Soviet Deception in the Cuban Missile Crisis

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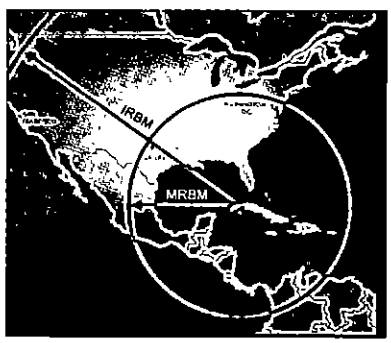

Range of Soviet SS-4 medium-range ballistic missiles and SS-5 intermediate-range ballistic missiles, if launched from Cuba.

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Moscow's surreptitious dispatch of nuclear-capable SS-4 and SS-5 surface-to-surface missiles to Cuba in 1962 upset the strategic balance in an alarming way.[1] The resulting showdown—which the Russians call the "Caribbean Crisis" and the Cubans call the "October Crisis"— brought the world to the brink of nuclear war. From its inception, the Soviet missile operation entailed elaborate denial and deception (D&D) efforts. The craft of denying the United States information on the deployment of the missiles and deceiving US policymakers about the Soviet Union's intent was the foundation of Nikita Khrushchev's audacious Cuban venture. Piecing together the deception activities from declassified US, Russian, and Cuban accounts yields insights that can help us anticipate and overcome the D&D efforts of a growing number of foreign adversaries today.

Maskirovka

Moscow has always had a flair for D&D, known in Russian as *maskirovka*. Its central tenet is to prevent an adversary from discovering Russian intentions by deceiving him about the nature, scope, and timing of an operation. *Maskirovka* covers a broad range of concepts, from deception at the strategic planning level to camouflage at the troop level.[2] Russian military texts indicate that *maskirovka* is treated as an operational art to be polished by professors of military science and officers who specialize in this area.

DIA analysis preceding the missile crisis noted that the Soviet Army had probably employed large-scale battlefield deception "more frequently and with more consistent success than any other army."[3] The Soviets practiced extensive *maskirovka* before their move into Czechoslovakia in 1968. Moscow also trained foreign forces to apply deception, including North Vietnamese units before the Tet offensive in 1968 and Egyptian forces before crossing the Suez Canal in 1973.

Close-hold Planning

Gen. Anatoli Gribkov—then a senior member of the Soviet General Staff—provides revealing insights into the early planning of the operation. He says that, after Nikita Khrushchev decided to emplace the missiles in Cuba in the spring of 1962, the General Staff detailed only five officers—four generals and a colonel—to serve as the center of the military planning apparatus. Col. Gen. Semyon Ivanov, chief of the General Staff's Chief Operations Directorate, was in over-

[1] Cuba is approximately 145 kilometers from US shores. The SS-4 medium-range ballistic missiles, which were deployed first to Cuba, had a range of up to 2,500 kilometers. The SS-5 intermediate-range ballistic missiles had a range of up to 5,000 kilometers.

[2] Jennie A. Stevens and Henry S. Marsh, "Surprise and Deception in Soviet Military Thought," *Military Review*, July 1982, pp. 25-35.

[3] Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), *Soviet/Warsaw Pact Ground Forces Camouflage and Concealment Techniques*, DDI-1100-161-78, January 1979, p. vii.

decided to emplace the missiles in Cuba in the spring of 1962, the General Staff detailed only five officers—four generals and a colonel—to serve as the center of the military planning apparatus. Col. Gen. Semyon Ivanov, chief of the General Staff's Chief Operations Directorate, was in overall charge.[4] During that summer, the circle of collaborators and contacts expanded to include members of each of the relevant service branches, but secrecy and need-to-know prevailed. The most senior officers brought into the plan were at least told that Cuba was involved in the operation, but only a few were informed of the exact nature of the mission.[5]

The top civilian and military officials conceptualizing the operation did not see eye-to-eye about the likelihood of pulling off a successful deception. At the very center of those making the decisions stood First Deputy Prime Minister Anastas Mikoyan, Presidium member Frol Kozlov, Defense Minister Marshal Rodion Malinovsky, and Marshal Sergei Biryuzov, commander of the Strategic Rocket Forces.[6] Alternate Presidium member Sharaf Rashidov was brought in as well, possibly for the cover that he later provided for traveling delegations.[7] Biryuzov and his experts believed that the deployment could be made expeditiously and secretly, without the US discovering the missiles. Mikoyan was surprised at this judgment and believed the marshal to be a fool.[8] Rashidov was confident that the missiles could be hidden, claiming that they could be placed so as to blend in with the palm trees. Gribkov held that only somebody inexperienced in military matters could reach such a conclusion, given the extensive preparations needed for each missile site

> **"To strengthen the concealment, many units were outfitted with skis, felt boots, fleece-lined parkas, and other winter equipment."**

Throughout the early planning stage, no secretaries were used to prepare final typed texts. A colonel with good penmanship wrote the proposal that the Defense Council adopted It grew into a full-fledged plan, still handwritten, which was approved by Malinovsky on 4 July and Khrushchev on 7 July.[9] From May through October, for reasons of security, no communications about the proposed, planned, and actual Soviet deployments in Cuba were sent, even by coded messages. Everything was hand-carried by members of the small coterie of senior officials who were directly involved.[10]

Developing A Cover Story

The General Staff's code name for the operation—ANADYR—was designed to mislead Soviets as well as foreigners about the destination of the equipment. Anadyr is the name of a river flowing into the Bering Sea, the capital of the Chukotsky Autonomous District, and a bomber base in that desolate region Operation ANADYR was designed to suggest to lower-level Soviet commanders—and Western spies—that the action was a strategic exercise in the far north of the USSR. Promoting the illusion, the troops that were called up for the Cuban expedition were told only that they were going to a cold region. Those needing more precise instructions, such as missile engineers, were informed that they would be taking ICBMs to a site on Novaya Zemlya, a large island in the Arctic where nuclear weapons had long been tested.[11]

To strengthen the concealment, many units were outfitted with

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[4] Gen. Anatoli I. Gribkov and Gen William Y. Smith, *Operation ANADYR: US and Soviet Generals Recount the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Chicago, Berlin, Tokyo, and Moscow: edition q, inc., 1994), p 24. This is a vital source, given Gen. Gribkov's role in planning and implementing the operation

[5] *Ibid.*

[6] Raymond L. Garthoff, *Reflections on the Cuban Missile Crisis*, revised edition (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 1989), pp 12-13

[7] Dino A. Brugioni, *Eyeball to Eyeball: The Inside Story of the Cuban Missile Crisis* (New York: Random House, 1991), p 84. The author was a key figure at the National Photographic Interpretation Center in 1962

[8] Garthoff, p 17.

[9] Gribkov and Smith, p 24.

[10] Garthoff, p 17.

skis, felt boots, fleece-lined parkas, and other winter equipment.[12] Moreover, perhaps to further backstop the cover plan, Moscow tapped four ground forces regiments from the Leningrad Military District in the north for dispatch to Cuba. The deception was so thorough that it fooled even senior Soviet officers sent to Cuba. One general there asked Gribkov why winter equipment and clothing had been provided. The general admonished him to "think like an adult," and explained, "It's called ANADYR for a reason. We could have given away the game if we had put any tropical clothing in your kits."[13]

Getting the Cubans On Board

Secrecy surrounded the first Soviet delegation that went to propose the audacious plan to Fidel Castro and other Cuban leaders. The officials arrived in Havana with little fanfare on 29 May, amidst a delegation of agricultural experts headed by Rashidov. The group included Col. Gen. Ivanov and several missile construction specialists and other military experts, whose job it was to determine whether the missiles could be deployed in secrecy.[14] Ambassador Aleksandr Alekseev took Cuban Defense Minister Raul Castro aside to explain that "Engineer Petrov" in the group actually was Marshal Biryuzov, and that he needed to meet with *el lider maximo* without delay. Only three hours later "Engineer Petrov" was shown into Fidel Castro's office.[15] The Cuban leadership unanimously and enthusiastically gave its approval in principle.[16]

Soviet maritime policy began to shift in accordance with these first trips. In June and July, the USSR began to charter Western ships to carry general cargo from the Soviet Union to Cuba, reserving its own freighters for carrying military cargo.[17]

During 2-17 July, a Cuban delegation led by Raul Castro traveled to Moscow to discuss Soviet military shipments, including nuclear missiles. Khrushchev met with the Defense Minister on 3 and 8 July. Raul Castro initialed a draft treaty with the Soviet Defense Minister that governed the deployment of Soviet forces to Cuba. This pact was not to be publicly revealed until a visit that Khrushchev planned to make to Cuba in November.[18]

The Russians began to dispatch officers and specialists covertly to Cuba by air. On 10 July, Gen. Issa Pliyev, traveling under the name "Pavlov," arrived in Cuba to command the Soviet contingent.[19] Two days later, 67 specialists touched down. They journeyed as "machine operators," "irrigation specialists," and "agricultural specialists." Their covers, however, could not have withstood probing—they had been assigned to occupations about which they knew nothing. They were urged to consult the few genuine specialists traveling with them to gain some rudimentary knowledge of their ostensible jobs.[20] On 17 July, Havana announced that Cuba and the USSR had signed an agreement establishing a regular Moscow-Havana civil air route. US intelligence analysis at the time speculated that the new Tu-114 flights were bringing Soviet military officers and sensitive electronic and signal-monitoring equipment to Cuba.[21]

Then-Minister for Industry Ernesto "Che" Guevara and the head of the Cuban militia led another delegation to Moscow during 27 August-2 September. The purpose was to introduce Fidel Castro's revisions into the draft treaty. The Cubans proposed that the deployment be made public in order to head off any American overreaction; Khrushchev,

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[11] Aleksandr Fursenko and Timothy Naftali, *"One Hell of a Gamble": Khrushchev, Castro, and Kennedy, 1958-1964* (New York and London, W. W. Norton & Company, 1997), p. 191. This valuable source relies on material from Soviet/Russian archives

[12] Gribkov and Smith, p. 15.

[13] *Ibid.*

[14] Garthoff, p. 15; also, Gribkov and Smith, p. 14

[15] Fursenko and Naftali, p. 186

[16] James G. Blight, Bruce J. Allyn, and David A. Welch, with the assistance of Davis Lewis, *Cuba on the Brink, Castro, the Missile Crisis, and the Soviet Collapse* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1993), p. 8. This source draws extensively on input from key Soviet/Russian and American officials who had a hand in the crisis.

[17] Brugioni, p. 92.

[18] Gribkov and Smith, p. 21

[19] Fursenko and Naftali, p. 192.

[20] Gribkov and Smith, pp. 37-38.

[21] Brugioni, p. 93.

however, successfully argued for continued secrecy.

Keeping The Secret At Home

In the Soviet Union, the men and equipment destined for Cuba were assembled, loaded, and moved by rail at night under reinforced guard. The train routes and final destinations were kept secret. Mail and telegrams along the way were strictly prohibited.[22]

To mask the immensity of the overall effort, the shipments to Cuba left from eight ports—four in the north (Kronstadt, Liepaya, Baltiysk, and Murmansk) and four on the Black Sea (Sevastopol, Feodosiya, Nikolayev, and Poti).[23] Western access to these ports was closed off. It was normal for the Soviets to close ports when munitions were being loaded, but this time the surface-to-surface missiles were being put on the ships under tight security and cover of darkness.[24]

The troops were housed at nearby military facilities during the two or three days required to load a ship. Guards were posted to prevent anyone from leaving the area. No letters, telegrams, or telephone calls were permitted, a rule that also applied to the officers.[25] The ships' crew members, some of whom made more than one run to Cuba, were forbidden shore leave and correspondence.[26] Secrecy was so strict that couriers carried all messages between the ports and the Defense Ministry in Moscow.[27]

> **"The ship captains were not told where their cargoes were to be delivered."**

On board, the Soviets applied the same *maskirovka* measures that they had adopted when they first began to send weapons to Cuba. Packing crates or special shipping containers concealed and protected weapons carried as deck cargo. Certain telltale military equipment was boarded up with planks to make it look like the ship's superstructure. Even on-deck field kitchens were disguised.[28] The Soviets shielded crated military hardware—such as missiles and launchers—with metal sheets to defeat infrared photography.[29] They stored other combat and specialized equipment below, out of sight. Ordinary automobiles, trucks, tractors, and harvesters were placed on the top deck to convey the impression that only civilian and agricultural gear was being transported.

The freighter *Poltava*, which sailed to Cuba in September, was a good example. No external signs indicated that it was carrying missiles. On deck were cargo trucks, none of which were associated with the missiles. Nonetheless, some US experts speculated that the ship might be carrying ballistic missiles deep in its hold, because the Soviets tended to use large-hatch ships of the *Poltava* and *Omsk* classes to deliver such missiles.[30]

The ship captains were not told where their cargoes were to be delivered. Before casting off, the captain and the troop commander jointly received a large sealed envelope. Unfastening it, they found a smaller envelope to be opened only at a certain set of geographic coordinates in the Atlantic Ocean. When they reached the designated point, an officer from the KGB's Special Department joined them for the opening of the envelope. The instructions told them to proceed to a Cuban port and authorized them to inform the ship's company of the destination.[31] The concern for secrecy permeated the process. The last sentence of the captain's letter read: "After familiarizing yourself with the contents of this document, destroy it."[32]

Every ship involved in Operation ANADYR carried thick folders, prepared by Defense Ministry staff officers, which contained background information on a number of countries with which the USSR had good relations. The

[22] Gribkov and Smith, p. 56
[23] *Ibid*, p. 29
[24] Brugioni, p. 149
[25] Gribkov and Smith, p. 30
[26] *Ibid*, p. 56
[27] *Ibid*, p. 29
[28] *Ibid*, p. 30
[29] *Ibid*., p. 56.
[30] Brugioni, pp. 149-150
[31] Gribkov and Smith, p. 31
[32] *Ibid*

study materials on Cuba were buried in these packets, so that not even the compilers would know the real focus of the operation.

Secrecy In Transit

The Soviet ships made false declarations when they exited the Black Sea and the Bosporus. Cargo records were altered and the tonnage declared was well below what was being carried.[33] The ships would declare from Odessa, although they had loaded at other ports. Often ships going to Cuba listed Conakry, Guinea, as their destination. When the volume of traffic increased, a number of ships did not give their destinations but simply stated that they were carrying "general cargo" and "awaiting orders."[34]

Transit through the Bosporus and the Dardanelles Straits presented a special challenge. Not only were the soldiers kept below decks, but the captains were under orders to prevent any foreigners from boarding, even the Turkish pilots who usually guided civilian ships through those tricky waters. Whenever the pilots approached the Soviet ships, the Soviet crews would lower bulging parcels of vodka, brandy, caviar, sausages, and other delicacies. Gribkov noted that this transparent bribery worked well: "Everyone likes to get presents, even pilots."[35]

> **"[If challenged at sea,] the captains were to 'destroy all documents with State and military secrets,' take measures to protect the personnel, and sink the ships."**

The captains were instructed to take all possible evasive action in the event of attacks or an effort to board their ships. Should evasive action fail, they were to "destroy all documents with state and military secrets," take measures to protect the personnel, and sink the ships.[36] Should their vessels experience mechanical failure en route, the captains were to explain to ships offering assistance that they were exporting automobiles.[37] Had this occurred, it might have provided clues—the USSR had few cars of any kind and was not recognized as an automobile exporter.

Moscow also resorted to diplomatic means to reduce US reconnaissance of the ships en route. In July 1962, the Soviets described US reconnaissance missions in international waters as "harassment," and requested through their GRU officer in Washington, Col. Georgi Bolshakov, that these flights be stopped for the sake of better bilateral relations.[38] In retrospect, this overture clearly appears to have been an effort by Khrushchev to delay the discovery of weapons related to Operation ANADYR. Bolshakov met with Attorney General Robert Kennedy more than a dozen times.

Most of the voyages lasted from 18 to 20 days. Due to strict *maskirovka* measures, the troops were kept below decks except for a few minutes at night when small groups were allowed to exercise and get some fresh air.[39] During the tropical days, heavy tarpaulins covered the hatches to the lower decks where the troops were berthed. With little air circulation, the inside temperature climbed to 120 degrees Fahrenheit or higher. Rations were issued twice a day and only in darkness.[40] Many of the troops on board swore that they would never again set foot on a ship.

Although the restrictions made conditions on board nightmarish, the deceptions worked. Gen. Gribkov states that "US intelligence discovered neither the true significance of the surge in Soviet shipping to Cuba nor the mission

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[33] US SIGINT revealed that Soviet vessels were making false port declarations and listing less than their known cargo-carrying capacity. By late August, the National Security Agency noted that 57 voyages to Cuba had taken place in a little over a month and that some ships were on their second voyage in that period of time. See: National Security Agency, *NSA and the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Fort Meade, MD: NSA Center for Cryptologic History, 1998), pp. 3-4.

[34] Brugioni, p. 149.

[35] Gribkov and Smith, p. 57.

[36] Fursenko and Naftali, p. 192.

[37] *Ibid.*

[38] *Ibid.*, p. 193.

[39] Gribkov and Smith, p. 35.

[40] *Ibid.*, p. 56.

of our troops on the island until nearly all the men had come ashore and, still moving in large numbers only by night, had been deployed to their assigned positions."[41]

Unloading in Cuba

As the Soviet troops arrived, Cuban officials took steps to support Moscow's *maskirovka* plan. In early fall, they began to exert control over the movements of all foreigners on the island. News reporters and foreign embassy personnel were forbidden to travel outside Havana. In the city, Cuban agents surveilled and harassed foreigners, especially British embassy officials.[42]

The planners had selected 11 Cuban ports to receive the Soviet ships: Havana, Mariel, Cabanas, Bahia Honda, Matanzas, La Isabella, Nuevitas, Nicaro, Casilda, Cienfuegos, and Santiago de Cuba.[43] They earmarked three of them—Bahia Honda and Mariel on the northwest coast and Casilda on the south coast—to receive the surface-to-surface missiles and nuclear warheads.[44]

"By late October, the size of the Soviet contingent in Cuba was about 41,900 personnel—quadruple the size that US intelligence agencies figured."

Even before the Soviet ships approached Cuban ports, a number of *maskirovka* precautions had been implemented. At Mariel, for example, the Soviets built a large cinder-block wall around the unloading area so that none of the port activity could be observed by land-based agents.[45] As the ships lay in port, KGB officers kept watch on deck. All Cubans, even militiamen, were barred from the port areas.[46] Local inhabitants within a mile of the waterfront in Mariel had to evacuate their homes.[47]

The first SS-4 missiles arrived in Mariel on board the *Omsk* on 8 September. The *Indigirka* brought the initial shipment of nuclear warheads on 4 October.[48] According to one source, this ship carried 99 nuclear charges—some two-thirds of all nuclear weapons sent to Cuba and over 20 times the explosive power dropped by all Allied bombers on Germany throughout World War II.[49]

Most of the military technicians also came ashore at Mariel. Deception activities throughout the transit stage and the strict security measures at Mariel hindered the ability of US intelligence agencies to estimate the number of Soviet troops. The plan for ANADYR that was approved in early July had called for moving 50,874 men. That total included personnel for field hospitals, bakeries, mechanical workshops, and other support units, all with a three-month supply of food and fuel. During September, the plan was revised to eliminate submarine and surface ship squadrons, due to potential resupply problems and concerns that their presence might sound an alarm bell in Washington. By late October, the size of the contingent in Cuba had reached about 41,900 personnel—quadruple the size that US intelligence agencies figured.[50]

Nonetheless, in the hectic initial days in Cuba, secrecy created more than a few glitches. The General Staff had neglected to provide passwords to facilitate communication between the arriving transport ships and the

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[41] *Ibid.*
[42] Brugioni, p. 148. The Cubans probably knew that the British were helping the United States, which did not have formal representation in Havana.
[43] Gribkov and Smith, p. 38. Gribkov's map puts Nicaro in the wrong location, apparently confusing it with Niquero on the Southeast coast.
[44] Fursenko and Naftali, p. 216.
[45] Brugioni, p. 150.
[46] David Detzer, *The Brink: Cuban Missile Crisis, 1962* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1979), p. 69.
[47] *Ibid.*, p. 57.
[48] Gribkov and Smith, p. 52.
[49] Fursenko and Naftali, p. 217. There is conflicting source information on the number of warheads specifically for the SS-4 missiles. Gribkov states that 36 such warheads were introduced. This issue cannot be resolved based on current evidence, but 36 appears to be a likely figure as that tracks with Soviet doctrinal requirements for refire missiles.
[50] Gribkov and Smith, p. 28.

Cuban greeting parties. Accordingly, some ship captains and onboard troop commanders had difficulty accepting orders to reroute their ships from their originally assigned ports. The captain of one ship even turned back out to sea rather than allow a Cuban patrol boat crew to come aboard to guide him to his anchorage.[51]

Usually two or three days were required to unload a ship with military cargo, and *maskirovka* requirements invariably complicated the work. Equipment that had at least a superficial resemblance to agricultural machinery was unloaded in broad daylight, but weapons and other military equipment could be unloaded only at night. From the docks, specialized equipment was stored in sheds or moved directly to designated bases along back roads at night [52]

All this time, Radio Moscow was claiming that the USSR was only giving Cuba "machine tools, wheat, and agricultural machinery," along with "some 7,000 tons of various fertilizers."[53] This description was consistent with the false identities provided to many of the Soviet military specialists and also with the daytime unloading activity.

[51] *Ibid*, pp. 38-39
[52] *Ibid.*
[53] Detzer, p. 57

> **"Soviet and Cuban planners leaked accurate information about the deployment [through discredited groups] so as to mask it."**

Movement to Field Sites

The *maskirovka* measures were not air tight. In the initial stages of the operation, the United States received reports from friendly nations, newspaper correspondents, and other sources indicating that hundreds of Russian troops in fatigues had been seen in Havana and in seemingly endless convoys along Cuba's main highways. Many young Russian men also had been observed sightseeing in the Cuban capital in checked, cotton shirts and cheap trousers.[54] Although the Soviets and Cubans took extra precautions to keep gawkers away from the wharves and moved the nuclear cargoes away under black canvas and escorted by heavy guard, the chatty Cubans gave a steady stream of clues to US SIGINT collectors.[55]

At the same time, the Soviets and Cubans mounted a major campaign using HUMINT channels to bolster the overall deception effort. The planners leaked accurate information about the deployment so as to mask it. The information was funneled through counterrevolutionary organizations and their press in the United States, especially in Miami. The CIA discounted the information, because it did not consider the groups and people peddling it to be credible. This strategy was highly effective, according to a former Cuban intelligence officer.[56]

The deception campaign that exploited the émigrés' lack of credibility was unwittingly backstopped by correspondence between Cubans and their friends and relatives in the United States. From June to September, Cuban intelligence intercepted some 17,000 letters that had something to say about the deployment of Soviet troops and missiles in Cuba. In late September, Cuban authorities permitted those letters to arrive in Miami as part of the deception campaign. Just as Havana expected, the CIA paid no attention to these letters.[57]

For US intelligence analysts, the amount of "noise" from Cuba grew deafening. Reports flooded in from Cubans, tourists, foreign diplomats in Cuba, and newspaper officials reporting in a private

[54] Brugioni, p. 101
[55] NSA, *op. cit*, pp. 2-3 The US SIGINT ship *Oxford* was hugging the Cuban coastline at that time.

[56] Domingo Amuchastegui, "Cuban Intelligence and the October Crisis," *Intelligence and National Security*, Volume 13, Number 3, Autumn 1998, p. 101. This is a special issue on intelligence and the missile crisis, edited by James G Blight and David A Welch. It is a unique collection of articles on the roles played by different intelligence services.
[57] *Ibid*

capacity. At the CIA focal point at Opa-Locka, Florida, intelligence officers screened countless reports and debriefed Cubans who had fled the island.[58] Most of the reports from Cuba were exaggerated or imaginary—some were so outrageous that they were laughable and made all the others suspect. There were far-fetched tales of African troops with rings in their noses, lurking Mongolians, and even Chinese troops. These accounts followed earlier erroneous reports of Soviet military equipment secreted away in caves, underground hangers, and concrete domes. The previous reports had cast doubt on the reliability of sources, so US analysts found it easy to dismiss the stream of reports of Soviet missiles.[59]

From the port areas, the canvas-covered SS-4 missiles were moved in night convoys, under tight security, to sites in the interior of the island. Security was tightened so that the troops disembarked dressed as civilians, and their escorts—Soviet personnel who had arrived earlier—were required to wear Cuban military uniforms and issue commands along the convoy routes only in Spanish.[60] On the march or bivouacked, Soviet military men remained dressed in civilian clothing and were forbidden to mention their military designations or the ranks of their commanders. Moreover, all communications between the Soviet military headquarters in Havana and units in the field had to be made in person, not written or sent by radio. Except for very brief hookups and equipment tests, Soviet troops maintained total radio silence in order to mask their identity, location, and troop strength from US intelligence.[61]

In retrospect, some Soviet and Cuban officials found it remarkable that the operation remained secret for a full month after the missiles arrived in Cuba.[62] The missile carriers were too big to go unnoticed on the back roads of the island for long. As they rumbled through the little Cuban towns, they left a trail of downed telephone poles and mailboxes. When a peasant's shack had to be moved or knocked down to allow a missile carrier to turn a tight corner, those who witnessed the event were bound to talk. Soviet and Cuban efforts to discredit such anecdotal accounts paid off.

Disingenuous Diplomacy

Soviet spokesmen kept up a steady stream of denials and disinformation in September. On 4 September, Ambassador Anatoli Dobrynin sought out Robert Kennedy and stated that he had received instructions from Khrushchev to assure the President that there would be no surface-to-surface missiles or offensive weapons placed in Cuba. Dobrynin also added that the Attorney General could assure his brother that the Soviet military buildup was not of any significance.[63] On 6 September, Theodore Sorenson, special counsel to President Kennedy, met with Dobrynin, who reiterated his assurances that Soviet military assistance to Cuba was strictly defensive in nature and did not represent a threat to American security. The following day, Dobrynin assured US Ambassador to the United Nations Adlai Stevenson that the USSR was supplying only defensive weapons to Cuba. On 11 September, TASS announced that the USSR neither needed nor intended to introduce offensive nuclear weapons into Cuba.[64]

In late September, Khrushchev embarked on a barnstorming tour in the Turkmen and Uzbek republics. This high-profile trip, which extended into the first week of October, emphasized agricultural themes. In none of Khrushchev's many speeches during his travels was there any reference suggesting aggression or threats to the United States.[65]

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[58] Detzer, p. 59.
[59] *Ibid.*, p. 60.
[60] Gribkov and Smith, p. 39. This *maskirovka* requirement is comparable to that used during the Korean conflict, when Soviet pilots were instructed to speak in Chinese while flying missions to try to fool US SIGINT units.
[61] *Ibid.*
[62] *Ibid.*, p. 52, and Amuchastegui, p. 101. A cautionary note here is that this article is the only published account by a former Cuban intelligence officer thus far.
[63] Brugioni, p. 115.
[64] Blight, Allyn, and Welch, pp. 463-464.
[65] Brugioni, pp. 157-158.

The pattern continued. On 13 October, a high State Department official, Chester Bowles, questioned Dobrynin on whether Moscow intended to put offensive weapons in Cuba; the Ambassador denied any such intention. On 17 October, GRU Col. Bolshakov brought Robert Kennedy a personal message directly from Khrushchev to President Kennedy that "under no circumstances would surface-to-surface missiles be sent to Cuba." The next day Foreign Minister Gromyko met with President Kennedy for two hours. Gromyko assured him that the Soviet aid to Cuba "pursued solely the purpose of contributing to the defense capabilities of Cuba and to the development of its peaceful economy."[66]

Denouement

The missile sites themselves could never have remained hidden for long. They were constructed in areas expropriated from Cuban landowners, had no fences or walls, and were exposed to aerial observation.[67] Standard *maskirovka* doctrine gave preference to deployment in wooded areas, yet Cuba's forests were generally sparse, consisting of a few clusters of palm trees or a thick undergrowth of bushes. Such vegetation could not cover all of the missile equipment.[68] SS-4 launchers are anchored to large concrete slabs and surrounded not only by the missiles, but also by multiple buildings, fuel trucks and tanks, and hundreds of meters of thick cable To try to maintain secrecy, Soviet commanders forbade their troops from taking any leave from their deployment sites and ruled out using Cuban labor. Nonetheless, Soviet commanders and planners knew that although the tractor-trailers and associated large objects could be covered by canvas, their masses could not be shrunk.[69] Heavy equipment might obscure part of the missile site signature from ground-level, but from above it stuck out markedly.[70]

> **"In only six minutes, US Air Force Maj. Richard Heyser snapped 928 photographs that yielded the first confirmation of offensive missiles in Cuba."**

On 14 October, a U-2 aircraft photographed the area of San Cristobal, where the first missile unit was being deployed. In only six minutes, US Air Force Maj. Richard Heyser snapped 928 photographs that yielded the first confirmation of offensive missiles in Cuba.[71] Washington stepped up intelligence collection of all kinds, readied massive air attack and invasion plans—including sending nuclear-armed B-52s aloft—and engaged in extensive policy deliberations in the Executive Committee. On 22 October, President Kennedy revealed the missile buildup to the world. Confronted with the photographic evidence, the Russians informed Raul Castro that more attention would have to be paid to concealing the site work and camouflaging the missiles and other heavy equipment.[72] The Soviet units stretched tarpaulins and nets over the missiles, and daubed paint or mud across the canvases. This marked the first time that they tried to conceal their missiles from the air, probably hoping to mask the total number of missiles and protect against sabotage.[73] By 28 October, however, the confrontation, including Kennedy's imposition of a naval and air quarantine on the shipment of offensive military equipment to Cuba, led Khrushchev to agree on a formula to end the crisis. The

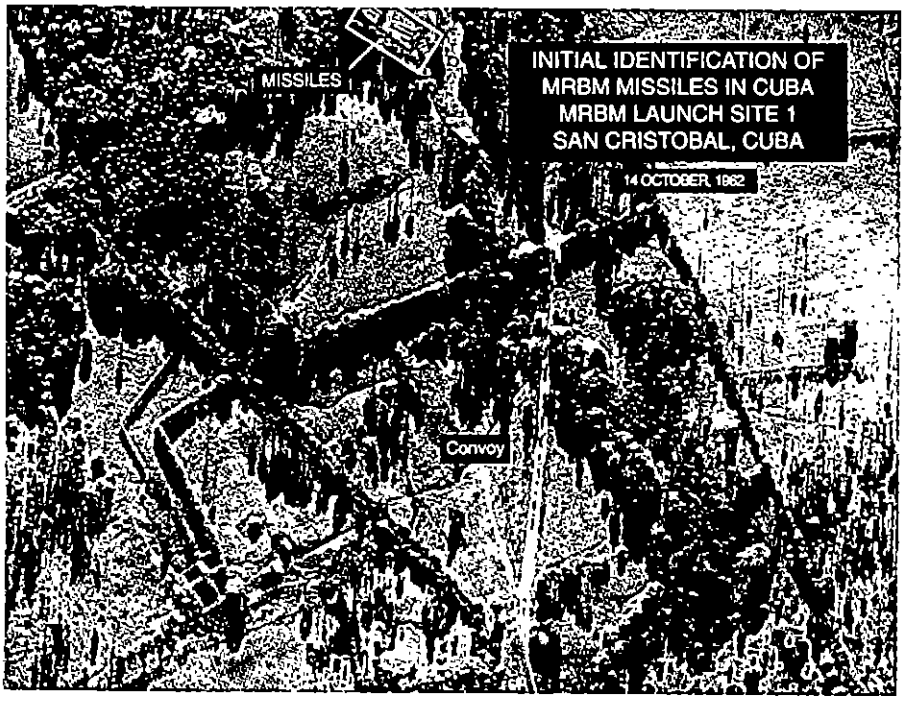
[66] Blight, Allyn, and Welch, pp 465-466.
[67] Brugioni, p. 150.
[68] Gribkov and Smith, p 40.
[69] *Ibid*, p. 55.
[70] *Ibid*, p. 40.
[71] The details of the U-2 mission are found in *Volume XI: Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963, Cuban Missile Crisis and Aftermath*, edited by Edward C Keefer, Charles S Sampson, Louis J. Smith, and David S Patterson (Washington, DC, US Government Printing Office, 1996), p. 29. Although uncertain about the status of the weapons in Cuba at the time of discovery, we now know that only some of the nuclear-capable delivery systems were ready for action in late October. Of the 36 SS-4s deployed, for example, only about half were ready to be fueled—an 18-hour process—and not one had been programmed for flight. See Gribkov and Smith, p. 63
[72] Gribkov and Smith, p. 53.
[73] Detzer, p 194

Russians began to dismantle their bases.

In Conclusion

The Soviet deception effort was comprehensive, but not free from shortcomings. The early, overly optimistic assessments by Marshal Biryuzov and Rashidov evidently went unchallenged. Some cover arrangements were slapdash. Many of the slips occurred not in the USSR but in Cuba, when Soviet units had to unload their weapons, transport them to the field, and set them up. The operation might have been enhanced by the presence of *maskirovka* specialists in all Soviet units in Cuba. In the 1980s, a special *maskirovka* directorate was created within the General Staff. Such an organization would have played a vital role had it existed in 1962.[74]

On 4 February 1963, the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board issued a major postmortem report over the signature of its chairman, James R. Killian, Jr. The Killian report described the introduction and deployment of Soviet strategic missiles in Cuba as a "near-total intelligence surprise."[75] It concluded that the Intelligence Community's analysis of intelligence indicators and its production of current intelligence reports "failed to get across to key government officials the most accurate possible picture of what the Soviets might be up to in Cuba"



U2 photograph of SS-4 missile site in Cuba.

during the months preceding 14 October. The report took the Community to task for inadequate early warning of hostile intentions and capabilities; failure to provide senior policymakers with meaningful, cumulative assessments of the available intelligence indicators; and failure to produce a revision of the erroneous National Intelligence Estimate (NIE 8-3-62) of 19 September 1962.[76]

Nowhere does the 10-page Killian Report mention adversarial denial and deception. Within US intelligence organizations, the awareness and systematic study of foreign D&D had not been developed, and would not emerge until some 20 years later. It is likely that with a trained, well-staffed, and deception-aware analytic corps, the United States could have uncovered Khrushchev's great gamble long before Maj. Heyser's revealing U-2 mission.

Only now, four decades later, can we uncover the extent of the use of deception in the events leading to the Cuban missile crisis. To paraphrase Sir Winston Churchill, perhaps the least-explored aspect of the crisis was the Soviet effort to cloak the truth of its strategic missile deployment within a body-guard of lies, on a scale that most US planners could not comprehend.

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[74] This revelation comes from a former GRU officer who wrote under the pen name of "Viktor Suvorov" and produced books and articles on the Soviet military and intelligence forces in the 1980s.

[75] Central Intelligence Agency, *CIA Documents on the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Washington, DC: CIA, 1992), p. 367.

[76] *Ibid*, pp. 367-368.