

McNamara: This would be my view, Mr. President. The tanker doesn't give us much of an excuse for a showdown. And if a showdown occurs, it may weaken our position for the next step.

Bundy: That's important for you to know, Mr. President, that there is a good, substantial argument, and a lot of people in the argument on the other side. All of whom will fall in with whatever decision you make. I think Paul [*unclear*] would feel much differently.

Rusk: I think we ought to review this task and then try to get something to [give to] the President from Bob McNamara and me.

Nitze: I think, the distinction really is between whether you look at the specific incident, the stopping of the . . . whether it's a tanker or some other ship, or whether you look at it as the principle of a blockade. Our view, I think, yesterday afternoon was that you've declared a quarantine which has certain implied rules, which means you just go ahead and carry out those rules indiscriminately, against everybody, not selecting ships or types of ships. But just go ahead and do that. I think that would be easiest in the end.

Bundy: That's correct.

Rusk: Mr. President, I think there are certain points that Mr. McCone has . . . people might take a look at. For one, these ships other than those bound for Cuba—their behavior. We've already mentioned that.

Secondly, what the effect is on . . . if the present Soviet conduct about turning back ships continues . . .

Bundy: On the Cuban run.

Rusk: —on the Cuban run. Now under the circumstances it's already escalated very, very fast.

President Kennedy: All right, well, in any case, I'll tell you what let's do. Let's wait. . . . We got to . . . Let's come back this afternoon and take the ship. I think we can always . . . Your point about we can act . . . "eyeball to eyeball" . . . We could say: "Well, we're waiting for Khrushchev. We're waiting for U Thant. . . . We don't want to precipitate an incident." Which may be [*unclear*].

Bundy: I was thinking about it tomorrow morning, if [*unclear*].

President Kennedy: OK, well, we still have then [tomorrow morning] another six or seven hours [to board the *Bucharest*]. I think the only arguments for not taking it [*unclear*]. I don't think it makes a hell of a lot of difference what ship it is, whether it's a tanker or . . .

Bundy: We can . . .

President Kennedy: I would think the only argument would be that, with U Thant and the U.N. asking us for—

Bundy: We've given them a letter.