

The Chiefs have been . . . I went back to them [*unclear*] and talked this over with the Chiefs. The problem of low-level surveillance is becoming difficult because in all the flights today around the SAM sites and the certain missile sites there is low-level ack-ack [*antiaircraft artillery*].

President Kennedy: There was a lot of firing today, wasn't there?

Taylor: Quite a bit. The planes are turning back. Got overused at the first of the missile sites and then, at the second, turned back and cut out. We have some photography.

So I would say by tonight, by the end of the day, we probably have seen some of the [*antiaircraft*] dispositions around these sites. However, the kind of 20-millimeter flak that's involved is very hard to pick up. It's very hard to know exactly where it is. So that by tomorrow, I would say we're not ready to go back with *armed* reconnaissance preceding the actual photographic missions, with any hope of cleaning out these little air sites.

We think, however, the Chiefs would recommend, that we still go back with about six planes tomorrow, picking out targets which we don't know have this kind of flak around, and verify the work [*on the missile sites*] is still going ahead, and also prove we're still on the job.

But we're approaching the point I think, Mr. President, where low-level reconnaissance will be entirely impossible. And if we reach that point, and if we're going to continue reconnaissance, without actually taking out the whole works, we're faced with taking out a number of the SAM sites that—say ten—to get a squad coming in again at medium- and high-level reconnaissance. But low-level reconnaissance probably is on its way out, as I think we'll learn at the end of tomorrow.

Robert McNamara: I would add to that, I don't believe we should carry out tomorrow's U-2 mission. The U-2 is just too dangerous [*unclear*].

But I do believe we should carry out the low-level reconnaissance with the necessary fighter escorts and preparations for following the reconnaissance, if it's attacked, with attack on the attackers.

Taylor: We don't think that fighter escort on the low level will help tomorrow. These [*fighter*] planes are off the coast now, in case they have a cripple [*a damaged reconnaissance aircraft*] coming out. But this was a case again of us trying to put a rush crew on certain targets that we know, we don't think are . . .

Dillon: I wasn't quite clear. Is the antiaircraft shooting at these things around the missile sites themselves?

Taylor: Either side of these missile sites, they are.