

other step is carrying out this low-level surveillance. We certainly don't have to do anything more today.

**Robert Kennedy:** I agree.

**President Kennedy:** Then we come back then to whether the political situation at the U.N. and everywhere else is such that we want to let this *Bucharest* pass today without making the inspection. That's really the question. What is the political effect of our letting that pass? Are we better off to make this issue come to a head today, or is there some advantage in putting it off till tomorrow?

**Robert Kennedy:** When will it arrive in Cuba?

**McNamara:** The *Bucharest*, as best we can tell, is traveling about 17 knots, is around 500 miles from Cuba and should arrive therefore sometime tomorrow. And if we're going to [*unclear interjection*]. Yeah. [*Unclear*], we have about eight hours left, because it is now 11:35 [in the area at sea, not Washington, which is on daylight saving time] and we wouldn't want to do it tonight.

**Rusk:** Mr. President, the fact that we have already hailed it [the *Bucharest*], asked it questions. It's answered. We've already passed it through.

**McNamara:** We haven't passed it. We just hailed it; it replied; and then we're shadowing it. And that is, to the best of my knowledge, the only words that were passed.

**Llewellyn Thompson:** By the time this arrives in port you will almost then be ready to tackle the other ships, and there wouldn't be much interval between its arrival and the fact that you make [*unclear*].

**McNamara:** That's approximately correct, Tommy.

**President Kennedy:** You want to put this . . . Is this any reason to put it off, or not put it off for 24 hours, the searching of a Soviet ship?

**McNamara:** It actually could be put off possibly for 48 hours, Mr. President.

**Rusk:** From my point of view, a tanker is not the best example. I mean, we haven't got POL [petroleum, oil, and lubricants] on the [prohibited materials] list, and if there's no visible suspicious cargo on deck there's not much room for anything under, beneath the deck. This is a tanker that left home before all this fracas developed.

**President Kennedy:** And it kept going. All right, it's obvious [*unclear*] and that's a restraining factor. We wouldn't turn it around. The question really is, if it arrives in Havana tomorrow or wherever it arrives, and it states that the United States—and it states what happened—does that then indicate [that the United States has wavered from the blockade and adopted] a separate pattern?