

Unidentified: Any intelligence on that thing?

President Kennedy: Mr. Rusk?

Rusk: Mr. President this is, of course, a very serious development. It's one that we, all of us, had not really believed the Soviets could carry this far. They seemed to be denying that they were going to establish bases of their own [in Cuba] and this one that we're looking at is a Soviet base. It doesn't do anything essential from a Cuban point of view. The Cubans couldn't do anything with it anyhow at this stage.

Now, I do think we have to set in motion a chain of events that will eliminate this base. I don't think we can sit still. The question then becomes whether we do it by a sudden, unannounced strike of some sort or we build up the crisis to the point where the other side has to consider very seriously about giving in, or even the Cubans themselves take some action on this.

The thing that I'm, of course, very conscious of is that there is no such thing, I think, as unilateral action by the United States. It's so intimately involved with 42 allies and confrontation in many places that any action that we take will greatly increase the risks of a direct action involving our other alliances and our other forces in other parts of the world.

So I think we have to think very hard about *two* major courses of action as alternatives. One is the quick strike. The point where we think there is the overwhelming, overriding necessity to take all the risks that are involved in doing that. I don't think this in itself would require an invasion of Cuba. You could do it with or without such an invasion—in other words, if we make it clear that what we're doing is eliminating this particular base or any other such base that is established. We ourselves are not moved to general war. We're simply doing what we said we would do if they took certain action. Or we're going to decide that this is the time to eliminate the Cuban problem by action [*unclear*] the island.

The *other* would be, if we have a few days from the military point of view, if we have a little time, then I would think that there would be another

sile site, near Banes in eastern Cuba, that CIA analysts needed more time to analyze. They finally judged (correctly) that this missile was a cruise missile (more akin to a small unguided jet aircraft, without a ballistic trajectory) with a range of 20 to 40 nautical miles, apparently designed for coastal defense. President Kennedy was briefed in person about this finding on 7 September (see Brugioni, *Eyeball to Eyeball*, pp. 120–27).

President Kennedy was concerned that the nature of this arguably defensive system not be misunderstood and that news about it not leak out into the ongoing, volatile domestic debate over his response to the Soviet buildup in Cuba. A new codeword classification, PSALM, was thereupon created—with a tightly restricted distribution—for future reports on Soviet deployments in Cuba. A new, even more explicit, public warning against deployment of "offensive weapons" was announced by the White House on 13 September.