cuba, began in late September or early October. Work probably began on the SAM site at Siguanea on the Isle of Pines in the last week of September and on the sites at Esmeralda, Chambas, Maldonado, Santiago de Cuba, Ciego de Avila, and Deleite during the first half of October.

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