

TOP SECRET - SENSITIVE

Handwritten notes:
A...
2/15/74

There is attached a copy of the statement I am making today concerning the action taken by your Government in Cuba and the action taken by my Government in response to the threat which your action posed to its vital interests.

There are two possible assumptions open to me concerning the purpose of your action. The first was that you have supplied these offensive weapons to Cuba and trained Cubans in their use. In this case you have deliberately turned over these lethal weapons to a government headed by a fanatic who has repeatedly declared his implacable hostility to this country and the democratic nature of this hemisphere.

The second possible assumption is that you had decided rapidly to build-up a set of Soviet bases in Cuba to vastly increase your nuclear capability either for use against us or to form a basis for demanding our capitulation in Berlin and elsewhere. I made explicitly clear at our meeting in Vienna and subsequently, that in view of your adherence to an ideology which contemplates and seeks the spread of your system throughout the world,

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my Government in the interests of self-preservation could not tolerate any action on your part which would upset the balance of power in the world in a major way. In addition to this in view of my public statements on the Cuban situation you must have realized that failure to act on our part would have convinced you and the rest of the world that the United States was incapable of action in its own defense.

It was against this background that I received definite information that the missiles and bombing planes already in Cuba were rapidly being brought to a state of readiness. I also received good indications that atomic warheads were en route. In these circumstances I felt that I had no other choice than to take immediate action to remove the threat to our national security.

The action which I have taken with the greatest reluctance is the minimum I believed would remove the threat. The decision as to whether this already grave crisis is widened and dispersed lies with your Government. My Government has always been ready and desirous to resolve

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the problems that threaten the peace of the world by negotiation and continues earnestly to desire this course. I trust that your Government will follow this path.

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