

Dillon: And then the message to the capitals saying we are doing this, and that we want the representatives to be instructed.

President Kennedy: Of course, it would be relatively easy if we wanted to get NATO to reject this rejoinder [the Soviet proposal for a Cuba-Turkey trade]. But that isn't necessarily what we want right now, is it?

Ball: Well, if they rejected it—

President Kennedy: What kind of a briefing?

McNamara: I don't think you can go to NATO. I don't think you can send any messages out to the capitals until we decide what we want to do.

Unidentified: That's right.

McNamara: When we decide that, I think we can force them, and I think we can do it in such a way that the aftereffects will not—not be too severe. But I think we've got to decide ahead of time what it is we want to do, and what I would suggest we decide is, we want those missiles taken out of Turkey. And we simply say that we believe this is, as I do believe, in the interest of the alliance, and that we will replace those missiles with other fire.

President Kennedy: But they're going to say is we're seeking the trade with the Russians, aren't they?

McNamara: But I would say: "We may have to attack Cuba. If we attack Cuba, they're holding Turkey as a hostage and they're likely to attack Turkey and this . . ."

Bundy: "To free our hands in Cuba, we must get these missiles out of Turkey," is what we say.

McNamara: Yeah. Without endangering you, the alliance. This is the theme we give to them.

Unidentified: And the point that always has to be made to these countries is that: After all, the menace of these missiles like these in Cuba is a menace to the retaliatory power of the United States, which is the central defense of the whole free world, including yourselves.

McNamara: Yeah, well, I would put it like this. "We're not trading Turkish missiles for Cuban missiles."

Bundy: No, no.

McNamara: Not a bit. We're relieving the alliance of a threat that is presently upon them.

Bundy: Of a local threat—

President Kennedy: But they will say, it's going to be regarded in the NATO meeting as a trade, isn't it? They're going to say: "Well now, do you have a deal with the Russians if we take them out of Turkey?"