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MEMORANDUM

October 4, 1979

TO: Leon Billings

FROM: Tom Dine *J*

Attached are notes taken at the Senate SALT Working  
Group staff meeting.

Senator Muskie attended the session in Senator Cranston's  
Capitol office.

Attachment.

NOTES ON MEETING OF SENATE SALT WORKING GROUP

September 25, 1979

Seventeen Senators attended a SALT Working Group luncheon meeting in the Majority Whip's office on Tuesday, September 25, 1979. The guests were DCI Turner and two of his associates. (See attached agenda.)

The consensus among the subdued Senators, following the intelligence briefing on Soviet troops in Cuba, was that the so-called crisis was self-created and self-imposed by both the Senate and the White House-- acting in harmony for a change!

Senator Cranston began the meeting reporting on his conversation with the White House Counsellor Lloyd Cutler on the Vance-Gromyko sessions. The Monday meeting had "produced nothing." The U.S. side was trying "to work out an accommodation." If we are unable, "then we must work out unilateral actions to get the U.S. out of the corner that the two -- branches have painted us into," reported Cranston. During the Group's meeting, word came in about Foreign Minister Gromyko's U.N. General Assembly speech denouncing our allegations that the Soviets have a combat brigade in Cuba.

Admiral Turner gave a detailed intelligence presentation to the Senators. He said the press was "filled with information," including some of our "most sensitive." He reported that David Binder's stories in the New York Times contain such leaks. He called a paragraph 25X1, E.O.13526 "the worst leak in his time at the CIA." (Note: Turner has consistently and frequently made this claim during his intelligence stewardship. --

Further note: It is my information that Binder's major source is the

25X1, E.O.13526

Turner's 20-minute background briefing followed.

Only since mid-August have we been able to confirm information about Soviet activity in Cuba.

25X1, E.O.13526

The

Soviets are doing in Cuba, Turner claimed, what our Marines do in Okinawa: combat exercises by Soviet troops; utilize an amount of equipment that indicates full units;

25X1, E.O.13526

25X1, E.O.13526

The chronology of this buildup, according to Turner, is as follows:

1962--22,000 Soviet armed forces in Cuba. End of 1963--all combat forces out, with 1,000 to 3,000 trainers remaining.

1965--Three of four bases given over to the Cuban military; Santiago retained by the Soviet Union. With current hindsight, it is now believed that a Soviet contingent remained on this base.

1968--Reports received that Soviets training Cubans; at the same time the USSR built a communications facility.

1968  
and  
later--Reports of Soviet military exercises.

1975--First reference to a "brigade" 25X1, E.O.13526

1975--Increased construction at Santiago, plus more Soviet supplies imported.

1976--Small scale Soviet military exercises, comparable to training.

Spring, 1976--No Cuban involvement apparent in a Soviet exercise.

August, 1978--National Intelligence Daily (NID) report carried intelligence community's conclusion that some small scale Soviet involvement in training, with Soviet combat units.

Spring, 1979--NSC ordered intelligence review of Soviet presence in Cuba.

July, 1979--Intelligence community memorandum said fragmentary evidence that small scale units connected to a headquarters.

August 27,  
1979--NID report said there was a Soviet "combat brigade" in Cuba.

Turner said he had "high confidence that it is a brigade," made up of 4 battalions. He has "moderate confidence" that it contains 2,000-3,000 personnel. (Note: A brigade is a task organization that comes together for some purpose and then breaks up to return somewhere. Battalions within the Soviet armed forces are standard.--Further note: A brigade is not a regular Soviet combat unit; there are 4 such autonomous and remote units worldwide. There is too much equipment concentrated in one spot for the Cuban contingent to be regarded as a training unit.)

Regarding an interpretation of the brigade's purpose, Turner said he had "low confidence." He reported the Soviets have made an effort to keep Cubans away from the brigade's places of operation and its equipment, but did not know its military objective. Rejected hypotheses include a praetorian guard, training for jungle warfare, and training Cubans. Possible hypotheses are a trip wire in the defense of the island, defend Soviet communications-intelligence installations (something our Army brigades in Alaska and Turkey do), a Soviet military presence in an American lake, the quid for Cuba sending its troops to Africa in the 1970s, a demonstration unit, or a combination of all of these.

Turner complained at this point that while our aerial photography is good, our human intelligence is not. The CIA staff, for instance, has dwindled over the years. Turner did not say if by "staff" he meant host country or third country nationals on location, or Americans at Langley. Neither did he mention that he himself ordered a large staff reduction in 1977.

Senator Glenn asked about the status of Cienfuegos. Turner said that new construction is taking place. The best guess is it could be a Cuban facility for two conventional submarines; the CIA expects it to be finished in three months. There is a large pier, already, shore facilities, torpedo and missile maintenance facilities like what the Soviets had at Berbera, Somalia. Arnold Hoerlick, the NID for the Soviet Union but recently assigned to head a task force on Cuba, said the concern about the Cienfuegos facilities is whether they are to service Soviet submarines. He expects the Russians at a minimum to have access.

Senator Culver asked Turner, in light of his varying levels of confidence in the data, the logic that if the troops were to protect the communications installations that they would exercise in a manner similar to ours in Turkey. "Perhaps," Turner replied. Hoerlick chimed in that that was the "predominate hypothesis until 25X1, E.O.13526

Senator Muskie asked if we ignored the evidence and did not react, what would be the consequences for U.S. national security? Turner said it "would encourage Soviet boldness." In the Nicaraguan situation, for example, "the Cubans played a key role." So we can expect an expanded Cuban role?" Muskie asked. Turner replied, "Yes." Again Muskie: "Has the Soviet response to our questioning been credible?" "Not really," Turner said. "They hold to the claim they are to train officers."

At this point, Turner left for a 2:00 meeting and the Senators got into a short and vigorous discussion over what they could do to rectify the situation vis-a-vis SALT. Leahy said, "We are shooting ourselves because of intelligence leaks." (Note: Turner had said that the leaks were being investigated. On August 27th, the NID report was issued; on August 30th Aviation Week called State and DoD about Soviet troops in Cuba. That is when David Newsom at State called Congressional leaders, including Senator Church.)

Senator Pell reported that he and Senator Chafee were "belittling" the whole issue in Rhode Island.

Muskie felt this issue would lose votes for SALT II. There will be "no give on Cuba" by the Soviets and we won't "get SALT."

According to Bumpers, an NBC poll shows 80 percent of the American public have heard about the issue, and two-thirds want something done about the troops.

Senator Stafford said "something had to be done to the Soviets."

Senator Leahy said, "U.S. action would amplify the U.S. willingness to draw the line."

Bumpers said, "the whole issue suggested a lack of confidence in the leadership coming out of the White House." There was general agreement to this statement.

In conclusion, Senators felt the Soviet troops in Cuba issue not that big a deal intrinsically (i.e., they accepted the interpretation of a "combat" brigade, but agreed it was of no military consequence) but a big deal politically.

Some thought there was a Cuban crisis, but it was not caused by the Russians. No one had confidence that the issue would be sufficiently resolved. It was felt that this was not the time (i.e., this fall) to vote on SALT.

The trend appears today hopeless.

S A L T L U N C H E O N

AGENDA

September 25, 1979

I. Luncheon Guests

Admiral Stansfield Turner, Director of Central  
Intelligence Agency  
Mr. Arnold Hoerlick, National Intelligence  
Officer for the USSR-Eastern Europe  
Mr. Fred Hitz, Legislative Counsel, CIA

II. Discussion -- Presence of Soviet Military  
Personnel in Cuba

Background briefing and status report

III. Next Meetings

October 9 -- Recommendation - Briefing from  
Defense Undersecretary of Research and  
Engineering Perry on the different basing  
modes considered for the MX missile and why  
DOD has chosen the horizontal shelter  
"racetrack" system.

October 23 -- Other suggestions.