

The President's News Conference of November 20, 1962

THE PRESIDENT. I have several statements. I have today been informed by Chairman Khrushchev that all of the IL-28 bombers now in Cuba will be withdrawn in 30 days. He also agrees that these planes can be observed and counted as they leave. In as much as this goes a long way towards reducing the danger which faced this hemisphere 4 weeks ago, **I have this afternoon instructed the Secretary of Defense to lift our naval quarantine.** In view of this action, I want to take this opportunity to bring the American people up to date on the Cuban crisis and to review the progress made thus far in fulfilling the understandings between Soviet Chairman Khrushchev and myself as set forth in our letters of October 27 and 28. Chairman Khrushchev, it will be recalled, agreed to remove from Cuba all weapons systems capable of offensive use, to halt the further introduction of such weapons into Cuba, and to permit appropriate United Nations observation and supervision to insure the carrying out and continuation of these commitments. We on our part agreed that once these adequate arrangements for verification had been established we would remove our naval quarantine and give assurances against an invasion of Cuba. **The evidence to date indicates that all known offensive missile sites in Cuba have been dismantled. The missiles and their associated equipment have been loaded on Soviet ships. And our inspection at sea of these departing ships has confirmed that the number of missiles reported by the Soviet Union as having been brought into Cuba, which closely corresponded to our own information, has now been removed.** In addition, the Soviet Government has stated that all nuclear weapons have been withdrawn from Cuba and no offensive weapons will be reintroduced. **Nevertheless, important parts of the understanding of October 27th and 28th remain to be carried out. The Cuban Government has not yet permitted the United Nations to verify whether all offensive weapons have been removed, and no lasting safeguards have yet been established against the future introduction of offensive weapons back into Cuba. Consequently, if the Western Hemisphere is to continue to be protected against offensive weapons, this Government has no choice but to pursue its own means of checking on military activities in Cuba.** The importance of our continued vigilance is underlined by our identification in recent days of a number of Soviet ground combat units in Cuba, although we are informed that these and other Soviet units were associated with the protection of offensive weapons systems and will also be withdrawn in due course. I repeat, we would like nothing better than adequate international arrangements for the task of inspection and verification in Cuba, and we are prepared to continue our efforts to achieve such arrangements. Until that is done, difficult problems remain. **As for our part, if all offensive weapons systems are removed from Cuba and kept out of the hemisphere in the future, under adequate verification and safeguards, and if Cuba is not used for the export of aggressive Communist purposes, there will be peace in the Caribbean.** And as I said in September, "we shall neither initiate nor permit aggression in this hemisphere." We will not, of course, abandon the political, economic, and other efforts of this hemisphere to halt subversion from Cuba nor our purpose and hope that the Cuban people shall someday be truly free. But these policies are very different from any intent to launch a military invasion of the island. In short, the record of recent weeks shows real progress, and we are hopeful that further progress can be made. **The completion of the commitment on both sides and the**

achievement of a peaceful solution to the Cuban crisis might well open the door to the solution of other outstanding problems. May I add this final thought in this week of Thanksgiving: there is much for which we can be grateful as we look back to where we stood only 4 weeks ago—the unity of this hemisphere, the support of our allies, and the calm determination of the American people. These qualities may be tested many more times in this decade, but we have increased reason to be confident that those qualities will continue to serve the cause of freedom with distinction in the years to come

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Q. Mr. President, with respect to your no-invasion pledge, there has been considerable discussion and speculation in the press as to the exact scope of this pledge. I believe that Chairman Khrushchev, in his letter of the 28th, made the assumption, or the implication, or the statement, that no attack would be made on Castro, not only by the United States, but any other country in the Western Hemisphere. It appeared to be an implication that possibly you would be willing to guarantee Castro against any and all enemies anywhere. Now I realize that in your letter there was nothing of that sort and you've touched on this today, but I'm wondering if you can be a bit more specific on the scope of your no-invasion pledge.

THE PRESIDENT. I think that today's statement describes very clearly what the policy is of the Government in regard to no-invasion. I think if you re-read the statement you will see the position of the Government on that matter.

Q. Mr. President, in speaking of "adequate verification," does this mean that we insist upon onsite inspection? Would we be satisfied with anything less than actual, on-the-spot inspection in Cuba?

THE PRESIDENT. Well, we have thought that to provide adequate inspection, it should be onsite. As you know, Mr. Castro has not agreed to that, so we have had to use our own resources to implement the decision of the Organization of American States that the hemisphere should continue to keep itself informed about the development of weapons systems in Cuba

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Q. Mr. President, apparently you've established quite a free-flowing channel of communications with Chairman Khrushchev. I wonder if you could comment any on this, perhaps telling us how many messages you've exchanged, some of the tenor of those, and if this will be a pattern for the future?

THE PRESIDENT. We've exchanged several messages in an attempt to try to work out the details of the withdrawal of the IL-28's and also a system of verification, in an attempt to fill in, in detail, the assurances given in the letters of late October. So that's what the correspondence has been about. I think that's been very clearly stated. And as I say, today a message was received, several hours ago, indicating that the IL-28's

would be taken out. The main burden of the negotiation, however, has been borne by Mr. McCloy and Governor Stevenson in their conversations, but I have continued to indicate how we defined offensive weapons, which has been the subject of this correspondence and, really, the subject of the negotiations between Mr. McCloy and Mr. Stevenson on the one hand, and the Russians on the other. In addition, the question of adequate verification has been a subject of the correspondence and a subject of the negotiations.

Q. Mr. President, in the various exchanges of the past 3 weeks, either between yourself and Chairman Khrushchev or at the United Nations, have any issues been touched on besides that of Cuba, and could you say how the events of these past 3 weeks might affect such an issue as Berlin or disarmament or nuclear testing?

THE PRESIDENT. No. I instructed the negotiators to confine themselves to the matter of Cuba completely, and therefore no other matters were discussed. Disarmament, any matters affecting Western Europe, relations between the Warsaw pact countries and NATO, all the rest—none of these matters was to be in any way referred to or, negotiated about until we had made progress and come to some sort of a solution on Cuba. So that has been all we have done diplomatically with the Soviet Union in the last month. Now, if we're successful in Cuba, as I said, we would be hopeful that some of the other areas of tension could be relaxed. Obviously when you make progress in any area, then you have hopes that you can continue it. But up till now we have confined ourselves to Cuba, and we'll continue to do so until we feel the situation has reached a satisfactory state.

Q. Mr. President, your administration, like others, is being criticized for its handling of information. The point is being made that reporters are being hampered in carrying out their role as the link between Government and the American people, that we're not keeping the American people well informed, as a result of Government policies. LeRoy Collins, former Governor of Florida, now head of the National Association of Broadcasters, has accused both the Defense Department and the State Department of news suppression in the Cuban crisis. Would you care to comment on your general feeling about that, Mr. President?

THE PRESIDENT. Well, it is true that when we learned the matter on Tuesday morning until we made the announcement on the quarantine on Monday afternoon, that this matter was kept in the highest levels of Government. We didn't make any public statement about it. And I returned to Washington that Saturday morning because I had a campaign trip that was going to take until Sunday evening, and I had to come back, and we did not want to indicate to the Soviet Union or to Cuba or anyone else who might be our adversaries, the extent of our information until we had determined what our policy would be, and until we had consulted with our allies and members of OAS and NATO. So, for those very good reasons, I believe, this matter was kept by the Government until Monday night. There is at least one newspaper learned about some of the details on Sunday evening and did not print it for reasons of public interest. I have no apologies for that. I don't think that there's any doubt it would have been a great

mistake and possibly a disaster if this news had dribbled out when we were unsure of the extent of the Soviet buildup in Cuba, and when we were unsure of our response, and when we had not consulted with any of our allies, who might themselves have been involved in great difficulties as a result of our action. During the week, then, from Monday till Sunday, when we received Mr. Khrushchev's first message about the withdrawal, we attempted to have the Government speak with one voice. There were obvious restraints on newspapermen. They were not permitted, for example, to go to Guantanamo because obviously that might be an area which might be under attack. Since that Sunday we have tried to, or at least intend to attempt to lift any restraints in the news. And I'm really-as a reader of a good many papers, it seems to me that the papers more or less reflected quite accurately the state of our negotiations with the Soviet Union. They have, in a sense, been suspended because we've been arguing about this question of IL-28's, so there hasn't been any real progress that we could point to or any hard information that we could put out until today, which we're now doing. Now, if the procedures which have been set up, which are really to protect the interest and security of the United States, are being used in a way inimical to the free flow of news, then we'll change those procedures.

Q. Sir, in another area, could you give us your analysis of the election results and your analysis as to what effect this may have on your program in Congress next year?

THE PRESIDENT. Well, I think we'll probably be in a position somewhat comparable to what we were in for the last 2 years. We did better than we had hoped in the election, but we still did not pick up seats, and we lost and won a number of votes by very close margins, particularly in the House. It really will depend on whether we can maintain a good deal of unity in the Democratic Party and also whether we receive some assistance from some Republicans. If the Republicans vote unanimously against us and we lose 40-odd Democrats-about one fifth of our number-then we will have difficulty. If we get the kind of Republican support that we got at the beginning of last year in the rules fight, then we can put some of these important programs through. So I think we have to wait until they come back before we can make a judgment, and we may be about in the position we were in in the last 2 years.

[Note: The midterm election results for the 88th Congress: Senate: 67 Democrats (+3), 33 Republicans (-3); House: 258 Democrats (-4), 176 Republicans (+1); Vacancies 1]

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Q. Mr. President, another question on Cuba. Is it your position, sir, that you will issue a formal no-invasion pledge only after satisfactory arrangements have been made for verification and after adequate arrangements have been made to make sure that such weapons are not reintroduced once more?

THE PRESIDENT. Quite obviously, as I said in my statements, serious problems remain as to verification and reassurance, and, therefore, this matter of our negotiations really are not-have not been completed and until they're completed, of course, I

suppose we're not going to be fully satisfied that there will be peace in the Caribbean. In regard to my feelings about what remains to be done, and on the matter of invasion, I think my statement is the best expression of our views.

Q. Mr. President, what would we accept as a guarantee, as a safeguard against reintroduction? Can that be achieved by anything short of continuous aerial reconnaissance?

THE PRESIDENT. Well, I think that what we would like to have is the kind of inspection on the ground which would make any other means of obtaining information unnecessary.

Q. A continuing inspection after the settlement

THE PRESIDENT. Inspection which would provide us with assurances that there are not on the island weapons capable of offensive action against the United States or neighboring countries and that they will not be reintroduced. Obviously, that is our goal. If we do not achieve that goal, then we have to use other resources to assure ourselves that weapons are not there, or that they're not being reintroduced.

Q. Mr. President, the other day Khrushchev stated that Communists could learn something even from capitalists, and he even had a few kind words to say about profit incentives. Do you read any great amount of significance into this?

THE PRESIDENT. NO, I don't. No. Except human nature is the same on both sides, fortunately, on both sides of the Iron Curtain, which is why I'm optimistic about the ultimate outcome of this struggle.

Q. Sir, would you please clear up for us our relationship with the United Nations? If we wanted to invade Cuba, if we wanted to take unilateral action in any way, could we do so without the approval of the United Nations?

THE PRESIDENT. Well, I don't think a question-you have to really give me a much more detailed hypothetical question before I could consider answering it, and even under those conditions it might not be wise. Obviously, the United States-let's use a hypothetical case, which is always better-the United States has the means as a sovereign power to defend itself. And of course, exercises that power, has in the past, and would in the future. We would hope to exercise it in a way consistent with our treaty obligations, including the United Nations Charter. But we, of course, keep to ourselves and hold to ourselves under the United States Constitution and under the laws of international law, the right to defend our security. On our own, if necessary-though we, as I say, hope to always move in concert with our allies, but on our own if that situation was necessary to protect our survival or integrity or other vital interests

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Q. Mr. President, Brazil has urged that a ban be declared on nuclear arms and delivery vehicles not only in Cuba, but in the rest of South America. Do you support this proposal, and would you favor extending a similar ban on other areas, such as the Middle East, where Senator Javits has said that the continuing buildup of Soviet arms in Egypt, Syria, and other Arab states may provoke the next East-West crisis?

THE PRESIDENT. Well, we're interested in the Brazilian proposal, which is under discussion at the United Nations. We're interested in it, and a similar proposal has been made for Africa. We would be interested in that, too. The question comes down to the willingness of the countries of Latin America to accept the Brazilian proposal, and the development of an adequate inspection system. That's the issue.

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Q. Mr. President, would you give us your estimate as to the current relations between Communist China and Communist Russia, particularly in relationship to the events in Cuba and in India?

THE PRESIDENT. No, I don't think that any comment that I might make would necessarily be accurate, because there's a variety of opinions in regard to the matters which may be in dispute. And in addition, I think that it's a matter which we should study. There're no assurances that it means it is helpful to us or harmful, as yet, but I think we have to wait. I said the other day that I thought this was a rather climactic period, and I think that we can perhaps tell in the next months what is going on in the world beyond this hemisphere with more precision. As of tonight, it would be just estimates, and I think it would be a mistake to indulge those right now.

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Q. Mr. President, when you speak of this as a climactic period, can you sketch in what you think some of the ultimate possibilities are?

THE PRESIDENT. No, I don't think we can, but I do think if 5 years ago we had looked at the world, I don't think we would have made a judgment that it would have moved quite the way it has moved, that China and India would be involved in a very serious struggle which may lead to a full-scale war if it hasn't already, and that relations in many parts of the world would be as changing as they are. I think this is a very climactic period.

NOTE: President Kennedy's forty-fifth news conference was held in the State Department Auditorium at 6 o'clock on Tuesday evening, November 20, 1962.
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