

PREM19

11

CUBA

(Soviet ground
forces)

MT

Confidential Filing

Soviet ground forces in Cuba.

CUBA

5/3
830

September 1979

Referred to	Date	Referred to	Date	Referred to	Date	Referred to	Date
8-9-79 10-9-79 14-9-79 1-10-79 2-10-79 17-12-79				PREM	19/11		

PREM 19/11

Subject filed on
USA: Nov 79: Visit to
US: Policy

CUBA

Extract from Record of Meeting between P.M.
and American Secretary for Defence, Dr. Brown,
Washington, 17.12.79.

The Prime Minister said she was concerned with the threat outside the NATO area, e.g. in the Caribbean and the rest of the Alliance's underbelly. Dr Brown said that the US and UK should co-operate in this field. It was a pity, for example, that we had left Aden. The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary observed that the US had not been blameless in our retreat from the Middle East. The Prime Minister mentioned our role in the Trucial States. The Russians, Cubans and East Germans were infiltrating right across the board. Our friends in the Caribbean were worried, but we did not have a big enough Navy to help them. ~~She wondered whether the~~

Cuba 6
SECRET



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

2 October 1979

US/Soviet Relations: President Carter's
Message

In your letter to me of 2 October you enclosed a draft reply from the Prime Minister to President Carter.

I enclose the text of the message in the form in which it issued.

I am sending copies of this letter and its enclosure to Brian Norbury (Ministry of Defence) and Martin Vile (Cabinet Office).

M. O'D. B. ALEXANDER

Paul Lever, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

SECRET

5
SUBJECT

CABINET OFFICE/WHITE HOUSE 001/02

IMMEDIATE 021845Z OCT 79

FM CABINET OFFICE LONDON
TO WHITE HOUSE

PRIME MINISTER'S

PERSONAL MESSAGE

SERIAL No. T107/79.1

SECRET

FOLLOWING MESSAGE FROM THE PRIME MINISTER TO PRESIDENT CARTER

BEGINS:

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT,

THANK YOU FOR YOUR MESSAGE OF 1 OCTOBER ABOUT THE SOVIET
COMBAT BRIGADE IN CUBA, SENT BEFORE YOUR TELEVISION ADDRESS
TO THE AMERICAN PEOPLE. I HAVE READ THE TEXT CAREFULLY.

I SHARE YOUR CONCERN ABOUT CUBAN AND SOVIET INTENTIONS IN
THE CARIBBEAN. BRITAIN TOO HAS SIGNIFICANT INTERESTS THERE.
I ALSO AGREE THAT THIS DANGER EXISTS MORE WIDELY IN THE
DEVELOPING WORLD. IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT THE SOVIET UNION SHOULD
RECOGNISE YOUR RESOLVE IN THIS MATTER.

I AM THEREFORE ESPECIALLY ENCOURAGED BY YOUR STATEMENT THAT
YOU ARE ACCELERATING EFFORTS TO INCREASE THE CAPABILITY OF THE
UNITED STATES TO USE ITS MILITARY FORCES WORLD WIDE. AFTER WHAT
HAS HAPPENED IN ANGOLA, ETHIOPIA AND ELSEWHERE, THERE IS AN
IMPERATIVE NEED TO DEMONSTRATE TO THE RUSSIANS THAT THE WEST WILL
NOT TOLERATE FURTHER ACTION OF THIS KIND BY THEM AND THEIR ALLIES.

YOU KNOW THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT'S POSITION ON SALT II. WE
HOPE THAT THE TREATY WILL BE RATIFIED WITHOUT DELAY. WE WOULD
NOT WISH ANY COMPLICATIONS CONCERNING SALT II TO STAND IN THE
WAY OF NECESSARY IMPROVEMENTS IN THE ALLIANCE'S DEFENCES.

I WELCOME OUR CONTINUING PERSONAL CONSULTATION ON MAJOR
INTERNATIONAL ISSUES.

WITH BEST WISHES,

MARGARET THATCHER

ENDS

NNNN

SECRET



10 DOWNING STREET

For favour of immediate
onward transmission
please.

R Carter.

Duty Clerk

2.10.79

SECRET

4

MESSAGE FROM THE PRIME MINISTER TO PRESIDENT CARTER

Dear Mr. President,

Thank you for your message of 1 October about the Soviet combat brigade in Cuba, sent before your television address to the American people. I have read the text carefully.

I share your concern about Cuban and Soviet intentions in the Caribbean. Britain too has significant interests there. I also agree that this danger exists more widely in the developing world. It is essential that the Soviet Union should recognise your resolve in this matter.

I am therefore especially encouraged by your statement that you are accelerating efforts to increase the capability of the United States to use its military forces world wide. After what has happened in Angola, Ethiopia and elsewhere, there is an imperative need to demonstrate to the Russians that the West will not tolerate further action of this kind by them and their allies.

You know the British Government's position on SALT II. We hope that the Treaty will be ratified without delay. We would not wish any complications concerning SALT II to stand in the way of necessary improvements in the Alliance's defences.

I welcome our continuing personal consultation on major international issues.

With best wishes,

Margaret Thatcher

2 October 1979

SECRET



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London S.W.1

2 October 1979

Dear Michael,

US-Soviet Relations: Message from President
Carter

/ In response to your letter of today, I enclose a draft
/ reply to the President's message to the Prime Minister dated
1 October. I also enclose the full text of the President's
address on TV, which we have just received from the U.S.
Embassy.

US handling of the question of Soviet combat troops in
Cuba has not been very effective. But it is at least welcome
that, after some only too visible hesitations, the President
is apparently now inclined to take a firmer stand in response
to Soviet and Cuban opportunism, and the draft reply is designed to
encourage him in this.

I am sending copies of this letter and enclosure to Brian
Norbury (MOD) and Martin Vile (Cabinet Office).

*Yours etc**Paul*

Paul Lever

M O'D B Alexander Esq
10 Downing Street

SECRET

DSR 11 (Revised)

DRAFT: ~~message~~ ~~radio/letter/teletype/airmail~~ ~~airmail~~

TYPE: Draft Final 1+

FROM: PRIME MINISTER

Reference

DEPARTMENT:

TEL. NO:

SECURITY CLASSIFICATION

TO: PRESIDENT CARTER

Your Reference

Top Secret

Secret

Confidential

Restricted

Unclassified

PRIVACY MARKING

.....In Confidence

CAVEAT.....

SUBJECT:

Dear Mr President,

Thank you for your message of 1 October about the Soviet combat brigade in Cuba, sent before your television address to the American people, the text of which I have read carefully.

~~(I am sure you are right to take seriously the presence of the Soviet combat force, whatever its capabilities vis-a-vis the United States.)~~ *Share your concern about* I agree particularly with the emphasis you place on Cuban and Soviet intentions in the Caribbean, ~~where~~ *significant* Britain too has ~~important~~ *there.* interests; ~~and~~ *also* that this danger ~~also~~ exists more widely in the developing world. ~~I therefore welcome the response described in your message.~~ *essential* It is ~~important~~ that the Soviet Union should recognise your resolve in this matter. The establishment of the Caribbean Joint Task Force in Florida is a necessary step ~~as is~~ *to this end.* your decision to increase economic assistance to countries in the Caribbean and Central America *will* to help them to deal with unrest caused by social and economic needs.

I am especially encouraged by your statement that you will accelerate efforts to increase US ~~capacity~~ *capability* to use *its*

Enclosures—flag(s).....

militar forces world wide. There is an imperative need to demonstrate to the Russians, ^{What has happened} after their successes in Angola, Ethiopia and elsewhere, that the West will not tolerate ~~unchallenged~~ the repeated exercise of global opportunism by the Soviet Union and its allies.

You know the British Government's position on SALT II: we ~~welcome your agreement with the Russians and~~ hope that the Treaty will be ratified ~~without delay~~. ^{And we} would not wish any complications concerning SALT II to stand in the way of necessary improvements in the Alliance's defences.

I welcome our continuing personal consultation on major international issues.

SUBJECT: TEXT OF THE PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS TO
THE NATION, OCTOBER 1, 1979

1. TONIGHT I WANT TO TALK WITH YOU ABOUT THE SUBJECT THAT IS MY HIGHEST CONCERN, AS IT HAS BEEN FOR EVERY PRESIDENT. THAT SUBJECT IS PEACE AND THE SECURITY OF THE UNITED STATES.

2. WE ARE AT PEACE TONIGHT, AS WE HAVE BEEN AT PEACE THROUGHOUT THE TIME OF MY SERVICE IN THIS OFFICE. THE PEACE WE ENJOY IS THE PEACE OF THE STRONG. OUR NATIONAL DEFENSES ARE UNSURPASSED IN THE WORLD. THOSE DEFENSES ARE STRONGER TONIGHT THAN THEY WERE TWO YEARS AGO; THEY WILL BE STRONGER TWO YEARS FROM NOW THAN THEY ARE TONIGHT, BECAUSE OF CAREFULLY PLANNED IMPROVEMENTS THAT ARE GOING FORWARD WITH YOUR SUPPORT AND WITH THE SUPPORT OF CONGRESS.

3. OUR PROGRAM FOR MODERNIZING AND STRENGTHENING THE MILITARY FORCES OF THE NATO ALLIANCE IS ON TRACK, WITH THE FULL COOPERATION AND PARTICIPATION OF OUR EUROPEAN ALLIES. OUR STRATEGIC NUCLEAR FORCES ARE POWERFUL

ENOUGH TO DESTROY ANY POTENTIAL ADVERSARY MANY TIMES OVER, AND THE INVULNERABILITY OF THOSE FORCES WILL SOON BE FURTHER ASSURED BY A NEW SYSTEM OF POWERFUL MOBILE MISSILES. THESE SYSTEMS ARE DESIGNED FOR STABILITY AND DEFENSE.

4. BEYOND THESE MILITARY DEFENSES, WE ARE ON THE THRESHOLD OF A GREAT ADVANCE IN THE CONTROL OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS -- THE ADOPTION OF THE SECOND STRATEGIC ARMS LIMITATION TREATY, OR SALT II.

5. THIS EVENING I ALSO WANT TO REPORT TO YOU ABOUT THE HIGHLY PUBLICIZED SOVIET BRIGADE IN CUBA AND ABOUT ITS BEARING ON THE IMPORTANT RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN OUR NATION AND THE SOVIET UNION.

6. THIS IS NOT A SIMPLE OR EASY SUBJECT.

7. THE UNITED STATES AND THE SOVIET UNION ARE THE TWO MOST POWERFUL NATIONS ON EARTH, AND THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN US IS COMPLEX BECAUSE IT INVOLVES STRONG ELEMENTS OF BOTH COMPETITION AND COOPERATION.

8. OUR FUNDAMENTAL PHILOSOPHIES CONFLICT, AND QUITE OFTEN OUR NATIONAL INTERESTS CONFLICT AS WELL. BUT AS

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TWO GREAT NATIONS, WE DO HAVE COMMON INTERESTS AND SHARE AN OVERWHELMING MUTUAL CONCERN IN PREVENTING A NUCLEAR WAR. WE MUST RECOGNIZE THEREFORE THAT NUCLEAR ARMS CONTROL AGREEMENTS ARE VITAL TO BOTH OUR COUNTRIES. AND WE MUST ALSO EXERCISE SELF-RESTRAINT IN OUR RELATIONS AND BE SENSITIVE TO EACH OTHER'S CONCERNS.

9. RECENTLY WE HAVE OBTAINED EVIDENCE THAT A SOVIET COMBAT BRIGADE HAS BEEN IN CUBA FOR SEVERAL YEARS. THE PRESENCE OF SOVIET COMBAT TROOPS IN CUBA IS OF SERIOUS CONCERN TO US.

10. I WANT TO REASSURE YOU AT THE OUTSET THAT WE DO NOT FACE ANY IMMEDIATE, CONCRETE THREAT THAT COULD ESCALATE INTO WAR OR A MAJOR CONFRONTATION.

11. BUT WE DO FACE A CHALLENGE. IT IS A CHALLENGE TO OUR WISDOM -- A CHALLENGE TO OUR ABILITY TO ACT IN A FIRM, DECISIVE WAY WITHOUT DESTROYING THE BASIS FOR COOPERATION WHICH HELPS TO MAINTAIN WORLD PEACE AND CONTROL NUCLEAR WEAPONS. IT IS A CHALLENGE TO OUR DETERMINATION TO GIVE A MEASURED AND EFFECTIVE RESPONSE TO SOVIET COMPETITION AND TO CUBAN MILITARY ACTIVITIES

AROUND THE WORLD.

12. NOW LET ME EXPLAIN THE SPECIFIC PROBLEM OF THE SOVIET BRIGADE AND DESCRIBE THE MORE GENERAL PROBLEM OF SOVIET-CUBAN MILITARY ACTIVISM IN THE THIRD WORLD.

13. HERE IS THE BACKGROUND ON SOVIET FORCES IN CUBA: AS MOST OF YOU KNOW, 17 YEARS AGO IN THE ERA OF THE COLD WAR, THE SOVIET UNION SUDDENLY ATTEMPTED TO INTRODUCE OFFENSIVE NUCLEAR MISSILES AND BOMBERS INTO CUBA. THIS DIRECT THREAT TO THE UNITED STATES ENDED WITH THE SOVIET AGREEMENT TO WITHDRAW THOSE NUCLEAR WEAPONS, AND A COMMITMENT NOT TO INTRODUCE OFFENSIVE WEAPONS INTO CUBA THEREAFTER.

14. AT THE TIME OF THAT 1962 MISSILE CRISIS, THERE WERE MORE THAN 20,000 SOVIET MILITARY PERSONNEL IN CUBA. MOST OF THEM WERE ALSO WITHDRAWN, AND WE MONITORED THEIR DEPARTURE. IT WAS BELIEVED THAT THOSE WHO STAYED BEHIND WERE NOT COMBAT FORCES BUT WERE THERE TO ADVISE AND TRAIN CUBANS AND TO PERFORM INTELLIGENCE FUNCTIONS.

15. JUST RECENTLY AMERICAN INTELLIGENCE OBTAINED PERSUASIVE EVIDENCE THAT SOME OF THESE SOVIET FORCES HAD BEEN ORGANIZED INTO A COMBAT UNIT. WHEN ATTENTION WAS THEN FOCUSED ON A CAREFUL REVIEW OF PAST INTELLIGENCE DATA, IT WAS POSSIBLE FOR OUR EXPERTS TO CONCLUDE THAT THIS UNIT HAD EXISTED FOR SEVERAL YEARS, PROBABLY SINCE THE MID-1970'S AND POSSIBLY EVEN LONGER.

16. THIS UNIT APPEARS TO BE A BRIGADE OF TWO TO THREE THOUSAND MEN. IT IS ARMED WITH ABOUT FORTY TANKS AND OTHER MODERN MILITARY EQUIPMENT. IT HAS BEEN ORGANIZED AS A COMBAT UNIT, AND ITS TRAINING EXERCISES HAVE BEEN THOSE OF A COMBAT UNIT.

17. THIS IS NOT A LARGE FORCE, NOR AN ASSAULT FORCE. IT PRESENTS NO DIRECT THREAT TO US. IT HAS NO AIRBORNE OR SEABORNE CAPABILITY. IN CONTRAST TO THE 1962 CRISIS, NO NUCLEAR THREAT TO THE U.S. IS INVOLVED.

18. NEVERTHELESS THIS SOVIET BRIGADE IN CUBA IS A SERIOUS MATTER. IT CONTRIBUTES TO TENSION IN THE CARIBBEAN AND CENTRAL AMERICAN REGION. THE DELIVERY OF MODERN ARMS TO CUBA AND THE PRESENCE OF SOVIET NAVAL FORCES IN CUBAN WATERS HAVE STRENGTHENED THE SOVIET-

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CUBAN MILITARY RELATIONSHIP. THEY HAVE ADDED TO THE FEARS OF SOME COUNTRIES THAT THEY MAY COME UNDER SOVIET OR CUBAN PRESSURE.

19. DURING THE LAST FEW YEARS THE SOVIETS HAVE BEEN INCREASING THE DELIVERY OF MILITARY SUPPLIES TO CUBA. THE RESULT IS THAT CUBA NOW HAS ONE OF THE LARGEST, BEST EQUIPPED ARMED FORCES IN THIS REGION. THESE MILITARY FORCES ARE USED TO INTRUDE INTO OTHER COUNTRIES IN AFRICA AND THE MIDDLE EAST.

20. THERE IS A SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CUBA AND THE SOVIET UNION. THE CUBANS GET THEIR WEAPONS FREE. OTHER SOVIET SATELLITE COUNTRIES HAVE TO PAY FOR THEIR MILITARY SUPPLIES.

21. THE COMMUNIST REGIME IN CUBA IS AN ECONOMIC FAILURE; IT CANNOT SUSTAIN ITSELF. THE SOVIET UNION MUST SEND TO CUBA ABOUT \$8 MILLION IN ECONOMIC AID EVERY DAY.

22. FIDEL CASTRO DOES NOT PAY MONEY FOR RUSSIAN ARMS; THE CUBAN PEOPLE PAY A MUCH HIGHER PRICE. IN EVERY INTERNATIONAL DISPUTE, ON EVERY INTERNATIONAL ISSUE, THE CUBAN REGIME AUTOMATICALLY FOLLOWS THE SOVIET LINE.

23. THE SOVIET BRIGADE IS A MANIFESTATION OF MOSCOW'S DOMINANCE OF CUBA. IT RAISES THE LEVEL OF THAT DOMINANCE -- AND IT RAISES THE LEVEL OF RESPONSIBILITY THAT THE SOVIET UNION MUST TAKE FOR ESCALATING CUBAN MILITARY ACTIONS ABROAD.

24. NOW I WANT TO REPORT FURTHER ON WHAT WE ARE DOING TO RESOLVE THESE PROBLEMS AND TO COUNTER THESE ACTIVITIES.

25. OVER THE PAST THREE WEEKS WE HAVE DISCUSSED THIS ISSUE AT GREAT LENGTH WITH TOP SOVIET OFFICIALS.

26. WE HAVE MADE IT CLEAR THAT THE PRESENCE OF A SOVIET COMBAT UNIT IN CUBA IS A MATTER OF SERIOUS CONCERN TO US. THE SOVIET UNION DOES NOT ADMIT THAT THE UNIT IN QUESTION IS A COMBAT UNIT. HOWEVER, THE SOVIETS HAVE MADE CERTAIN STATEMENTS TO US WITH RESPECT TO OUR CONCERN:

-- THAT THE UNIT IN QUESTION IS A TRAINING CENTER, THAT IT DOES NOTHING MORE THAN TRAINING, AND CAN DO NOTHING MORE;

-- THAT THEY WILL NOT CHANGE ITS FUNCTION OR STATUS AS A TRAINING CENTER. WE UNDERSTAND THIS TO MEAN THAT THEY

DO NOT INTEND TO ENLARGE THE UNIT OR GIVE IT ADDITIONAL CAPABILITIES;

-- THEY HAVE SAID THAT THE SOVIET PERSONNEL IN CUBA ARE NOT AND WILL NOT BE A THREAT TO THE U.S. OR TO ANY OTHER NATION;

-- THAT THEY REAFFIRM THE 1962 UNDERSTANDING AND THE MUTUALLY AGREED CONFIRMATION OF THIS UNDERSTANDING IN 1970, AND WILL ABIDE BY IT IN THE FUTURE. WE, FOR OUR PART, RECONFIRM THIS UNDERSTANDING.

27. THESE ASSURANCES HAVE BEEN GIVEN TO ME FROM THE HIGHEST LEVELS OF THE SOVIET GOVERNMENT.

28. ALTHOUGH WE HAVE PERSUASIVE EVIDENCE THAT THE UNIT

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IS A COMBAT BRIGADE, THE SOVIET STATEMENTS ABOUT THE FUTURE NON-COMBAT STATUS OF THE UNIT ARE SIGNIFICANT.

29. HOWEVER, WE SHALL NOT REST ON THESE SOVIET STATEMENTS ALONE. FIRST, WE WILL MONITOR THE STATUS OF THE SOVIET FORCES BY INCREASED SURVEILLANCE OF CUBA. SECOND, WE WILL ASSURE THAT NO SOVIET UNIT IN CUBA CAN BE USED AS A COMBAT FORCE TO THREATEN THE SECURITY OF THE UNITED STATES OR ANY OTHER NATION IN THIS HEMISPHERE.

30. THOSE NATIONS CAN BE CONFIDENT THAT THE UNITED STATES WILL ACT IN RESPONSE TO A REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE IN MEETING ANY SUCH THREAT FROM SOVIET OR CUBAN FORCES.

31. THIS POLICY IS CONSISTENT WITH OUR RESPONSIBILITIES AS A MEMBER OF THE ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES AND A PARTY TO THE RIO TREATY. IT IS A REAFFIRMATION IN NEW CIRCUMSTANCES OF JOHN F. KENNEDY'S DECLARATION IN 1963 "THAT WE WOULD NOT PERMIT ANY TROOPS FROM CUBA TO MOVE OFF THE ISLAND OF CUBA IN ANY OFFENSIVE ACTION AGAINST ANY NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES."

32. THIRD, I AM ESTABLISHING A PERMANENT, FULL-TIME CARIBBEAN JOINT TASK FORCE HEADQUARTERS AT KEY WEST, FLORIDA. I WILL ASSIGN TO THIS HEADQUARTERS FORCES FROM ALL THE MILITARY SERVICES RESPONSIBLE FOR EXPANDED PLANNING AND FOR CONDUCTING EXERCISES. THIS HEADQUARTERS UNIT WILL EMPLOY DESIGNATED FORCES FOR ACTION IF REQUIRED. THIS WILL SUBSTANTIALLY IMPROVE OUR CAPABILITY TO MONITOR AND RESPOND RAPIDLY TO ANY ATTEMPTED MILITARY ENCROACHMENT IN THE REGION.

33. FOURTH, WE WILL EXPAND MILITARY MANEUVERS IN THE REGION, AND WE WILL CONDUCT THESE REGULARLY FROM NOW ON. IN ACCORDANCE WITH EXISTING TREATY RIGHTS, THE UNITED STATES WILL, OF COURSE, KEEP OUR FORCES IN GUANTANAMO.

34. FIFTH, WE WILL INCREASE OUR ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE TO ALLEVIATE THE UNMET ECONOMIC AND HUMAN NEEDS IN THE CARIBBEAN REGION AND FURTHER TO ENSURE THE ABILITY OF TROUBLED PEOPLES TO RESIST SOCIAL TURMOIL AND POSSIBLE COMMUNIST DOMINATION.

35. THE UNITED STATES HAS A WORLDWIDE INTEREST IN PEACE AND STABILITY. ACCORDINGLY, I HAVE DIRECTED THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE TO FURTHER ENHANCE THE CAPACITY OF OUR RAPID DEPLOYMENT FORCES TO PROTECT OUR OWN INTERESTS AND TO ACT IN RESPONSE TO REQUESTS FOR HELP FROM OUR ALLIES AND FRIENDS. WE MUST BE ABLE TO MOVE OUR GROUND, SEA AND AIR UNITS TO DISTANT AREAS -- RAPIDLY AND WITH ADEQUATE SUPPLIES.

36. WE HAVE REINFORCED OUR NAVAL PRESENCE IN THE INDIAN OCEAN.

37. WE ARE ENHANCING OUR INTELLIGENCE CAPABILITY IN ORDER TO MONITOR SOVIET AND CUBAN MILITARY ACTIVITIES -- BOTH IN CUBA AND THROUGHOUT THE WORLD. WE WILL INCREASE OUR EFFORTS TO GUARD AGAINST DAMAGE TO OUR CRUCIAL INTELLIGENCE SOURCES AND METHODS OF COLLECTION, WITHOUT IMPAIRING CIVIL AND CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS.

38. THESE STEPS REFLECT MY DETERMINATION TO PRESERVE PEACE, TO STRENGTHEN OUR ALLIANCES, AND TO DEFEND THE INTERESTS OF THE UNITED STATES. IN DEVELOPING THEM, I HAVE CONSULTED NOT ONLY WITH MY OWN ADVISERS, BUT WITH CONGRESSIONAL LEADERS AND WITH A BIPARTISAN GROUP OF DISTINGUISHED AMERICAN CITIZENS AS WELL. THE DECISIONS

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ARE MY OWN, AND I TAKE FULL RESPONSIBILITY FOR THEM AS PRESIDENT AND AS COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF.

39. I HAVE CONCLUDED THAT THE BRIGADE ISSUE IS CERTAINLY NO REASON FOR A RETURN TO THE COLD WAR. A CONFRONTATION MIGHT BE EMOTIONALLY SATISFYING FOR A FEW DAYS OR WEEKS FOR SOME PEOPLE, BUT IT WOULD BE DESTRUCTIVE TO THE NATIONAL INTEREST AND THE SECURITY OF THE UNITED STATES.

40. WE MUST CONTINUE THE BASIC POLICY THAT THE UNITED STATES HAS FOLLOWED FOR 20 YEARS, UNDER SIX ADMINISTRATIONS OF BOTH PARTIES -- A POLICY THAT RECOGNIZES THAT WE ARE IN COMPETITION WITH THE SOVIET UNION IN SOME FIELDS, AND THAT WE SEEK COOPERATION IN OTHERS -- NOTABLY MAINTAINING THE PEACE AND CONTROLLING NUCLEAR ARMS.

41. MY FELLOW AMERICANS, THE GREATEST DANGER TO AMERICAN SECURITY TONIGHT IS CERTAINLY NOT THE TWO OR THREE THOUSAND SOVIET TROOPS IN CUBA. THE GREATEST DANGER TO ALL THE NATIONS OF THE WORLD -- INCLUDING THE UNITED STATES AND THE SOVIET UNION -- IS THE BREAKDOWN OF A COMMON EFFORT TO PRESERVE THE PEACE, AND THE ULTIMATE THREAT OF A NUCLEAR WAR.

42. I RENEW MY CALL TO THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES TO RATIFY THE SALT II TREATY.

43. SALT II IS A SOLID TREATY. ENSURING COMPLIANCE WITH ITS TERMS WILL NOT BE A MATTER OF TRUST. WE HAVE HIGHLY SOPHISTICATED NATIONAL TECHNICAL MEANS, CAREFULLY FOCUSED ON THE SOVIET UNION TO ENSURE THAT THE TREATY IS VERIFIABLE. THIS TREATY IS THE MOST IMPORTANT STEP EVER TAKEN IN CONTROLLING STRATEGIC NUCLEAR ARMS.

44. IT PERMITS US TO STRENGTHEN OUR DEFENSE AND PRESERVE THE STRATEGIC BALANCE AT LOWER RISK AND COST. DURING THE PAST FEW YEARS WE HAVE MADE REAL INCREASES IN OUR DEFENSE EXPENDITURES TO FULFILL THE GOALS OF OUR FIVE YEAR DEFENSE PLAN. WITH SALT II WE CAN CONCENTRATE THESE INCREASES IN AREAS WHERE OUR INTERESTS ARE MOST THREATENED AND WHERE DIRECT MILITARY CHALLENGE IS MOST LIKELY.

45. THE REJECTION OF SALT WOULD SERIOUSLY COMPROMISE OUR NATION'S PEACE AND SECURITY.

46. OF COURSE WE HAVE DISAGREEMENTS WITH THE SOVIETS. OF COURSE WE HAVE CONFLICTS WITH THEM. IF WE DID NOT HAVE THOSE DISAGREEMENTS AND CONFLICTS, WE WOULD NOT NEED A TREATY TO REDUCE THE POSSIBILITY OF NUCLEAR WAR BETWEEN US.

47. IF SALT II IS REJECTED, THESE DISAGREEMENTS AND CONFLICTS COULD TAKE ON A NEW AND OMINOUS DIMENSION. AGAINST THE BACKGROUND OF AN UNCONTROLLED NUCLEAR ARMS RACE, EVERY CONFRONTATION OR DISPUTE COULD CARRY THE SEEDS OF A NUCLEAR CONFRONTATION.

48. IN ADDITION, SALT II IS CRUCIAL TO AMERICAN LEADERSHIP AND TO THE FURTHER STRENGTHENING OF THE WESTERN ALLIANCE. OBVIOUSLY A SECURE EUROPE IS VITAL TO OUR OWN SECURITY.

49. THE LEADERS OF OUR EUROPEAN ALLIES SUPPORT SALT II -- UNANIMOUSLY. WE HAVE TALKED TO A NUMBER OF THOSE LEADERS IN THE PAST SEVERAL DAYS. AND I MUST TELL YOU

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TONIGHT THAT IF THE SENATE FAILS TO APPROVE THE SALT TREATY, THESE LEADERS AND THEIR COUNTRIES WOULD BE CONFUSED AND DEEPLY ALARMED. IF OUR ALLIES SHOULD LOSE CONFIDENCE IN OUR ABILITY TO NEGOTIATE SUCCESSFULLY FOR THE CONTROL OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS, OUR EFFORT TO BUILD A STRONGER AND MORE UNITED NATO COULD FAIL.

50. I KNOW THAT FOR MEMBERS OF CONGRESS, THIS IS A TROUBLING AND DIFFICULT ISSUE IN A TROUBLING AND DIFFICULT TIME. BUT THE SENATE HAS A TRADITION OF BEING THE GREATEST DELIBERATIVE BODY IN THE WORLD, AND THE WHOLE WORLD IS WATCHING THE SENATE TODAY. I AM CONFIDENT THAT ALL SENATORS WILL PERFORM THEIR HIGH RESPONSIBILITIES AS THE NATIONAL INTEREST REQUIRES.

51. POLITICS AND NUCLEAR ARSENALS DO NOT MIX.

52. WE MUST NOT PLAY POLITICS WITH THE SECURITY OF THE UNITED STATES. WE MUST NOT PLAY POLITICS WITH THE SURVIVAL OF THE HUMAN RACE. WE MUST NOT PLAY POLITICS WITH SALT II. IT IS MUCH TOO IMPORTANT FOR THAT -- TOO VITAL TO OUR COUNTRY, TO OUR ALLIES, AND TO THE CAUSE OF PEACE.

53. THE PURPOSE OF THE SALT II TREATY AND THE PURPOSE OF MY ACTIONS IN DEALING WITH SOVIET AND CUBAN MILITARY RELATIONSHIPS ARE EXACTLY THE SAME -- TO KEEP OUR NATION SECURE AND TO MAINTAIN A WORLD AT PEACE.

54. AS A POWERFUL NATION -- AS A SUPERPOWER -- WE HAVE A SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITY TO MAINTAIN STABILITY EVEN WHEN THERE ARE SERIOUS DISAGREEMENTS AMONG NATIONS.

55. WE HAVE HAD FUNDAMENTAL DIFFERENCES WITH THE SOVIET UNION SINCE 1917. I HAVE NO ILLUSIONS ABOUT THESE DIFFERENCES, BUT THE BEST WAY TO DEAL WITH THEM SUCCESSFULLY IS TO MAINTAIN AMERICAN UNITY, AMERICAN WILL AND AMERICAN STRENGTH.

56. THAT IS WHAT I AM DETERMINED TO DO.

57. THE STRUGGLE FOR PEACE -- THE LONG, HARD STRUGGLE TO BRING WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION UNDER THE CONTROL OF HUMAN REASON AND HUMAN LAW -- IS THE CENTRAL DRAMA OF OUR AGE.

58. AT ANOTHER TIME OF CHALLENGE IN OUR NATION'S HISTORY, PRESIDENT ABRAHAM LINCOLN TOLD THE AMERICAN PEOPLE: "WE SHALL NOBLY SAVE, OR MEANLY LOSE, THE LAST BEST HOPE OF EARTH."

59. WE ACTED WISELY THEN, AND PRESERVED THE UNION. LET US ACT WISELY NOW, AND PRESERVE THE WORLD. VANCE

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True
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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

2 October 1979

MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT CARTER

I enclose the text of a message, received late yesterday evening, from President Carter to the Prime Minister about Cuba. The Prime Minister has seen the message.

I should be grateful if you could let me have by 1800 hours today, a draft message of thanks for the Prime Minister to send to the President.

I should be grateful if the knowledge of the existence and contents of this message could be limited to a suitably restricted number of officials.

I am sending copies of this letter and its enclosure to Brian Norbury (Ministry of Defence) and Martin Vile (Cabinet Office).

M. O'D. B. ALEXANDER

G.G.H. Walden, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

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10 DOWNING STREET

Mr Alexander,

I took this message from President Carter up to the PM when it arrived at 10.15 tonight.

The PM asked me to wait whilst she read it through, and then handed it back, saying it was both kind and courteous of Mr Carter to give an advance text of his announcements. — We should of course thank him.

G. Baldwin

Duty Clerk.

1. Oct 79.

SECRET

T106/79T

SUBJECT.

Prime Minister

Duty Clerk. 1.10.79.

PRIME MINISTER'S

PERSONAL MESSAGE

SERIAL No. T106/79T

HERE IT COMES

WAG21

*****ZZ WTE24

WAG WQ

WAG021

*****ZZ WTE24

DE WTE 08114 2742002

Z 012039Z OCT 79

FM PRESIDENT CARTER

TO PRIME MINISTER THATCHER

ZEM

SECRET SENSITIVE VIA CABINET OFFICE CHANNELS WH91915
OCTOBER 1, 1979

DEAR MADAME PRIME MINISTER,

I WILL BE ANNOUNCING THIS EVENING MY DECISION WITH RESPECT TO THE PRESENCE OF A SOVIET COMBAT BRIGADE IN CUBA. IN ADVANCE OF MY SPEECH TO THE AMERICAN PEOPLE, I WANT TO EXPLAIN THE BACKGROUND OF MY DECISION AND THE STEPS I WILL TAKE IN THIS CONNECTION.

FIRST, AS TO THE SOVIET BRIGADE ITSELF: IT IS ORGANIZED, TRAINED, COMMANDED AND ARMED AS AN INFANTRY BRIGADE. IT UNQUESTIONABLY HAS A COMBAT CAPABILITY. IN ITS PRESENT FORM, THIS UNIT HAS BEEN IN CUBA AT LEAST SINCE 1976, AND PERHAPS LONGER.

THE BRIGADE DOES NOT POSE A DIRECT MILITARY THREAT TO THE UNITED STATES. WE DO, HOWEVER, REGARD IT AS A SERIOUS MATTER. IT CONTRIBUTES TO TENSION IN THE CARIBBEAN AND CENTRAL AMERICA AND ADDS TO THE FEARS OF SOME COUNTRIES THAT THEY MAY COME UNDER SOVIET OR CUBAN PRESSURE. IT IS PART OF A CLOSER SOVIET-CUBAN MILITARY RELATIONSHIP, WHICH INVOLVES ARMING CUBA WITH MODERN WEAPONS, AND CANNOT BE SEPARATED FROM THE LARGER PATTERN OF SOVIET SUPPORT FOR ARMED CUBAN INTERVENTION IN VARIOUS PARTS OF THE WORLD.

OVER THE PAST THREE WEEKS, WE HAVE DISCUSSED THIS ISSUE AT GREAT LENGTH WITH TOP SOVIET OFFICIALS. WE HAVE MADE CLEAR THAT THE PRESENCE OF A SOVIET COMBAT UNIT IN CUBA IS A MATTER OF GREAT CONCERN TO US.

THE SOVIET UNION DOES NOT ADMIT THAT THE UNIT IN QUESTION IS A COMBAT UNIT. HOWEVER, THE SOVIETS HAVE MADE CERTAIN STATEMENTS TO US WITH RESPECT TO OUR CONCERN:

-- THE UNIT IN QUESTION IS A TRAINING CENTER, WHICH DOES NOTHING MORE THAN TRAINING AND CAN DO NOTHING MORE=

-- THEY WILL NOT CHANGE ITS FUNCTION OR STATUS AS A TRAINING CENTER= WE UNDERSTAND THIS TO MEAN THAT THEY DO NOT INTEND TO ENLARGE THE UNIT OR GIVE IT ADDITIONAL CAPABILITIES=

-- THE SOVIET PERSONNEL IN CUBA ARE NOT AND WILL NOT

END OF PAGE 01

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BE A THREAT TO THE UNITED STATES OR ANY OTHER NATION=

-- THEY HAVE REAFFIRMED THE 1962 UNDERSTANDING AND THE MUTUALLY AGREED CONFIRMATION IN 1970 NOT TO STATION OFFENSIVE WEAPONS IN CUBA AND WILL ABIDE BY IT IN THE FUTURE. WE, FOR OUR PART, CONFIRM THIS UNDERSTANDING.

THESE ASSURANCES HAVE BEEN GIVEN TO ME FROM THE HIGHEST LEVELS OF THE SOVIET GOVERNMENT. ALTHOUGH WE HAVE PERSUASIVE EVIDENCE THAT THE UNIT IS A COMBAT BRIGADE, THE SOVIET STATEMENTS ABOUT THE FUTURE NON-COMBAT STATUS OF THE UNIT ARE SIGNIFICANT. THEY IMPLICITLY RECOGNIZE THAT THE PRESENCE OF A SOVIET COMBAT UNIT IN CUBA WOULD BE A MATTER OF CONCERN TO US AND TO OTHER NATIONS. HOWEVER, WE SHALL NOT REST UPON THESE SOVIET STATEMENTS ALONE.

-- WE WILL ASSURE WITH OUR OWN MEANS THAT NO SOVIET UNIT IN CUBA WILL BE USED AS A COMBAT FORCE TO THREATEN THE SECURITY OF THE UNITED STATES OR ANY OTHER NATION IN THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE. THE UNITED STATES WILL ACT IN RESPONSE TO A REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE IN MEETING ANY SUCH THREAT FROM SOVIET OR CUBAN FORCES.

-- WE SHALL ESTABLISH A FULL-TIME CARIBBEAN JOINT TASK FORCE HEADQUARTERED AT KEY WEST, FLORIDA= THIS WILL SUBSTANTIALLY IMPROVE OUR CAPABILITY TO MONITOR AND RESPOND RAPIDLY TO ANY ATTEMPTED MILITARY ENCROACHMENT IN THE REGION=

-- WE WILL EXPAND MILITARY EXERCISES IN THE REGION=

-- WE WILL INCREASE OUR ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE TO THE CARIBBEAN AND CENTRAL AMERICA TO HELP THEM DEAL WITH UNREST BROUGHT ABOUT BY UNMET SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC NEEDS=

-- WE WILL ACCELERATE OUR EFFORTS TO INCREASE OUR CAPACITY TO PROJECT OUR MILITARY FORCES WORLDWIDE IN RESPONSE TO REQUESTS FOR HELP FROM OUR ALLIES AND FRIENDS=

-- WE SHALL ENHANCE OUR INTELLIGENCE CAPABILITIES TO MONITOR SOVIET AND CUBAN MILITARY ACTIVITIES IN CUBA AND THROUGHOUT THE WORLD.

THESE STEPS REFLECT MY DETERMINATION TO PRESERVE PEACE, TO STRENGTHEN OUR ALLIANCES, TO DEFEND THE INTERESTS OF THE UNITED STATES. AT THE SAME TIME, I HAVE CONCLUDED THAT THE BRIGADE ISSUE US NO REASON FOR A RETURN TO THE COLD WAR. I WILL CONTINUE MY DETERMINED EFFORT TO ASSURE THE U.S. SENATE SPEEDILY RATIFY THE SALT II TREATY.

I KNOW THAT YOU AGREE WITH ME THAT TO DELAY SALT WOULD

HURT THE ALLIANCE AS MUCH AS THE SOVIETS AND MIGHT COMPLICATE
OUR EFFORT BOTH TO STRENGTHEN OUR DEFENSE POSTURE AND PURSUE
NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE SOVIETS ON ISSUES OF SECURITY AND ARMS
CONTROL IN EUROPE.

THE PURPOSE OF THE ACTIONS I WILL BE ANNOUNCING TONIGHT
AND THE PURPOSE OF SALT II ARE EXACTLY THE SAME. THAT PURPOSE
IS A STRONG AMERICA, STRONG ALLIANCES, AND A JUST AND LASTING
PEACE IN THE WORLD. I KNOW THAT I CAN COUNT ON YOUR SUPPORT FOR
THESE ACTIONS IN THE SERVICE OF OUR COMMON OBJECTIVES.

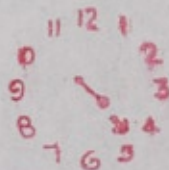
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Cuba and SALT II

Mr Carbaugh said that Senator Helms intended to produce evidence next week that the Soviet Union had nuclear armed submarines based ^{in Cuba} ~~in Cuba~~. The Senator also intended to question whether all Soviet missiles had been withdrawn from Cuba in 1962. The effect of this and of the statement made yesterday by Senator Long would be, in Mr Carbaugh's view, that the Senate would not vote on the SALT II Agreement until after next year's Presidential election.

MA

14 September 1979

Top Copy on: USA, Senator Helms,
June '79.

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TO PRIORITY FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 1006 OF 10 SEPTEMBER

INFO PRIORITY HAVANA, MOSCOW, UKDEL NATO, WASHINGTON.

Prime Minister

11/5

SOVIET TROOPS IN CUBA

1. WHEN I CALLED ON THE UN SECRETARY-GENERAL TODAY TO PRESENT MY CREDENTIALS, DR WALDHEIM SAID THAT DR CASTRO HAD COME TO SEE HIM IN HAVANA LAST WEEK TO TALK ABOUT THIS QUESTION. CASTRO HAD SAID THAT THE 3,000 SOVIET TROOPS HAD BEEN IN CUBA FOR 17 YEARS, EVER SINCE THE WITHDRAWAL OF THE SOVIET MISSILES AFTER THE 1962 CRISIS. HE COULD ASSURE THE SECRETARY-GENERAL THAT THEY WERE NOT A COMBAT FORCE AND THAT THEY WERE OF ONLY SYMBOLIC IMPORTANCE TO CUBA. THEIR FUNCTION WAS TO TRAIN CUBAN FORCES AND TO MONITOR UNITED STATES RADIO INSTALLATIONS. HE HAD ALWAYS ASSUMED THAT THE AMERICANS KNEW OF THEIR PRESENCE AND HE COULD NOT UNDERSTAND WHY THEY WERE MAKING A FUSS NOW.

2. WALDHEIM HAD FORMED THE CLEAR IMPRESSION THAT CASTRO WANTED HIM TO PASS THE ABOVE TO THE US GOVERNMENT AND HE HAD ACCORDINGLY SPOKEN TO MR VANCE. VANCE HAD CONFIRMED THAT THE AMERICANS KNEW OF THE PRESENCE OF THE SOVIET TROOPS, BUT SAID THAT THEY HAD ONLY RECENTLY DISCOVERED THAT THEY WERE A COMBAT (UNDERLINED) BRIGADE.

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Prime Minister (24/8)

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TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELEGRAM NO 2558 OF 5 SEPTEMBER

INFO PRIORITY CABINET OFFICE (FOR JIS), HAVANA, UKDEL NATO,
MODUK (DS12), MOSCOW.

Int: 6/9
[Signature]

MY IMMEDIATELY PRECEEDING TELEGRAM: SOVIET GROUND FORCES IN CUBA.

1. STATE DEPARTMENT CONTACTS GAVE US TODAY THE FOLLOWING AMPLIFICATION TO THE POINTS MADE BY VANCE AT HIS PRESS CONFERENCE.
2. UNTIL THIS YEAR US EVIDENCE OF THE SOVIET PRESENCE IN CUBA HAD BEEN FRAGMENTARY, ALTHOUGH THEY HAD KNOWN OF THE SOVIET ADVISERS FOR SOME TIME. IN THE FIRST WEEK OF JULY THEY BEGAN TO ESTABLISH THAT THE SOVIET FORCES WERE ORGANISED AS A COHERENT MILITARY UNIT OF THE SOVIET ARMY. ALTHOUGH FULL INFORMATION WAS STILL UNAVAILABLE, THE INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY HAD REACHED A CONSENSUS IN THE LAST WEEK OF JULY THAT THE FORCE WAS AN ORGANISED COMBAT UNIT COMMANDED BY RUSSIANS FOR RUSSIAN PURPOSES (WHICH REMAIN UNCLEAR). FURTHER INFORMATION WAS CONTINUING TO BE FITTED INTO THE JIGSAW, AND MORE AND MORE FACTS WERE BEING UNEARTHED FROM THE ARCHIVES WHICH THREW GREATER LIGHT ON THE HISTORY OF SOVIET PRESENCE. A QUOTE LUCKY INTELLIGENCE BREAK TWO WEEKS AGO UNQUOTE TAKEN ALONG WITH SATELLITE PHOTOGRAPHY AND OTHER SOURCES HAD FURTHER CLARIFIED THE PICTURE.

3. THE TIMING OF THE ADMINISTRATION'S ACTION IN REVEALING THE NEW APPRECIATION WAS DICTATED BY TWO MAJOR AND ONE MINOR FACTORS:
 - (A) THE NEWS THAT THE INFORMATION HAD BEEN LEAKED ALMOST IN ITS ENTIRETY TO THE WEEKLY U.S. MAGAZINE QUOTE AVIATION WEEK AND SPACE TECHNOLOGY UNQUOTE AND WOULD BE SHORTLY PUBLISHED (IN THE EDITION OF 10 SEPTEMBER, SINCE THEY JUST MISSED LAST WEEK'S DEADLINE).
 - (B) THE PRESSURE FROM SENATOR STONE WHO, IN ADDITION TO THE VANCE LETTER OF 27 JULY, HAD ALSO BEEN GIVEN A CLASSIFIED BRIEFING.
 - (C) AND THE ADMINISTRATION'S COMMITMENT TO OPEN GOVERNMENT.

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/THEY BELIEVED

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THEY BELIEVED THAT THE COMBINATION OF THE FIRST TWO FACTORS WOULD HAVE MADE IT IMPOSSIBLE FURTHER TO DELAY REVEALING THE NEW ASSESSMENT. STATE DEPARTMENT CONTACTS HAVE EMPHASISED THAT ANY LINKAGE TO THE OPENING OF THE HAVANA SUMMIT WAS QUOTE FORTUITOUS AND CO-INCIDENTAL UNQUOTE.

4. STATE DEPARTMENT ACCEPT THAT THE DISCLOSURES WILL POSE DIFFICULTIES FOR THE SALT PROCESS BUT HOPE THEY WILL BE TEMPORARY. THEY SEE THE VERIFICATION ISSUE AS PROVIDING THE MAIN PROBLEM TO SURMOUNT (US FAILURES OVER CUBA CONTRASTED WITH ASSURANCES IN RESPECT OF SOVIET ADHERENCE TO THE TREATY). HOWEVER, THEY RECOGNISE THAT THEIR MAIN LEVERAGE TO PRODUCE A HELPFUL RESPONSE FROM THE RUSSIANS RESTS ON THE LATTER'S DESIRE TO SEE RATIFICATION PROCEED. IN PRIVATE DISCUSSIONS WITH THE RUSSIANS UNTIL NOW (WHICH BEGAN WITH THE MINISTER AT THE SOVIET EMBASSY A MONTH AGO) THE US HAVE NOT TAKEN AN UNDULY TOUGH LINE. BUT VANCE WILL BE ADDRESSING THE ISSUE WITH DOBRYNIN ON THE LATTER'S RETURN AND LOOKING FOR A MORE PRODUCTIVE RESPONSE.

5. THE ADMINISTRATION ARE CLEARLY RIGHT TO BE CONCERNED THAT THIS NEW ISSUE WILL POSE FRESH PROBLEMS FOR SALT RATIFICATION. ALTHOUGH THE MIG 23 ISSUE EARLIER IN THE YEAR PASSED OFF WITHOUT CAUSING MAJOR DIFFICULTIES, THE PRESENCE OF SOVIET GROUND FORCES IN A COHERENT MILITARY UNIT NINETY MILES FROM US TERRITORY IS A PROBLEM OF A DIFFERENT ORDER. IT IS HARD TO DISMISS THE IDEA THAT THE ADMINISTRATION, ONCE RELEASE BECAME INEVITABLE, CHOSE THE DAY WITH AN EYE TO THE SALT DEBATE. DOING SO JUST BEFORE THE LABOR DAY WEEKEND AND PRIOR TO RESUMPTION OF THE SENATE HEARINGS, THEY MAY HAVE HOPED TO REDUCE PUBLIC EXCITEMENT AS FAR AS POSSIBLE. IF THIS WAS THEIR HOPE, IT IS UNLIKELY TO SUCCEED.

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TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 2557 OF 5 SEPTEMBER

INFO PRIORITY CABINET OFFICE(FOR JIS), UKDEL NATO HAVANA
MODUK(DS12) MOSCOW

MY TELNO 2513 (NOT TO ALL): SOVIET GROUND FORCES IN CUBA

1. MOST OF VANCE'S PRESS CONFERENCE TODAY IN WASHINGTON WAS DEVOTED TO THE SOVIET/CUBAN ISSUE. TRANSCRIPT FOLLOWS BY BAG. IN A BRIEF OPENING STATEMENT HE CONFIRMED THAT THE INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY HAD RECENTLY CONCLUDED THAT A SOVIET COMBAT FORCE WAS STATIONED IN CUBA, ELEMENTS OF WHICH MIGHT HAVE BEEN THERE SINCE THE EARLY 1970S AND POSSIBLE EVEN EARLIER. THE FORCE CONSISTED OF TWO TO THREE THOUSAND PERSONNEL AND INCLUDED MOTORISED RIFLE BATTALIONS, TANK AND ARTILLERY BATTALIONS AND COMBAT AND SERVICE SUPPORT UNITS. ALL THESE WERE SEPARATE FROM SOVIET ADVISORY AND TECHNICAL PERSONNEL IN CUBA, ESTIMATED TO BE BETWEEN 1500 AND 2,000. THE SPECIFIC MISSION OF THE FORCE WAS UNCLEAR. THERE WAS NO AIR OR SEA LIFT CAPABILITY ASSOCIATED WITH IT, WHICH WOULD GIVE AN ASSAULT CAPABILITY. THE PRESENCE OF THE UNIT WAS NOT COVERED BY THE BILATERAL US UNDERSTANDINGS WITH THE RUSSIANS IN 1962 OR 1970. BUT THIS PRESENCE WAS A MATTER OF SERIOUS CONCERN, AFFECTING US RELATIONS WITH THE SOVIET UNION. VANCE WOULD BE PURSUING THE MATTER WITH THE RUSSIANS, AND DISCUSSING IT WITH THE SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE LATER IN THE DAY.

2. IN ANSWER TO QUESTIONS, VANCE MADE THE FOLLOWING ADDITIONAL POINTS

(A) IN THE DISCUSSIONS TO COME WITH THE RUSSIANS HE WOULD QUOTE NOT BE SATISFIED WITH MAINTENANCE OF THE STATUS QUO UNQUOTE. HE WOULD NOT BE DRAWN INTO DEFINING FURTHER THE LIMIT OF US REQUIREMENTS.

(B) THE HEARINGS ON SALT RATIFICATION SHOULD PROCEED QUOTE BECAUSE OF THEIR FUNDAMENTAL IMPORTANCE UNQUOTE, BUT THE ADMINISTRATION WOULD KEEP IN CLOSE CONTACT AND DISCUSSION WITH THE SENATE AS THE DISCUSSIONS ON CUBA WITH THE RUSSIANS CONTINUED.

/ (C) THERE WAS

(C) THERE WAS NO PARALLEL BETWEEN US FAILURE UNTIL NOW TO IDENTIFY THE SOVIET FORCES, AND SALT VERIFICATION CAPABILITY. THE FORMER WAS QUOTE MUCH MORE DIFFICULT TO MONITOR UNQUOTE.

(D) AT THE TIME (27 JULY) OF HIS LETTER TO SENATOR STONE (D-FLORIDA) DENYING THAT THERE WAS A SOVIET BASE IN CUBA OR HAD BEEN A SUBSTANTIAL INCREASE IN SOVIET FORCES THERE, IT WAS THE CONCLUSION OF THE INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY THAT THERE WAS NOT SUFFICIENT EVIDENCE TO CONFIRM A SOVIET COMBAT PRESENCE IN CUBA. SUBSEQUENTLY ADDITIONAL INFORMATION PRODUCED A CLEARER READING OF THE SITUATION AND THIS WAS MADE AVAILABLE TO STONE AND THE RELEVANT SENATE COMMITTEES.

(E) THE US DID NOT KNOW AT PRESENT WHETHER THE SOVIET PRESENCE CONSTITUTED A BASE. THE DISCUSSIONS WITH THE RUSSIANS WOULD SHED LIGHT ON THIS.

(F) GIVEN THE CONCLUSION THAT THE SOVIET FORCES HAD BEEN IN CUBA SINCE THE EARLY 1970S, IT WAS TRUE TO SAY THAT THE RUSSIANS HAD QUOTE NOT DONE ANYTHING SPECIAL IN THE LAST YEAR OR TWO UNQUOTE.

(G) AS A RESULT OF A CURRENT REVIEW, THE ADMINISTRATION HOPED TO BE ABLE TO PUBLISH AT LEAST A FULL SUMMARY OF THE 1962 AND 1970 AGREEMENTS WITH THE RUSSIANS.

(H) VANCE HAD ASKED DOBRYNIN TO RETURN TO WASHINGTON AS SOON AS POSSIBLE, AND HOPED FOR A REPLY LATER IN THE DAY. THE MEETING WITH DOBRYNIN WOULD PROVIDE QUOTE A SERIOUS CHANCE TO DISCUSS THIS ISSUE UNQUOTE. (BY IMPLICATION VANCE DISMISSED EARLIER SOVIET PRESS REACTION TO THE US DISCLOSURES).

3. A NUMBER OF PROMINENT POLITICIANS HAVE ALREADY INJECTED THEMSELVES INTO THE DEBATE. SENATORS CHURCH (D-IDAHO) AND STONE (D-FLORIDA) HAVE SPOKEN OUT STRONGLY AGAINST THE SOVIET PRESENCE (SEE OUR TELEGRAM UNDER REFERENCE), AND THE LATTER HAS URGED THAT IT SHOULD BECOME PART OF THE SALT RATIFICATION DEBATE. SENATORS DOLE (R-KANSAS) AND HARRY BYRD (I-VIRGINIA) HAVE CALLED FOR SUSPENSION OF THE DEBATE UNTIL THE SOVIET FORCES ARE REMOVED. SENATE MINORITY LEADER BAKER (R-TENNESSEE, AND A PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE) TERMED THE RUSSIAN PRESENCE A PROVOCATION AND, WHILE RESERVING JUDGEMENT ON THE POSSIBLE

/IMPACT ON SALT,

IMPACT ON SALT, STATED QUOTE YOU CAN'T CONSIDER SALT IN ISOLATION UNQUOTE. SENATE MAJORITY LEADER ROBERT BYRD (D-WEST VIRGINIA) HAS ARGUED THAT THE TREATY SHOULD CONTINUE TO BE CONSIDERED ON ITS MERITS AND NOT LINKED WITH THE CUBAN PROBLEM. ANOTHER REPUBLICAN PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE (AND A FORMER DIRECTOR OF THE CIA), GEORGE BUSH HAS DEMANDED THE REMOVAL OF THE SOVIET FORCES AND ECHOED BAKER'S REMARKS ABOUT PROVOCATION.

4. SEE MIFT.

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