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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

November 24, 1964

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By g/jw, NARA, Date 3/19/96

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Meeting with the President, November 19, 1964 - Cuba

ATTENDEES: The President, the Vice President-elect, Secretary Rusk, Under Secretary Ball, Ambassador Thompson, Secretary McNamara, Deputy Secretary Vance, Mr. McCone, Mr. Bundy, Mr. Smith, Mr. Chase

Cuba was one of four main subjects discussed at the meeting; the three other main subjects were the Congo, Vietnam, and the MLF. The purpose for putting Cuba on the agenda was to brief the President on the present overflight situation and on some of the preliminary findings of Ambassador Thompson's NSAM 311 study, which is still under way.

In briefing the President about the overflight situation in Cuba, Secretary Rusk made three points. First, it is our impression that Castro is not likely to try to shoot down a U-2 immediately; he is more likely to wait at least until after the matter has been brought to the UN. In this regard, Castro's recent conversation with Sulzberger (N. Y. Times) is pertinent; Castro told Sulzberger that he had a commitment with the Russians to the effect that he would not shoot down a U-2 until "all other means" of stopping the overflights had been exhausted. Needless to say, there can be no 100% guarantee that Castro will not shoot down a U-2 tomorrow. Second, our overflights must concentrate on their main purpose - that is, to insure that offensive weapons are not reintroduced into Cuba. Third, we are now working on the possibility of establishing safer methods of obtaining the information we need to accomplish our main purpose. One alternative may be to use a mix of such facilities as satellites, drones, U-2's (less than we are using now), and agents. The inclusion of the A-11 in a mix may not be desirable; while the A-11 may be less vulnerable than a U-2, it has a loud sonic boom and would probably irritate Castro even more than the U-2.

Mr. McCone described the repositioning and concentration of SAM sites around a handful of key spots in Cuba (e.g. Havana and Santiago); this means that U-2's can fly in many areas of Cuba in relative safety. As for the areas heavily guarded by SAM's, it might be possible to have U-2's fly outside the range of the SAM's, and by using special cameras, photograph these heavily protected areas from an oblique angle. We should remember, though, that any use of

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Memorandum for the Record

-2-

November 24, 1964

U-2's leaves us with a political problem - i.e., the violation of Cuba's sovereignty. Mr. McCone went on to say that satellites might be the answer we are looking for, but added that he isn't optimistic about them. Then, too, we might rely on our steadily growing corps of agents to keep an eye on areas which are heavily defended by SAM's.

Mr. McCone said that we continue to get reports about missiles in Cuba; in this regard, we have received about 47 or 48 which we have considered serious enough to check out carefully. In reply to the President's question, Mr. McCone said that he is quite sure that there are no missiles in Cuba but that it is impossible to prove the negative categorically; others expressed agreement with Mr. McCone's view, while Mr. Bundy noted the unlikelihood of the Soviets reintroducing missiles after having been burned badly once. Mr. McCone went on to say that reports of missiles in Cuba are troublesome on the Hill and that it is very helpful to be able to use U-2 photographs in answering these charges. Secretary Rusk said that this emphasizes the necessity for continuing surveillance. We must be able to assure the American people and other interested parties that we are keeping a close eye out for a reintroduction of Soviet missiles.

Secretary McNamara said that the outcome of the UN will have a bearing on the U-2 problem. If the overflight issue comes up in the UN and we lose badly on it, the chances are probably greater that Castro will shoot down a U-2 than if he loses on the issue in the UN. In any event, we seem to be safe for the moment; after the UN, we will be in a riskier time-frame. Secretary Rusk noted that the State Department is now working hard and carefully on the position the U.S. should take in the event that the overflight issue comes to the UN.

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Gordon Chase