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NOTES TAKEN FROM TRANSCRIPTS
OF MEETINGS OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF,
OCTOBER-NOVEMBER 1962,
DEALING WITH THE CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS
(Handwritten notes were made in 1976 and
typed in 1993)

CJCS: Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff. General Maxwell D. Taylor, USA.

CSA: Chief of Staff, Army. General Earle G. Wheeler.

CSAF: Chief of Staff, Air Force. General Curtis E. LeMay.

CNO: Chief of Naval Operations. Admiral George W. Anderson, Jr.

CMC: Commandant, Marine Corps. General David M. Shoup.

CONAD: Continental Air Defense

DIA: Defense Intelligence Agency

J: Director, Joint Staff

LANT: Atlantic

NORAD: North American Air Defense

OAS: Organization of American States

RCT: Regimental Combat Team

SAM: Surface-to-Air Missile

TAC: Tactical Air Command

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Saturday, 27 October

JCS meeting at 0900 (CJCS left to attend White House meeting):
Briefing at 1000 by Gen. Carroll and Mr. Hughes of DIA: There is evidence of possible Soviet ground forces with modern equipment, of continued construction at MRBM sites, and of surface-to-surface missiles among the Soviet equipment.
Gen. Carroll: AsstSecDef Nitze called me yesterday. The SecDef was in Rusk's office. Rusk was requesting advice from experts who were to go to New York today to advise Amb. Stevenson on how to get and present evidence, particularly how to certify that devices have been rendered inoperable and how to inspect to see that this is the case. The inference was that inspection should be by photo interpretation.

CJCS called from White House: Eight flights authorized this morning, eight more this afternoon.

CSAF: We should write a simple paper taking the latest intelligence into account, and again recommending execution of full-scale OPLAN 312 followed by OPLAN 316.

Drafting of a paper begins.

JCS meeting, 1330-2000 (SecDef attended from 1330-1420):

DJS tables a paper recommending early and timely execution of OPLAN 312 with readiness to execute OPLAN 316.

SecDef: I want the Joint Staff to prepare two plans. First, move one Polaris off the Turkish coast before we hit Cuba, telling the Russians before they have a chance to hit Turkey. Second, assume we hit the missiles in Cuba and Soviets then attack the Jupiters and knock them out; I think this is a very

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real possibility.

Turning to the paper tabled by the DJS, SecDef asked exactly what was meant by "early and timely execution of OPLAN 312"?

CSAF: Attacking Sunday or Monday.

SecDef: Do JCS agree upon attack at first light?

CMC: No.

CJCS: Would you agree that, if there is no stoppage in missile work, Chiefs recommend a strike after a reasonable period of time?

SecDef: I would accept that statement. You don't have to say how long. But I would not have accepted a recommendation for attack "now."

SecDef: CSAF has just learned that a U-2 is lost off Alaska; I must tell Rusk at once. SecDef leaves at 1341, returns five minutes later.

Col. Steakley (Joint Reconnaissance Group, J-3) enters at 1403 to say that a U-2 overflying Cuba is 30-40 minutes overdue. At 1416, SecDef and CJCS left for a White House conference. JCS then turned to the DJS draft. CSAF and Adm. Ricketts (VCNO) favor executing OPLAN 312 on Sunday morning or Monday morning at the latest, unless there is positive proof of dismantling. CSA and CMC agree. They also want to add a passage about executing OPLAN 316. For agreed-upon wording, see JCSM-844-62. This recommendation was transmitted to the White House, where CJCS read it to the ExComm.

Col. Steakley reports on pilot debriefings at 1800: All but two planes were fired at. Intercept says the Cubans have recovered body and wreckage of the U-2.

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At 1830, CJCS gives debrief of White House meeting: He reads President's reply to Khrushchev. CJCS says President has been seized with the idea of trading Turkish for Cuban missiles; he seems to be the only one in favor of it. "The President has a feeling that time is running out." I read the Chiefs' memo to the meeting, saying that we should attack no later than 29 October. Then we got word of the U-2 loss. No air reconnaissance tonight, but everyone feels we should undertake reconnaissance tomorrow, so as to get a better background for attack on Cuba.

CJCS: Should we take out a SAM site?

CSAF: No, we would open ourselves to retaliation. We have little to gain and a lot to lose.

CSA: I feel the same way. Khrushchev may loose one of his missiles on us.

CJCS: Gentlemen, you all recommended retaliation if a U-2 was downed. If this was wise on the 23rd, it should be just as wise on the 27th. (Note: This is not an accurate recollection of the JCS position on 23 Oct)

CSA: Intelligence this morning showed concrete pads; I'm afraid they have nuclear weapons there.

JCS agreed: There should be no U-2 flights tomorrow, but there has to be some kind of reconnaissance tomorrow. If an attack is to be made on Monday, there is no need for further reconnaissance.

Briefing at 1940 by Mr. Hughes of DIA: Photography from today's missions show that the canvas is off the launchers, that the missiles are on the launchers, and that a reload

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capability is ready.

Reconnaissance decision was made later that night: A C-97 with fighter escort would do peripheral photography without getting in range of SAMs.

Sunday, 28 October

JCS meeting at 0900:

CSAF: I want to see the President later today, and I hope all of you will come with me. Monday will be the last time to attack the missiles before they become fully operational.

CJCS: If you want a meeting, I will put in your request.

CSA: My people tell me that all MRBM sites are now operational. If the warheads are with the missiles, they can be made ready to fire in 2 1/2 to 5 hours.

JCS discuss the low-level reconnaissance plan for today: six planes going over sites not defended by anti-aircraft artillery, so they will not cover MRBM sites.

At about 0930, a ticker tape of Moscow Radio's broadcast was passed around: "I appreciate your assurance that the United States will not invade Cuba. Hence we have ordered our officers to stop building bases, dismantle the equipment, and bring it back home. This can be done under UN supervision." SecDef, DepSecDef and AsstSecDef Nitze joined the meeting. CSAF: The Soviets may make a charade of withdrawal and keep some weapons in Cuba.

CNO: The no-invasion pledge leaves Castro free to make trouble in Latin America.

SecDef, DepSecDef and AsstSecDef reply that withdrawal of

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