

**Bundy:** There's nothing, Mr. President—I've just checked the language in your speech—which requires you to stop any ship. It is simply, "If found to contain cargoes of offensive weapons it would be turned back." The way in which we find this [that there is a prohibited cargo] is our business.

**Rusk:** Could we get Harlan Cleveland in here?<sup>11</sup>

**Bundy:** [*disapprovingly*] Cleveland?

**McNamara:** Mr. President, may I raise one other question? We should, I believe, have included missile fuel on the list of prohibited items. I'd like to send out an interpretation of that list today including missile fuel. This in preparation for the *Grozny* interception.

**Ball:** This might be the reason why the [*Grozny* displayed] hesitation on the course.

**McNamara:** Well, it might be. In any case, I'd like to cover that.

**Bundy:** More likely the quartermaster has . . .

**Robert Kennedy:** Do we know that this doesn't, that the one we're letting through [*Bucharest*] doesn't carry missile fuel?

**McNamara:** We're almost sure, but the missile fuel would not be in[side] these tankers. [It would] be on deck load.

**Unidentified:** Have you ever seen missile fuel?

**McNamara:** No. [*Unclear mentions of "nitric acid."*]

**President Kennedy:** How are we going to handle the problem, if we . . . if this one [*Bucharest*] proceeds, that today there's a lot of interest in what's happening to these ships? Isn't it going to come out that not one ship was stopped? How are we going to do . . . we can't sit on that for 24 hours [until the *Grozny* is intercepted]. Very well.

**Bundy:** Do you have a proposal, Don [Wilson]?

**President Kennedy:** It isn't really so much Don, as the Pentagon.

**McNamara:** I would say that, we've been boarding ships that raise any question in our minds about the type of cargo they're carrying. No Russian ship of that type came in. We've been hailing all other ships—

**Robert Kennedy:** Well, what if they ask you if you've intercepted any of [*unclear*]?

**McNamara:** As I was going to say, we've been hailing all ships, all other ships, and querying them as to their destination, point of origin, type of cargo. And where it was obvious they weren't carrying prohibited cargo we passed them through. Tankers, for example.

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11. Harlan Cleveland was assistant secretary of state for International Organization affairs, the bureau responsible for, among other things, the U.S. mission to the United Nations.