

meeting has apparently broken up temporarily into smaller knots of discussion. We hear background noise as people leave their seats and move around, putting objects on the table. One person can be heard saying: "We're trying to get a paragraph, and then it'll be thrown out because it's overtaken by events." A few moments later someone else can be heard: "This is what is known as escalation." Someone answers: "With everything else, suddenly they attack. . . ." One of these little conversations becomes somewhat audible.

Unidentified: If we had rewritten that letter, [unclear] the escalation.

Unidentified: We must first piece it together.

Unidentified: We still may want to talk to them and get together a response. [Unclear exchange.]

Gilpatric: It's hard. It depends on what kind of a target you're looking at. Oh, there are airfields, but there's nothing comparable. [Unclear remark about missile sites in East Germany.] The assessment is that he has no missile sites in the satellites.

Unidentified: No, Doug was saying, if they hit the Cubans [unclear], we should hit the [unclear].

Gilpatric: The trouble is, if you did that, [unclear] nothing comparable.

Dillon: If we did something to the Soviet Union it's almost, let's say [unclear]. But we've got to do something about it, because [unclear].

The mixed conversation continues, with few audible fragments, for several more minutes. A few participants review the timing of the receipt of last night's letter from Khrushchev, apparently trying to divine some meaning. Then there is an exchange about communications security and coded messages. Finally, after about ten minutes, President Kennedy returns to his seat and the meeting starts again. Robert Kennedy and Sorensen are still out of the room, where they have taken over and are completing the redrafting of the message to Khrushchev.

President Kennedy: What we got to do is—let's just see if we can get this. Castro just announced that any plane that intruded over the airspace of Cuba would be fired upon.

Let's see if . . . Gentlemen, come up and sit here now. Gentlemen.

Let's talk a little more about the Turks, how we're going to handle that. NATO and the Turks, that's the one matter we haven't settled today.

Dillon: I am really very much concerned about this. It's going to be very difficult with this Castro announcement [and] what's happened, if we wait until Wednesday or Thursday on this thing [taking action against the Soviet missiles in Cuba]. Therefore, if we want to do something—