

**McNamara:** Yes, the missiles belong to Turkey and they're manned by Turks, but the warheads are under U.S. custody.

**Taylor:** And committed to NATO.

**McNamara:** And they're committed to NATO.

**President Kennedy:** In other words, we couldn't destroy the missiles anyway, could we? They belong to the Turks.

**McNamara:** They belong to Turkey.

**President Kennedy:** All we can destroy is the warheads.

**Unidentified:** That is correct.

**McNamara:** And we can't even really withdraw the warheads. We simply are custodians of the warheads for the account of the Turks, in recognition that you [President Kennedy] must release them [under NATO nuclear release procedures].

**President Kennedy:** Well now, what we have to do first is get, I would think, is just act very quickly until we get a chance to think a little more about it.

But what we ought to say is that we have had several publicly and privately different proposals, or differing proposals from the Soviet Union. They all are complicated matters and involve some discussion to get their true meaning. We cannot permit ourselves to be impaled on a long negotiating hook while the work goes on on these bases. I therefore suggest that work, that the United Nations immediately, with the cooperation of the Soviet Union, take steps to provide for cessation of the work, and then we can talk about all these matters, which are very complicated.

**Bundy:** I think it will be very important to say at least that the current threat to peace is not in Turkey; it is in Cuba. There's no pain in saying that, even if you're going to make a trade later on.

I think also that we ought to say that we have an immediate threat. What is going on in Cuba and that is what has got to stop. Then I think we *should* say that the public Soviet, the broadcast, message is at variance with other proposals which have been put forward.

**President Kennedy:** Within the last 12 hours.

**Bundy:** Within the last 12 hours. And I get to surface those for background.

**President Kennedy:** That being so, until we find out what is really being suggested and what can really be discussed, we have to get something on [stopping] work. Their weakness is, the work's going on.

**Bundy:** That's right.

**President Kennedy:** There isn't any doubt. Let's not kid ourselves. They've got a very good proposal, which is the reason they've made it public—