

October 23, 1962

**Telegram from Swiss Ambassador in Washington
Lindt regarding briefing by Assistant Secretary of
State William Tyler**

Citation:

"Telegram from Swiss Ambassador in Washington Lindt regarding briefing by Assistant Secretary of State William Tyler", October 23, 1962, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Schweizerisches Bundesarchiv, 2001 (E): 1976/17, Politische Auswirkungen nach der Rede von Präsident Kennedy vom 22. Oktober 1962. Telegram 308, from the Swiss Embassy in Washington, 10/23/1962. Translated from German by Stephanie Popp. <https://wilson-center-digital-archive.dvincitest.com/document/115434>

Summary:

Before a briefing of the neutral ambassadors by US Secretary of State Dean Rusk, William Tyler, Assistant Secretary for European Affairs, asks the Swiss diplomat to meet with him. After Tyler expressed thanks on behalf of the USA for what Switzerland has done, and will yet do in the future, for the American interests in Cuba, he said that he wished to inform the Swiss official more extensively than Rusk would be able to do in front of the assembled group of ambassadors. They mostly discuss Soviet missile deployed in Cuba.

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FYI to: 112 110 108 113 149 152
p.B. 73.Cuba.O.U'Ch
152 154 155 157 217 DZ JD

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Washington 23.10.61

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Half an hour before this briefing [translator's note: the briefing of the neutral ambassadors by US Secretary of State Dean Rusk at 8 p.m. on 22 October 1962], [William] Tyler, Assistant Secretary for European Affairs, had asked me to come see him. After he expressed thanks on behalf of the USA for what Switzerland has done, and will yet do in the future, for the American interests in Cuba, he said that he wished to inform me more extensively than Rusk would be able to do in front of the assembled group of ambassadors.

All missiles stationed in Cuba are targeted north with an angle that would make it possible to hit most of the American cities. We, however, do not know if the missiles have been mated with nuclear warheads. Since great quantities of Soviet cargo planes have landed in Cuba over the course of the last few days, it can be assumed that the "war heads" were brought to Cuba that way.

"We do not know how, where and when Khrushchev is going to react." The telegram that has just arrived from the American Ambassador to Moscow [Foy D. Kohler] only mentions a radio text, which talks about an imminent American declaration of war on Cuba without mentioning a Russian reaction. Currently, any reaction is possible, even nuclear war.

There are indications that the Soviets were informed that the US could detect the missiles. This raises the question, why Moscow, if it in fact means war, warned the Americans by erecting the missile bases, which foils the surprise effect. Personally X [probably Tyler - trans.] believes that Khrushchev is trying to practice diplomacy by military means. He might be thinking in terms of trading the American forward bases for the Russian bases in Cuba.

It is certain that Khrushchev fully realizes the challenge his Cuba policy represents to the US and to Kennedy personally. In his meeting with [Soviet foreign minister Andrei] Gromyko [on October 18], Kennedy read the part from his speech where he stated that he cannot tolerate an offensive buildup in Cuba. Whereupon, Gromyko pulled a note out of his pocket and said that he had instructions to read the following "the Soviet Union intended under no circumstances to provide offensive weapons to Cuba." Khrushchev possibly believed that the Americans would take the affront [of deploying the missiles] without protest. This would have empowered him to push his Berlin solution. At any rate, it [sic - most likely "he"] is a too calm a "Berliner" [translator's quotation marks] to not also have prepared itself [sic - most likely "himself" - trans.] for the current reaction.

The possibility of a summit between Kennedy and Khrushchev has, today, not yet been eliminated, but neither has it consolidated.

In his conversation with the American Ambassador Kohler, Khrushchev hinted, in a convoluted manner, at the possibility of a meeting with Kennedy, without, however, setting a place or time. The conversation between Gromyko and the President did not

lead to any clarification either.

Embassy of Switzerland