

*One minute and 33 seconds excised as classified information.*

**McNamara:** . . . and therefore, I think that we can conduct low-level surveillance with very little risk of an incident that we did not wish to incite ourselves.

**President Kennedy:** What's the advantage of the low-level [*unclear*]?

**McNamara:** Two advantages. Three advantages, really.

One, it will give us some intelligence we can use, benefit from.

Two, it will establish a pattern of operation that is consistent with an attack, and cannot be differentiated from an attack, and therefore reduces the warning of an attack, and may make it possible to attack with lesser forces because we reduced the warning. And this, I think, is an extremely important point we can discuss later.

And three, it demonstrates to the public and the world that we are not only interested in stopping the flow of offensive weapons to Cuba, but also definitely have as our objective the removal of the weapons that are there.

Why are we justified in conducting low-level surveillance under these circumstances? We're justified doing so because there's evidence that the Soviets are camouflaging their sites. There is tremendous evidence of this. You can see the camouflage nets drying on the ground. It's been raining and it's wet and they're drying them out. They're under instructions to camouflage immediately. And they'll camouflage not just the weapons, but various buildings, trucks—

**President Kennedy:** [*Unclear*] explain to me this whole Russian thing someday. Why they didn't camouflage them before? And why they do it now? And at what point they thought we were going to find it out? I don't see this. That was one of the most [*unclear*].<sup>8</sup>

**McNamara:** It's an amazing thing. But now I think we're beginning to read their minds much more clearly than was true—

**Bundy:** Maybe their minds . . .

**McNamara:** —72 hours ago.

And there's absolutely no question but what they're under orders to camouflage and do it fast. And because the camouflage equipment is wet and spread out on the ground, it's drying. As soon as it dries they put it on everything in sight. They're camouflaging trucks; they're camouflaging erectors; they're camouflaging missiles. It's really a fantastic sequence of action.

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8. For a possible answer to President Kennedy's question about Soviet camouflage, see Graham Allison and Philip Zelikow, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis* (2d ed.; New York: Longman, 1999), pp. 212–14.