

October 19, 1962

Minutes of the Council of Ministers, The Hague, 19 October 1962 (excerpt)

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Summary:

The meeting of the Council of Ministers at The Hague revolved around the ongoing naval blockade of Cuba by the United States. The Dutch Assistant Secretary of State related that while the Americans are remaining firm on the Cuban situation, his visit to President Kennedy revealed he was very tense and was looking for a solution. The Foreign Ministry has yet to give an definitive stance on Cuba, but the primary concern for the Dutch Government was freedom of the sea and free flow of trade. The Minister of Justice concludes that while the government has no power to stop ships from going to Cuba, it does have the power to bar arms shipments.

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TOP SECRET

2. Foreign policy

a. America and Cuba

In a meeting with the mayor of Berlin, [Willy] Brandt, Assistant Secretary [of State Hans R.] Van Houten received some information relating to the former's visit to president Kennedy. He had the impression, that he [the president - trans.] was extremely nervous. This was the result of information regarding the numbers of Russian military technicians, who had arrived on Cuba, coupled with the pressure from public opinion and congress to do something against this. Although president Kennedy himself was very firm about the situation concerning Berlin it appeared to Brandt that the Americans are looking for a solution to this matter, which nevertheless for now is unsolvable.

Minister [of Justice Albert Christian Willem] Beerman, in response to the troubles that the "Java" owned by the Royal Rotterdam Lloyd is having in an American port, inquires whether Foreign Affairs has determined a standpoint regarding shipping to Cuba. Assistant secretary Van Houten replies, that in the NATO council the Americans have said, that if a ship transports weapons to Cuba the ports of the US will be closed to all ships of that country. Furthermore a ship that carries other goods to Cuba will no longer be permitted to enter American ports. From our side it has been said, that we are prepared to adopt the measures to constrain shipping to Cuba, but that these should not be such, that the principle of the freedom of the sea is eroded. England, Italy, and a few other countries have taken a similar standpoint. The prime minister adds to this, that the Dutch government has no instruments of power to prevent Dutch ships from transporting goods to Cuba. Minister Beerman remarks, that the government can only prevent these ships from loading weapons in the Netherlands.

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