

Thompson: If you have a NATO meeting, I gather from some word we've had from Italy, the Italians are likely to come up with a proposal to withdraw the bases there, the missiles there. I don't know if we [the others members of the ExCom] ever got that message, did we?

Nitze: We have a letter—a telegram—from [ambassador to Italy] Freddy Reinhardt saying that the Italians really don't care at all about . . .

Thompson: There was supposed to be a message coming through from [unclear].

Nitze: Oh I don't know.

Rusk: Well now, in view of that message just gone up to U Thant, [how do] we wind up this letter [to Khrushchev]? [reading] "As I was preparing this letter, I learned of your broadcast message today. That message raises problems affecting many countries and complicated issues not related to Cuba or the Western Hemisphere. The United States would be glad to discuss these matters with you and the other governments concerned. The immediate crisis is in Cuba and it is there that very prompt action is necessary. With that behind us, we can make progress on other, wider issues."

We still don't have any other suggestions.

President Kennedy: Well isn't that really rejecting their proposal of this morning?

Bundy: I don't think so. It is rejecting—

Rusk: I wouldn't think so.

Dillon: It is rejecting the immediate tie-in [to Turkey], but we've got to do that.

President Kennedy: Well, don't we just have to ask? We're not rejecting the tie-in. If we're going to reject it, I think we ought to have all of NATO rejecting it.

What we want to insist on now is a cessation of work et cetera while we *discuss* it. Then we may reject it, but NATO ought to reject it because I think the reprisal is going to be on all NATO. And I don't want them around saying, well . . . that's the problem.

It's just a question of timing, isn't it?

Ball: I would suggest this, Mr. President. If you have a NATO Council meeting in the morning, I think you are going to get a flat rejection of this [deal involving Turkey], which then ties our hands. I mean, then you can't go forward very easily in the face of this, because the NATO ambassadors [to the U.N.] met this afternoon in New York, and they took a *very* strong line against any discussion of this.¹⁰

President Kennedy: I don't think the alternative has been explained to them. You see, they just think it's sort of a continuation of the quaran-

tine. They don't have any notion that we're about to do something [militarily]. And that's going to be on them. You see that hasn't been explained to NATO, and I'd like to have them get into *that* before they reject it [the Cuba-Turkey trade].

Dillon: Tomorrow morning. That's what . . . If you have the [North Atlantic] council meeting, you'll probably get a strong reaction from a great many of the members of NATO against our taking any action in Cuba. Doubtless they'd say: "Don't trade." But they'd also say: "Don't do anything in Cuba."

Robert Kennedy: Exactly. [Unclear interjection.]

McNamara: Mr. President, I wonder if we should not take certain actions with respect to the Jupiters in Turkey and Italy before we act in Cuba. And if we decided to take that action with respect to the Jupiters in Turkey and Italy before we acted in Cuba, then we could tell NATO that, at the time we talked to them about this proposal from Khrushchev and our response to it.

If we act in Cuba, the only way we can act now is with a full attack. I don't think we can take any of these limited attacks when they are shooting at our reconnaissance aircraft because we would—we would not dare go in with the kind of limited attack that we've been thinking about the last 24 hours without taking out their SAM sites.

The moment we take out the SAM sites and the MiG airfields we're up to the 500-sortie program. If we send 500 sorties in against Cuba we must be prepared to follow up with an invasion in about seven days. If we start out on that kind of a program, it seems to me that the Soviets are very likely to feel forced to reply with military action someplace, particularly if these missiles—Jupiter missiles—are still in Turkey.

We might be able to either shift the area in which they would apply their military force, or give them no excuse to apply military force, by taking out the Turkish Jupiters and the Italian Jupiters before we attack Cuba.

One way to take them out would be to simply develop a program with bilateral negotiations between Turkey, Italy, and the U.S. saying that we are today defusing the Jupiters in those two countries and replacing them with Polaris submarines stationed off the shores of those nations to carry the same targets the Jupiters were directed to, in order to reduce the risk to those two nations but maintain the full defense of NATO.

Now, if we were willing to undertake . . . In the first place, I think that kind of action is desirable prior to an invasion of Cuba. In the second place, if we are willing to decide to do that, we're in a much better position to present this whole thing to NATO.

Nitze: What would be the reaction if the Soviet Union was to reply

that they were going to maintain three atomic [missile] submarines off the United States coast?

McNamara: We would say they're doing it anyway. We have already detected three submarines off the U.S. coast in the last 48 hours. Now they, as far as we know, they don't carry missiles, but that's just happenstance.

President Kennedy: The Turks won't take them [the Jupiters] out, will they? Isn't that . . . ?

McNamara: I think, I think we could. In the first place, we can tell the Turks—

President Kennedy: Well, I don't . . . except if we took them out, we'd get the trade the Russians have offered us. If we take them out, they'll take them out [of Cuba].

McNamara: Well, I think we have to say to the Turks we're going to cover the targets with Polaris missiles.

President Kennedy: Yes, but I think, if we're going to take them out of Turkey, they say they will take them out of—

Bundy: It's one thing to stand them down, Mr. President, in political terms. It is one thing to stand them down as a favor to the Turks, while we hit Cuba, and it's quite another thing to trade them out.

McNamara: But what we could do is unilaterally, unilaterally . . . Bilaterally with Turkey, we would agree to defuse them [the Jupiters] and replace them with Polaris.

Then we would go back to the Soviet Union and say: "Now, [you said] the threat is there. The threat is gone. You don't have to worry about that. We're going back to your letter of last night, and this is the proposal we make. We agree not to invade. You agree to take your—"

Bundy: But the incentive to them is to go back to Italy, and . . .

McNamara: But Turkey is gone.

Bundy: It could lead the Soviet Union to just come back to the next problem.

Dillon: Then they say Italy, and then they say England.

President Kennedy: I just said Turkey. I just said Turkey.

Robert Kennedy: You made an offer, up there now, and you also asked U Thant to find an answer to this. Now if U Thant could come back and say, number one, that they are going to continue the work on the bases, in which case, I suppose we have to move in some way.

Or they are going to say that they are going to discontinue the work on the bases. If they say they are going to discontinue the work on the bases, they can either accept our proposal, or they can reject the proposal and say we still want Turkey for Cuba.

If they reject the proposal and say they want Turkey for Cuba but

they are going to discontinue the work on the bases, then, I would think, would be the time to bring NATO in and say: "This is the proposal, do you want to consider it?" We haven't lost anything and they have discontinued the work on the bases.

If they say they are going to continue the work on the bases, I think then we've got to decide whether, if they have said by tomorrow morning that they are going to continue the work on the bases, whether we are going to have a military strike.

But I don't think if you have a meeting of NATO tomorrow morning, I don't see that that is going to—I think it's going to shoot this other possibility which U Thant has suggested [the previous day, October 26], of going forward with this letter [from Khrushchev the previous night], and see if we can trade the noninvasion of Cuba for this, and I think we are keeping the pressure on. We don't look like we're weakening on the whole Turkey complex. I mean I don't see that you are losing anything by not having the meeting tomorrow morning. Except that perhaps, then I think you are risking something because some of the allies are going to say that you're out of your mind, or . . .

Alexis Johnson: I would prefer to let Finletter find out for a day what people think.

President Kennedy: It's going to be . . . You see, they haven't had the alternatives presented to them. They'll say: "Well God! We don't want to trade them off." They don't realize that in two or three days we may have a military strike which would bring perhaps the seizure of Berlin or a strike on Turkey. And then they'll say: "My God! We should have taken it."

So when the time, the crucial time, comes, obviously we want it [the NATO meeting]. Now the question is, whether it's tomorrow morning [October 28] or Monday morning [October 29].

McNamara: I think in part it's going to be related to the strike. If tomorrow we don't have a favorable answer from U Thant or Khrushchev to this message that's going out now, is it important to strike tomorrow? Or do we have some more time?

If we have some more time, then you can still have the NATO meeting. It would seem to me the NATO meeting ought to be held before the strike. If it's necessary to strike tomorrow, there ought to be a NATO meeting tomorrow morning.

Robert Kennedy: Can I just say something? What if he says: "We're going to discontinue the work on the bases, now we are going to make the missiles inoperative, and we'll work out with you United Nations provisions." That could take three weeks to just work that problem out, couldn't it? And then what are we doing for the . . . ?

McNamara: If he said he was going to discontinue work on the bases and he's willing to make them inoperable, we carry on surveillance.

Robert Kennedy: And we would continue the—

McNamara: The blockade.

Robert Kennedy: —the blockade, until the United Nations observers get in.

McNamara: That's a good course of action.

Robert Kennedy: We're not in bad shape.

McNamara: No, that's an *excellent* course of action, which I don't believe he is going to accept. The probability is, he won't *say* he'll stop work on the bases. And we're faced with a decision tomorrow of what to do.

Robert Kennedy: Yeah, but of course we're, before the world, we're in much better shape.

Thompson: Not only that but it seems to me we ought to surface all of this correspondence with him, including this [private] letter [of October 26]. He broke his [new] proposal [to the press] before you got it. And I'd do the same thing [to his previous proposal]. Then you've got the rest of the world's focus back on Cuba and Latin America and the fact that we're prepared not to invade. And this makes it, I think, much tougher for him to go ahead and—

Bundy: That's right.

Unidentified: Good point.

President Kennedy: What I'm concerned about is that NATO . . . Norstad said the BBC radio or TV to say that there's no connection [between Cuba and Turkey]. There's going to be a lot of tough talk in New York saying that they [the NATO ambassadors at the U.N.] all said it. And they are going to say [at NATO headquarters] in Paris, that there is no connection. They don't realize that's what's coming up.

Rusk: Mr. President, if NATO seems solid on this, this has a chance of shaking Khrushchev off this point.

Ball: Now suppose that we give him [Khrushchev] a letter which is addressed to his letter of yesterday, and ask U Thant to release them both. He's the fellow who releases it. Then he releases correspondence which consists really of an offer from Khrushchev, and we come back and say—

Bundy: "Why thank you, yes."

Ball: We'll practically say: "Thank you, yes." And it doesn't mention Turkey. Then it seems to me that—

Bundy: He is in a difficult position.

Taylor: How much will Finletter be allowed to tell the NATO people what [unclear] in view of the alternatives? So they can see the point of view you referred to, Mr. President.

President Kennedy: Well, I think that he would probably just say that: "The work is going on. If you are not going to take these, if you are not interested in this deal, then I think we are going to have to do something." I don't think that he has to say what it is, but the escalation is going to go on and we think this is very likely that there will be some reply against, possibly, Turkey and, possibly, against Berlin. They should be aware of that.

What we don't want is for the cheap turndown by them without realizing that the turndown puts us in the position of then having to do something. What we are going to be in there faced with is, because we wouldn't take the missiles out of Turkey, we are either going to have to invade or have a massive strike on Cuba which may lose *Berlin*. That's what concerns me.

Rusk: Mr. President, there's one other variation here, that Mr. Foster has been giving some thought to, is that we say the missiles in Cuba and the missiles in Turkey be turned over to the U.N. for destruction.¹¹ And that the nuclear defense of NATO, including Turkey, is provided by other means. An actual disarmament step. Turn them over for destruction, on both sides.

Thompson: The Soviets don't want to let anybody get at their missiles and see what their technology is.

President Kennedy: They'll have to take them out.

I think the real problem is what we do with the Turks first.

Rusk: Yeah.

President Kennedy: If we follow Secretary McNamara, what we are going to do is say to the Turks, which they are bound to think is under Soviet pressure: "We want to get your missiles out of there."

McNamara: Well what I would say to the Turks: "Look here, we're going to have to invade Cuba. You are in mortal danger. We want to reduce your danger while at the same time maintaining your defense. We propose that you defuse those missiles tonight. We're putting Polaris submarines along your coast. We'll cover the same targets that your Jupiter missiles did, and we'll announce this to the world before we invade Cuba and thereby would reduce the pressure on the Soviet Union to attack you, Turkey, as a response to our invasion of Cuba." This is what I would say to the Turks.

Robert Kennedy: All right, now. And they say: "What if the Soviet Union attacks us anyway? Will you use the missiles on the nuclear submarines?" they're going to ask us.

McNamara: Before we attack Cuba I think we've got to decide how we'll respond to Soviet military pressure on NATO. And I'm not prepared to answer that question.

President Kennedy: Aren't the Soviets going to take their missiles out if we take them out of Turkey? If they don't, they're in an impossible position.

McNamara: Well, I don't know. What we'd do would be to work this out with Turkey first, then we announce it to the world, and then say to the Soviets: "Now we accept, well yeah, now we accept your deal of last night [only trading for a pledge not to invade Cuba]."

President Kennedy: The question is whether we can get the Turks to do it.

McNamara: Well, I think it would be important to them.

Taylor: You're deeply in trouble with NATO by [taking] this bilateral kind of approach.

McNamara: Well, the other course of action is not to have the bilateral course of approach, to invade Cuba, and have Turkey . . .

Bundy: Well we haven't tried the enlargement of the blockade. We haven't even thought about it for some hours, and it's been on my mind a good deal. I think POL [petroleum, oil, and lubricants] we still have to—

Rusk: If we get a negative answer to this message that has just gone up to U Thant, I think we really ought to consider whether in a fashion as low key as is possible—although there'll be a tremendous flap about it—in order to give you the necessary authority to call up additional units beyond those provided by the 150,000 legislation, you'd declare a state of national emergency.

McNamara: I'd call a requisition of 29 ships.

Rusk: I think some mobilization measures, not only here but in other NATO countries, might be very timely here in shaking Khrushchev off this position at this point. His change in position in a matter of hours here means either that . . .

Bundy: Ted [Sorensen] points out that his message of last night is not categorical about taking the missiles out. It says the specialists would go out.

Unidentified: That's right.

Thompson: It's a very loose, loose term.

President Kennedy: This morning's [public message from Khrushchev] is more precise, isn't it?

Unidentified: Yeah.

Unidentified: That was not in exchange for a hard . . . That was a different bargaining position.

Thompson: Mr. President, if we go on the basis of a trade, which I gather is somewhat in your mind, we end up, it seems to me, with the Soviets still in Cuba though, with planes and technicians and so on, even

though the missiles are out. And that would surely be unacceptable and put you in a worse position.

President Kennedy: Yeah, but our technicians and planes and guarantees would still exist for Turkey. I'm just thinking about what we're going to have to do in a day or so, which is 500 sorties, and seven days, and possibly an invasion, all because we wouldn't take missiles out of Turkey.

We all know how quickly everybody's courage goes when the blood starts to flow, and that's what is going to happen to NATO. When they start these things and they grab Berlin, everybody's going to say: "Well, that was a pretty good proposition."

Let's not kid ourselves that we've got . . . That's the difficulty. Today it sounds great to reject it, but it's not going to, after we do something.

Nitze: I think there are alternatives. One of them is to plan that we're going to make this 500 sorties which I think is going to result in an attack by them someplace, even if you do this about Turkey. In someplace or other. The other alternative is to make the blockade total [including POL and everything else], and live with the missiles. They're not going to let you conduct reconnaissance over them. You're going to have planes that are shot down. [Unclear], same as the 500 attack.

Unclear exchange; McNamara says something about "every hour on the hour." Someone whispers something to President Kennedy about the call that was placed to Adlai Stevenson at the United Nations.

President Kennedy: I think we're in pretty good shape [at the U.N.] with this morning's message [the White House statement] about the work ceasing. So I think, if he feels that strongly, we better . . .

Does he mind our sending the message [to U Thant]?

Bundy: No, he thought the message is good. He says it's a yes. But he said that this is what U Thant's been trying to do.

President Kennedy: Well, what I'm concerned [about] is that the NATO groups will all take a hard position on this before they've understood what our . . . They've met already in New York. They're going to be talking in Paris. And the word's going to be coming out that this is unacceptable. Pretty soon, before they've had a chance to realize that the—

Nitze: Yesterday, I had a meeting with the Four and brought them right up to the point of seeing how serious this was, and I think Dean talked to them about the alternatives they face.¹² If a message was to go to NATO, to Finletter, giving him the same information so that he could use it to [unclear], then it would, I think—

President Kennedy: Do you think that we ought to call the meeting if we have it, or Stikker?¹³

Unidentified: Stikker's absent.

Unidentified: He's in the hospital.

Bundy: No, Finletter can get the meeting called. His own advice is against having them in a group, but he may not be as shrewd as Norstad about it.

Taylor: Mac, would you say that his advice would be to get a decision, or to paint the picture?

Bundy: We don't know.

President Kennedy: Norstad just feels that no matter what we do, it's going to be . . . We've got to have NATO have a hand on this thing, or otherwise we'll find no matter [what], if we take no action or if we take action, they're all going to be saying we should have done the reverse. And we've got to get them in on some of this.

Now, the question really is—two questions: First, whether we go immediately to the Turks and see if we can work out some, see if they are receptive to the kind of deal which the Secretary [McNamara] talked about. If they are not receptive, then we ought to go to the general NATO meeting because the NATO meeting may put enough pressure on them.

I just tell you, I think we're better off to get those missiles out of Turkey and out of Cuba. Because I think the way of getting them out of Turkey and out of Cuba is going to be very, very difficult and very bloody, in one place or another.

Nitze: I'm sure that the Turks will not take them out, will not agree to take them out, except under NATO pressure.

Dillon: I don't see any point in talking to the Turks in the White House. I think you have to do it through NATO.

Bundy: Well, I'm not sure. Let's speculate with this, Mr. President. If you have that conviction, and you are yourself sure that this is the way we want . . . the best way out, then I would say that an immediate personal telegram of acceptance [of Khrushchev's public offer] was the best thing to do.

President Kennedy: Well, I don't think we accept it. Because I think then . . . What I think we have to do is get the Turks to agree. Accepting it over their opposition and over NATO opposition, I think *would* be . . .

I'd rather go the total blockade route, which is a lesser step than the military action. What I'd like to do is have the Turks and NATO equally feel that this is the wise move.

Sorensen: I wonder, Mr. President, inasmuch as your statement this morning does give some answer to the public statement of the Soviets, whether we can't defer this for 24 or 48 hours while we try the private letter route in answer to his private letter of last night. There's always a chance that he will still accept that.

The problems will be deferred [if we go ahead with the planned NATO consultation]. We meanwhile won't have broken up NATO over something that never would have come to NATO.

. . .

President Kennedy: [*impatiently*] The point of the matter is Khrushchev is going to come back and refer to his thing this morning on Turkey. And then we're going to be screwing around for another 48 hours.

I think what we've got to do is say that we've got to make the key of this letter the cessation of work. That we're *all* in agreement on. There's no *question* about that.

Then the question is whether Turkey's in or just Cuba. Otherwise he'll come back and say, "Well, we're glad to settle the Cuban matter. What is your opinion of our proposal about Turkey?" So then we're on to Monday afternoon, and the work goes on, and we haven't had a chance to specifically get his good faith on the cessation of work. We haven't got an answer to *that* question. So I think that we ought to make *that* the key question—the cessation of work. Then if we get the cessation of work, we can settle the Cuban question and we can do other things. Otherwise he can hang us up for three days while he goes on with the work.

Dillon: For three weeks.

. . .

President Kennedy: Well, now if, number 1, you'd [Khrushchev] undertake immediately to cease work on offensive missile bases in Cuba and promptly to render inoperable all weapons system in Cuba and permit U.N. verification of this action. That would be number 1.

McNamara: Right.

President Kennedy: Then we would get into discussion of all these matters.

McNamara: Right.

Bundy: But I think that that ought to just be made as a separate matter in the letter.

Sorensen: I just raise the question to make sure that we do insist on U.N. verification, because I understand from the Defense Department that we could verify it by ourselves, and even, they say . . .

President Kennedy: If we can't let the U.N. in?

Sorensen: Yeah.

Robert Kennedy: Well, now, can you actually? If they put them under trees and what we were discussing a week ago, or ten days . . . ?