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November 5, 1962
Telegram from Soviet Ambassador to the USA
Dobrynin to USSR Foreign Ministry (2)

Citation:

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Summary:

Dobrynin sends the results of a meeting with Robert Kennedy, during which Dobrynin clears up a "misunderstanding" between the Soviets and Americans and the two discuss American surveillance planes taking fire over Cuba.

Original Language:

Russian

Contents:

Translation - English

Having familiarized himself with the text of N.S. Khrushchev's confidential letter,^[1] Robert Kennedy said that he would pass it on to the President immediately.

Then, assuming a somewhat surprised air, he tried to represent the affair as if the Soviets, having given their consent in principle to withdraw from Cuba the arms that the Americans call offensive, thereby allegedly came close to adopting the American point of view that had been laid out in the form of the list of weaponry mentioned by the American statement about the "quarantine." This, he said, was how Stevenson had "understood" V.V. Kuznetsov during their first meeting.

I answered that this interpretation of the Soviet position did not correspond to reality. A reference to the declaration cannot have for us the force of an obligation, since it is a document publicized by the USA government in a highly unilateral fashion. It is well known that the Soviets have refused to recognize this document, and thus also the list of weaponry it contains, and to which R. Kennedy is referring. For the Soviet Union, only the written agreement reached between N.S. Khrushchev and the President has the force of law, and we will fulfill the terms of that agreement if the Americans also fulfill their own obligations.

V.V. Kuznetsov also spoken about this to Stevenson. And A.I. Mikoyan spoke about it to Stevenson and McCloy during his recent talks with them, at which I was present myself.

R. Kennedy did not go any further into the details of the list itself, saying, however, that besides the missiles being removed by us, the Americans place great importance as well on the removal from Cuba of the Soviet IL-28 bombers. "We are not insisting on the recall of fighter planes, but bombers with a significant radius of action are another matter entirely." He refused to make any further statements on this subject, saying only that he would immediately pass on N.S. Khrushchev's letter to the President, who was supposed to be flying soon to the city of Boston, where he will vote in the USA congressional elections.

R. Kennedy answered that any additional demands, like the list of weaponry indicated above, render the lessening of the tensions arising around Cuba significantly more difficult to attain, and could only seriously complicate the situation.

Before R. Kennedy's departure, he expressed concern about the Cubans' firing at American planes carrying out observational flights over Cuba on the dismantling of the Soviet missiles. Such gunfire can elicit highly serious consequences, he added.

R. Kennedy was told that the flights by the American planes are a direct violation of the sovereignty of Cuba, and that this whole issue should, in all fairness, be raised not by the Americans but by the Cubans. Every sovereign state has every legal right to defend the inviolability of its borders. And we are not authorized to carry on the discussion of this sort of issue on behalf of Cuba. Let us rather fulfill the agreement reached in the exchange of messages between the government leaders of both countries, said I to R. Kennedy. Then the situation around Cuba may be normalized. We are keeping our promise, and hope that the USA too does not renege on its own promises and impose unacceptable conditions that create the possibility of a continuation of the conflict.

R. Kennedy limited himself to the remark that they were really seriously worried by the possible consequences of the firing at American planes, and that he personally considered it necessary to say so. We then once again laid out for him our position with regard to the flights of American planes over Cuba.

With this the talks were ended, since R. Kennedy was hurrying to the White House to meet with the President.

5.XI.62 A. DOBRYNIN

[\[1\]](#) For Khrushchev's 4 November 1962 letter to Kennedy, see Chang and Kornbluh, eds., *The Cuban Missile Crisis*, 1962, 264.