

McGeorge Bundy: How clear is that intelligence?

McCone: I haven't got that.

Taylor: It was from a naval communications intercept.⁴

Rusk: Mr. President, I would like to make a comment very briefly on . . . [State Department intelligence director] Roger Hilsman's group has been watching this thing very closely, of course, trying to . . . Moscow's reaction. And there has been, all the way through, an element of caution and [no] freedom of action from Moscow. I'll just read the final paragraph [of the State intelligence analysis]:

Moscow, in spite of their threatened resistance to U.S. [*unclear*], has [*unclear*]. His [Khrushchev's] public line seems designed to leave him with some option to back off, if he chooses. Giving the impression of a pure U.S.-Cuban fracas will be hard to maintain once there's a U.S.-Soviet incident at sea. On balance we think it probable that Soviets will risk such an incident, in the expectation that the resulting further rise in tension will stimulate pressures on the U.S. to end the quarantine. And here lies the various kinds of compromise proposals. This will gain time for the Soviets to determine whether the U.S. has made a powerful case on the issue of the missiles, and whether the Soviet line that the Communist weapons are defensive can be sustained, whether a formula is available whereby the missiles can be withdrawn gracefully, or to risk escalation and the countermeasures that the U.S. [*unclear*].

President Kennedy: All right.

Bundy: Mr. President, there's one general problem which I also think we [*unclear*] need to clean up this morning, but I think we may want to do our other operational matters first. That is the communications problem. Dr. Wiesner and an interdepartmental team are standing by.

But perhaps first you will want to hear from the Secretary of Defense on the current military situation.

McNamara: Mr. President, first [*unclear*] yesterday about our own [*unclear*]. Here are these. Pictures. These are our own aircraft; that's 150 of them in that position. [*Photos of U.S. aircraft on airfields in Florida are being displayed.*]

President Kennedy: Where?

4. A U.S. Navy electronic intelligence ship, USS *Oxford*, was then deployed in international waters (according to the U.S. definition of that term) just off the coast of Cuba.