



## Adlai Stevenson

### *United Nations Security Council Address on Soviet Missiles in Cuba*



Delivered 25 October 1962

**AUTHENTICITY CERTIFIED:** Text version below transcribed directly from audio

Mr. President, Members of the Council, today we must address our attention to the realities of the situation posed by the buildup of nuclear striking power in Cuba.

In this connection I want to say at the outset that the course adopted by the Soviet Union yesterday to avoid direct confrontations in the zone of quarantine are welcome to my government. We also welcome the assurance by Chairman Khrushchev in his letter to Earl Russell that the Soviet Union will take no reckless decisions with regard to this crisis. And we welcome most of all the report that Mr. Khrushchev has agreed to the proposals advanced by the Secretary General. Perhaps that report will be confirmed here today.

My government is most anxious to effect a peaceful resolution of this affair. We continue to hope that the Soviet Union will work with us to diminish not only the new danger which has suddenly shadowed the peace, but all of the conflicts that divide the world.

I shall not detain you with any detailed discussion of the Soviet and the Cuban responses to our complaint. The speeches of the communist delegates were entirely predictable. I shall make brief comment on some points suggested by these speeches and some other points which may have arisen in the minds of members of the United Nations. Both Chairman Khrushchev in his letter to Earl Russell and Ambassador Zorin in his remarks to this Council argued that this threat to the peace had been caused not by the Soviet Union and Cuba but by the United States.



We are here today and have been this week for one single reason -- because the Soviet Union secretly introduced this menacing offensive military buildup into the island of Cuba while assuring the world that nothing was further from their thoughts. The argument in its essence of the Soviet Union is that it was not the Soviet Union which created this threat to peace by secretly installing these weapons in Cuba, but that it was the United States which created this crisis by discovering and reporting these installations. This is the first time, I confess, that I have ever heard it said that the crime is not the burglar but the discovery of the burglar -- and that the threat is not the clandestine missiles in Cuba their discovery and the limited measures taken to quarantine further infection. The peril arises not because the nations of the Western hemisphere have joined together to take necessary action in their self-defense, but because the Soviet Union has extended its nuclear threat into the Western hemisphere.

I noted that there is still at least some delegates in the Council, possibly -- I suspect very few -- who say that they don't know whether the Soviet Union has in fact built in Cuba installations capable of firing nuclear missiles over ranges from 1000 to 2000 miles. As I say, Chairman Khrushchev did not deny these facts in his letter to Earl Russell, nor did Ambassador Zorin on Tuesday evening. And if further doubt remains on this score, we shall gladly exhibit photographic evidence to the doubtful.

One other point I'd like to make, Mr. President and gentlemen, is invite attention to the casual remark of the Soviet representative claiming that we have 35 bases in foreign countries. The facts are that there are missiles comparable to these being placed in Cuba with the forces of only three of our allies. They were only established there by a decision of the heads of government meeting in December 1957 which was compelled to authorize such arrangements by virtue of a prior Soviet decision to introduce its own missiles capable of destroying the countries of Western Europe.

In the next place, there are some troublesome questions in the minds of members that are entitled to serious answers. There are those who say that conceding the fact that the Soviet Union has installed these offensive missiles in Cuba, conceding the fact that this constitutes a grave threat to the peace of the world -- Why was it necessary for the nations of the Western hemisphere to act with such speed? Why could not the quarantine against the shipment of offensive weapons have been delayed until the Security Council and the General Assembly had a full opportunity to consider this -- the situation and make recommendations?

Let me remind the members that the United States was not looking for some pretext to raise the issue of the transformation of Cuba into a military base. On the contrary, the United States made no objection whatever to the shipment of defensive arms by the Soviet Union to Cuba, even though such shipments offended the traditions of this hemisphere. Even after the first hard intelligence reached Washington concerning the change in the character of Soviet military assistance to Cuba, the President of the United States responded by directing an intensification of surveillance. And only after the facts and the magnitude of the buildup had been established beyond all doubt did we begin to take this limited action of barring only those nuclear -- only these nuclear weapons, equipment, and aircraft.



To understand the reasons for this prompt action it is necessary to understand the nature and the purposes of this operation. It has been marked above all by two characteristics: speed and stealth. As the photographic evidence makes clear, the installation of these missiles, the erection of these missile sites, has taken place with extraordinary speed. One entire complex was put up in 24 hours. This speed need not only -- not only demonstrates the methodical organization and the careful planning involved, but it also demonstrates a premeditated attempt to confront this hemisphere with a *fait accompli*.<sup>1</sup> By quickly completing the whole process of nuclearization of Cuba, the Soviet Union would be in a position to demand that the status quo be maintained and left undisturbed. And if we were to have delayed our counteraction, the nuclearization of Cuba would have been quickly completed. This is not a risk which this hemisphere is prepared to take.

When we first detected the secret, offensive installations could we be reasonably expected to have notified the Soviet Union in advance through the process of calling the Security Council that we had discovered its perfidy, and then to have done nothing but wait while we debated and then have waited further while the Soviet representative in the Security Council vetoed our resolution, as he has already announced that he will do? In different circumstances we would have, but today we are dealing with dread realities and not with wishes.

One of the sites, as I have said, was constructed in twenty-four hours. One of these missiles can be armed with its nuclear warhead in the middle of the night -- pointed at New York and landed above this room five minutes after it was fired.

No debate in this room could affect in the slightest the urgency of these terrible facts, or the immediacy of the threat to the peace. There was only one way to deal with that urgency and with that immediacy, and that was to act -- and to act at once, but with the utmost restraint consistent with the urgency of the threat to the peace.

And we came to the Security Council, I remind you, immediately -- immediately, and concurrently with the OAS.<sup>2</sup> We didn't even wait for the OAS to meet and to act. We came here at the same time. We immediately put into process the political machinery that we pray will achieve a solution of this grave crisis. And we did not act until the American Republics had acted to make the quarantine effective.

We did not shirk our duties to ourselves, to the hemisphere, to the United Nations, or to the world. We are now in the Security Council on the initiative of the United States precisely because -- having taken the hemispheric action which has been taken -- we wish political machinery, the machinery of the United Nations to take over, to reduce these tensions and to interpose itself to eliminate this aggressive threat to the peace, and to assure the removal from this hemisphere of offensive nuclear weapons and the corresponding lifting of the quarantine.

There are those who say that the quarantine is an inappropriate and extreme remedy, that the punishment does not fit the crime. But I ask those who take this position to put themselves in the position of the Organization of American states, to consider what you would have done in the face of the nuclearization of Cuba.



Were we to do nothing until the knife was sharpened? Were we to stand idly by until it was at our throats? What were the alternatives available? On the one hand, the OAS might have sponsored an invasion or destroyed the bases by an air strike, or imposed a total blockade on all imports into Cuba, including medicine and food. On the other hand the OAS and the United States might have done nothing.

Such a course would have confirmed the greatest threat to the peace of the Americas known to history and would have encouraged the Soviet Union in similar adventures in other parts of the world. And it would have discredited our will, our determination to live in freedom and to reduce -- not increase -- the perils of this nuclear age. The course we have chosen seems to me perfectly graduated to meet the character of the threat. To have done less would have been to fail in our obligation to peace.

To those who say that a limited quarantine was too much, in spite of the provocation and the danger, let me tell you a story -- attributed like so many of our American stories to Abraham Lincoln -- about the "passerby" out in my part of the country who was charged by a farmer's ferocious boar. He picked up a pitchfork and met the boar head-on. It died. And the irate farmer denounced him and asked him why he didn't use the blunt end of the pitchfork. And the man replied, "Why didn't the boar attack me with his blunt end?"

Some here have attempted to question the legal basis of the defensive measures taken by the American Republics to protect the Western hemisphere against Soviet long-range nuclear missiles. And I would gladly expand on our position on this, but in view of the proposal now before us presented last night by the Secretary General, perhaps that is a matter and a discussion, in view of its complexity and length, which could be more fruitfully delayed to a later time.

Finally, let me say that no twisting of logic, no distortion of words can disguise the plain, the obvious, the compelling common sense conclusion that the installation of nuclear weapons by stealth weapons of mass destruction in Cuba poses a dangerous threat to the peace, a threat which contravenes Article 2, paragraph 4, and a threat which the American Republics are entitled to meet as they have done with appropriate regional defensive measures.

Nothing has been said by the representatives of the Communist States, here, which alters the basic situation. There is one fundamental question to which I solicit your -- your attention. The question is this: What actions serve to strengthen the world's hope of peace? Can anyone claim that the introduction of long-range nuclear missiles into Cuba strengthens the peace? Can anyone claim that the speed and stealth of this operation strengthens the peace? Can anyone suppose that this whole undertaking is anything more than an audacious effort to increase the nuclear striking power of the Soviet Union against the United States and thereby magnify its frequently reiterated threats against Berlin? When we are about to debate how to stop the dissemination of nuclear weapons, does their introduction in a new hemisphere by -- by an outside state advance sanity and peace? Does anyone suppose that if this Soviet adventure should go unchecked the Soviet Union would refrain from similar adventures in other parts of the world?



The one action in the last few days which has strengthened the peace is the determination to stop this further spread of weapons in this hemisphere.

In view of the situation that now confronts us, and the proposals made here yesterday by the Acting Secretary General, I am not going to further extend my remarks this afternoon. I wish only to conclude by reading to the members of the Council a letter from the President of the United States which was delivered to the Acting Secretary General just a few minutes ago in reply to his appeal of last night. He said -- to Mr. U Thant:

*I deeply appreciate the spirit which prompted your message of yesterday. As we made clear in the Security Council, the existing threat was created by the secret introduction of offensive weapons into Cuba, and the answer lies in the removal of such weapons.*

*In your message and your statement to the Security Council last night, you have made certain suggestions and have invited preliminary talks to determine whether satisfactory arrangements can be assured.*

*Ambassador Stevenson is ready to discuss promptly these arrangements with you.*

*I can assure you of our desire to reach a satisfactory and a peaceful solution of this matter.*

Signed, John F. Kennedy. I have nothing further to say at this time, Mr. President.

ZORIN: [remarks to the Security Council]

STEVENSON: Mr. Zorin and gentlemen, I want to say to you, Mr. Zorin, that I don't have your talent for obfuscation, for distortion, for confusing language, and for doubletalk. And I must confess to you that I'm glad I don't. But if I understood what you said, you said that my position had changed, that today I was defensive because we didn't have the evidence to prove our assertions that your Government had installed long-range missiles in Cuba. Well, let me say something to you, Mr. Ambassador -- we do have the evidence. We have it, and it's clear and incontrovertible. And let me say something else -- those weapons must be taken out of Cuba.

And next, let me say to you with a -- that if I understood you -- trespass on credulity that excels your best, you said that our position had changed since I spoke here the other day because of the pressures of world opinion and the majority of the United Nations. Well, let me say to you, sir, you are wrong again. We have had no pressure from anyone whatsoever. We came in here today to indicate our willingness to discuss Mr. U Thant's proposals, and that is the only change that has taken place.

But let me also say to you, sir, that there has been a change. You, the Soviet Union, has sent these weapons to Cuba. You, the Soviet Union, has upset the balance of power in the world. You, the Soviet Union, has created this new danger, not the United States.



And you ask with a fine show of indignation why the President didn't tell Mr. Gromyko on last Thursday about our evidence, at the very time that Mr. Gromyko was blandly denying to the President that the U.S.S.R. was placing such weapons on sites in the new world.

Well, I'll tell you why -- because we were assembling the evidence, and perhaps it would be instructive to the world to see how a Soviet official -- how far he would go in perfidy. Perhaps we wanted to know if this country faced another example of nuclear deceit like that one a year ago, when in stealth, the Soviet Union broke the nuclear test moratorium.

And while you were asking -- while we're asking questions, let me ask you why your Government -- your Foreign Minister -- deliberately, cynically deceived us about the nuclear build-up in Cuba.

And, finally, the other day, Mr. Zorin, I remind you that you didn't deny the existence of these weapons. Instead, we heard that they had suddenly become defensive weapons. But today -- again, if I heard you correctly -- you now say they don't exist, or that we haven't proved they exist, with another fine flood of rhetorical scorn.

All right sir, let me ask you one simple question. Do you, Ambassador Zorin, deny that the U-S-S-R has placed and is placing medium and intermediate range missiles and sites in Cuba? Yes or no? Don't wait for the translation, yes or no?



ZORIN (statement in Russian followed by English translation through a United Nations Interpreter): I am not in an American courtroom, sir, and therefore I do not wish to answer a question that is put to me in the fashion in which a prosecutor does. In due course, sir, you will have your reply. Do not worry.

STEVENSON: You are in the court of world opinion right now and you can answer yes or no. You have denied that they exist. I want to know if this -- if I've understood you correctly.

ZORIN (statement in Russian followed by English translation through a United Nations Interpreter): Sir, will you please continue your statement. You will have your answer in due course.

SECURITY COUNCIL CHAIRMAN: Mr. Stevenson, would you continue your statement please? You will receive the answer in due course.

STEVENSON: I am prepared to wait for my answer until hell freezes over, if that's your decision. And I'm also prepared to present the evidence in this room.



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[The President called on the representative of Chile to speak, but Ambassador Stevenson continued as follows.]

I have not finished my statement. I asked you a question. I have had no reply to the question, and I will now proceed, if I may, to finish my statement.

I doubt if anyone in this room, except possibly the representative of the Soviet Union, has any doubt about the facts. But in view of his statements and the statements of the Soviet Government up until last Thursday, when Mr. Gromyko denied the existence or any intention of installing such weapons in Cuba, I am going to make a portion of the evidence available right now. If you will indulge me for a moment, we will set up an easel here in the back of the room where I hope it will be visible to everyone.

The first of these exhibits shows an area north of the village of Candelaria, near San Cristóbal, on the island of Cuba, southwest of Havana. A map, together with a small photograph, shows precisely where the area is in Cuba.

The first photograph shows the area in late August 1962. It was then, if you can see from where you are sitting, only a peaceful countryside.

The second photograph shows the same area one day last week. A few tents and vehicles had come into the area, new spur roads had appeared, the main road had been improved.

The third photograph, taken only twenty-four hours later, shows facilities for a medium-range missile battalion installed. There are tents for four or five hundred men. At the end of the new spur road there are seven 1,000-mile missile trailers. There are four launcher-erector mechanisms for placing these trailers in erect firing position. This missile is a mobile weapon, which can be moved rapidly from one place to another. It is identical with the 1,000-mile missiles which have been displayed in Moscow parades. All of this, I remind you, took place in twenty-four hours.

The second exhibit, which you can all examine at your leisure, shows three successive photographic enlargements of another missile base of the same type in the area of San Cristóbal. These enlarged photographs clearly show six of these missiles on trailers and three erectors.

And that is only one example of the first type of ballistic missile installation in Cuba.

A second type of installation is designed for a missile of intermediate range -- a range of about 2,200 miles. Each site of this type has four launching pads.

The exhibit on this type of missile shows a launching area being constructed near Guanajay, southwest of the city of Havana. As in the first exhibit, a map and small photograph show this area as it appeared in late August 1962, when no military activities were apparent.



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A second large photograph shows the same area about six weeks later. Here you will see a very heavy construction effort to -- to push the launching area to rapid completion. The pictures show two large concrete bunkers or -- or control centers in process of construction, one between each pair of launching pads. They show heavy concrete retaining walls being erected to shelter vehicles and equipment from rocket blast-off. They show cable scars leading from the launch pad to the bunkers. They show [a] large reinforced concrete building under construction. A building with a heavy arch may well be intended as the storage area for the nuclear warheads. The installation is not yet complete, and no warheads are yet visible.

The next photograph shows a closer view of the same intermediate-range launch site. Here you can clearly see one of the pairs of large concrete launch pads, with a concrete building from which launching operations for three pads are controlled. Other details are visible, such as fuel tanks.

And that is only one example, one illustration, of the work going forward in Cuba on intermediate-range missile bases.

[Now, in addition to missiles, the Soviet Union is installing other offensive weapons in Cuba. The next photograph is of an airfield at San Julián in western Cuba. On this field you will see twenty-two crates designed to transport the fuselages of Soviet Ilyushin-28 bombers. Four of the aircraft are uncrated, and one is partially assembled. These bombers, sometimes known as Beagles, have an operating radius of about 750 miles and are capable of carrying nuclear weapons. At the same field you can see one of the surface-to-air anti-aircraft guided missile bases, with six missiles per base, which now ring the entire coastline of Cuba.

Another set of two photographs covers still another area of deployment of medium-range missiles in Cuba. These photographs are on a larger scale than the others [and reveal many details of an improved field-type launch site. One photograph provides an overall view of most of the site; you can see clearly three of the four launching pads. The second photograph displays details of two of these pads. Even an eye untrained in photographic interpretation can clearly see the buildings in which the missiles are checked out and maintained ready to fire, a missile trailer, trucks to move missiles out to the launching pad, erectors to raise the missiles to launching position, tank trucks to provide fuel, vans from which the missile firing is controlled, in short, all of the requirements to maintain, load, and fire these terrible weapons.

These weapons, gentlemen, these launching pads, these planes -- of which we have illustrated only a fragment -- are a part of a much larger weapons complex, what is called a weapons system.

To support this build-up, to operate these advanced weapons systems, the Soviet Union has sent a large number of military personnel to Cuba -- a force now amounting to several thousand men.

These photographs, as I say, are available to members for detailed examination in the Trusteeship Council room following this meeting. There I will have one of my aides who will gladly explain them to you in such detail as you may require.



I have nothing further to say at this time.

(After another statement by the Soviet representative, Ambassador Stevenson replied as follows:)

Mr. President and gentlemen, I won't detain you but one minute.

I have not had a direct answer to my question. The representative of the Soviet Union says that the official answer of the U.S.S.R. was the Tass statement that they don't need to locate missiles in Cuba. Well, I agree -- they don't need to. But the question is, have they missiles in Cuba -- and that question remains unanswered. I knew it would be.

As to the authenticity of the photographs, which Mr. Zorin has spoken about with such scorn, I wonder if the Soviet Union would ask its Cuban colleague to permit a U.N. team to go to these sites. If so, I can assure you that we can direct them to the proper places very quickly.

And now I hope that we can get down to business, that we can atop this sparring. We know the facts, and so do you, sir, and we are ready to talk about them. Our job here is not to score debating points. Our job, Mr. Zorin, is to save the peace. And if you are ready to try, we are.

<sup>1</sup> an event already accomplished and not likely to be undone

<sup>2</sup> Organization of American States