

'62 Cuba invasion ban may be void — Reagan

WASHINGTON (UPI) — President Reagan suggested Wednesday that Soviet shipments of offensive arms to the Caribbean and Central America may have released the United States from the terms of a 1962 pledge to not invade Cuba.

Reagan, in a question-and-answer session with out-of-town reporters, said the mutual restraint promised by the superpowers in the charged climate of the Cuban missile crisis should be reviewed in light of more recent events.

Reagan also accused Cuban President Fidel Castro of using the massive boatlift of refugees to the United States "to infiltrate subversives into our country" and renewed the U.S. charge that criminals and mental patients were "deliberately planted" among the tens of thousands.

"We've appealed a number of times for Cuba to take them back, and they've refused," Reagan said. "We're still trying to work out this problem."

In a still-secret understanding following the 1962 Cuban missile crisis, President Kennedy promised to not invade Cuba in return for a pledge by Soviet Premier Nikita Krushchev that Moscow would remove missiles from Cuba and not reintroduce offensive weapons into the area.

"As far as I'm concerned," Reagan said, "that agreement has been abrogated many times by the Soviet Union and Cuba, bringing in what could only be described as offensive weapons."

The president did not elaborate. His spokesman, Larry Speakes, said the Soviets "repeatedly" have violated the accord by shipping conventional arms to Cuba and providing weapons to leftist movements in Central America.

In any event, Speakes said, "There are no (U.S.) plans to violate" the agreement.

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"There is no invasion on the agenda," he said.

The issue was raised by Tomas Regalado, a Cuban-born radio commentator from Miami, who asked Reagan whether, in view of alleged Soviet violations, the administration still feels compelled to adhere to the agreement.

"I have been looking at that," Reagan replied. "And with all the things that are going on, we haven't been able to talk as much as we should about it."

Regalado was among a group of Hispanic, labor and religious journalists invited to a day of meetings with administration officials. The session came at the midpoint of five days of events orchestrated by the White House under the banner of Hispanic Heritage Week.

Reagan was defensive about the motives behind his recent overtures to the Hispanic community, including nearly a dozen speeches, appearances and private meetings with Hispanic leaders since Aug. 1.

"I want you to know that my concern is not something new or some grand campaign strategy, as some have indicated," he told the Hispanic reporters. "Since my days as governor of California, I've been aware of the rich contributions Americans of Hispanic descent have made and are making to our country."