

## Sources and Tools

### SOURCE 8.1: EXCERPT FROM *THIRTEEN DAYS* (MODIFIED)

Note: Robert Kennedy was the brother of President John Kennedy and Attorney General of the United States in 1962. In this diary excerpt, he writes about his negotiations with Soviet Ambassador Dobrynin regarding the missiles in Cuba.

I telephoned Ambassador Dobrynin about 7:15 P.M. and asked him to come to the Department of Justice. We met in my office at 7:45. I told him first that we knew that work was continuing on the missile bases in Cuba and that in the last few days it had been **expedited**. . . .

We had to have a commitment by tomorrow that those bases would be removed. I was not giving them an **ultimatum** but a statement of fact. He should understand that if they did not remove those bases, we would remove them. President Kennedy had great respect for the Ambassador's country and the courage of its people. Perhaps his country might feel it necessary to take **retaliatory** action; but before that was over, there would be not only dead Americans but dead Russians as well.

He asked me what offer the United States was making, and I told him of the letter that President Kennedy had just transmitted to Khrushchev. He raised the question of our removing the missiles from Turkey. I said that there could be no **quid pro quo** or any arrangement made under this kind of threat or pressure and that in the last analysis this was a decision that would have to be made by NATO. However, I said, President Kennedy had been anxious to remove those missiles from Italy and Turkey for a long period of time. He had ordered their removal some time ago, and it was our judgment that, within a short time after this crisis was over, those missiles would be gone.

I said President Kennedy wished to have peaceful relations between our two countries. He wished to resolve the problems that confronted us in Europe and Southeast Asia. He wished to move forward on the control of nuclear weapons. However, we could make progress on these matters only when the crisis was behind us. Time was running out. We had only a few more hours—we needed an answer immediately from the Soviet Union. I said we must have it the next day.

#### WORD BANK

**expedited**—speeded up, dealt with quickly  
**ultimatum**—a final demand  
**retaliatory**—designed to hurt someone back  
**quid pro quo**—something done in exchange

**SOURCE 8.2A: EXCERPT FROM ROBERT KENNEDY'S MEMO TO DEAN RUSK (MODIFIED)**

Note: In this official memo, Attorney General Robert Kennedy reports to Secretary of Defense Dean Rusk about his meeting with the Soviet Ambassador.

At the request of Secretary Rusk, I telephoned Ambassador Dobrynin at approximately 7:15 p.m. on Saturday October 27th. I asked him if he would come to the Justice Department at quarter of eight. We met in my office. . . . He asked me . . . what offer we were making. I said a letter had . . . been **transmitted** to the Soviet Embassy which stated . . . that the missile bases should be **dismantled** and all offensive weapons should be removed from Cuba. In return, if Cuba and Castro and the Communists ended their **subversive** activities . . . we would agree to keep peace . . . and not permit an invasion from American soil.

He then asked me about Khrushchev's other proposal dealing with the removal of the missiles from Turkey. I replied that there could be no *quid pro quo*—no deal of this kind could be made. . . . Per your instructions I repeated that there could be no deal of any kind and that any steps toward easing tensions in other part of the world largely depended on the Soviet Union and Mr. Khrushchev taking action in Cuba and taking it immediately.

*Source:* Top-secret memo from Robert Kennedy, Attorney General, to Secretary of Defense Dean Rusk, October 30, 1962.

**WORD BANK**

**transmitted**—sent

**dismantled**—taken apart

**subversive**—intended to hurt or overthrow the government

**quid pro quo**—something done in exchange

## SOURCE 8.2B: TOP-SECRET MEMO FROM ROBERT KENNEDY TO DEAN RUSK (ORIGINAL)



Office of the Attorney General  
Washington, D. C.

October 30, 1962

MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF STATE  
FROM THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

At the request of Secretary Rusk, I telephoned Ambassador Dobrynin at approximately 7:15 p.m. on Saturday, October 27th. I asked him if he would come to the Justice Department at a quarter of eight.

We met in my office. I told him first that we understood that the work was continuing on the Soviet missile bases in Cuba. Further, I explained to him that in the last two hours we had found that our planes flying over Cuba had been fired upon and that one of our U-2's had been shot down and the pilot killed. I said these men were flying unarmed planes.

I told him that this was an extremely serious turn in events. We would have to make certain decisions within the next 12 or possibly 24 hours. There was a very little time left. If the Cubans were shooting at our planes, then we were going to shoot back. This could not help but bring on further incidents and that he had better understand the full implications of this matter.

~~TOP SECRET~~

DECLASSIFIED  
E.O. 12345, Sec. 8.4  
NLK-90-58  
By SCE MAA 10/23/91

Memorandum for  
The Secretary of State

October 30, 1962

He raised the point that the argument the Cubans were making was that we were violating Cuban air space. I replied that if we had not been violating Cuban air space then we would still be believing what he and Khrushchev had said ~~before~~ -- that there were no long-range missiles in Cuba. In any case I said that this matter was far more serious than the air space over Cuba and involved peoples all over the world.

I said that he had better understand the situation and he had better communicate that understanding to Mr. Khrushchev, Mr. Khrushchev and he had misled us. The Soviet Union had secretly established missile bases in Cuba while at the same time proclaiming, privately and publicly, that this would never be done. I said those missile bases had to go and they had to go right away. We had to have a commitment by at least tomorrow that those bases would be removed. This was not an ultimatum, I said, but just a statement of fact. He should understand that if they did not remove those bases then we would remove them. His country might take retaliatory action but he should understand that before this was over, while there might be dead Americans there would also be dead Russians.

~~TOP SECRET~~

- 2 -

**SOURCE 8.2B: TOP-SECRET MEMO FROM ROBERT KENNEDY TO DEAN RUSK (ORIGINAL)**  
(continued)

Memorandum for  
The Secretary of State

October 30, 1962

He asked me then what offer we were making. I said a letter had just been transmitted to the Soviet Embassy which stated in substance that the missile bases should be dismantled and all offensive weapons should be removed from Cuba. In return, if Cuba and Castro and the Communists ended their subversive activities in other Central and Latin-American countries, we would agree to keep peace in the Caribbean and not permit an invasion from American soil.

He then asked me about Khrushchev's other proposal dealing with the removal of the missiles from Turkey. I replied that there could be no quid pro quo -- no deal of this kind could be made. This was a matter that had to be considered by NATO and that it was up to NATO to make the decision. I said it was completely impossible for NATO to take such a step under the present threatening position of the Soviet Union. ~~I gave time elapsed and per your instructions, I mentioned four or five months. I said I was sure that these matters could be resolved satisfactorily.~~

Per your instructions I repeated that there could be no deal of any kind and that any steps toward easing tensions in other parts of the world largely depended on the Soviet Union and Mr.

~~TOP SECRET~~

- 3 -

Memorandum for  
The Secretary of State

October 30, 1962

Khrushchev taking action in Cuba and taking it immediately.

I repeated to him that this matter could not wait and that he had better contact Mr. Khrushchev and have a commitment from him by the next day to withdraw the missile bases under United Nations supervision for otherwise, I said, there would be drastic consequences.

RFK:amn

~~TOP SECRET~~

- 4 -

---

**SOURCE 8.3: KHRUSHCHEV REMEMBERS**


---

Note: Nikita Khrushchev was the leader of the Soviet Union during the Cuban Missile Crisis. In his memoir, he recalls what President Kennedy told him during the crisis.

President Kennedy said that in exchange for the withdrawal of our missiles, he would remove American missiles from Turkey and Italy.

*Source:* Excerpt from *Khrushchev Remembers: The Last Testament*. Introduction, commentary, and notes by Edward Crankshaw, trans. and ed. by Strobe Talbott (Boston: Little, Brown, 1974); 512.

---

**SOURCE 8.4: DOBRYNIN CABLE TO MOSCOW (MODIFIED)**


---

Note: During the Cuban Missile Crisis, Anatoly Dobrynin was the Soviet Ambassador to the United States. Here, he recalls his negotiations with U.S. Attorney General Robert Kennedy.

“And what about Turkey?” I asked R. Kennedy.

“If that is the only obstacle to achieving the regulation I mentioned earlier, then the president doesn’t see any **insurmountable** difficulties in resolving this issue,” replied R. Kennedy. “The greatest difficulty for the president is the public discussion of the issue of Turkey. . . .

“However, President Kennedy is ready to come to agree on that question with N.S. Khrushchev, too. I think that in order to withdraw these bases from Turkey,” R. Kennedy said, “we need 4–5 months. This is the minimal amount of time necessary for the U.S. government to do this, taking into account the procedures that exist within the **NATO** framework. On the whole Turkey issue,” R. Kennedy added, “if Premier N.S. Khrushchev agrees with what I’ve said, we can continue to exchange opinions. . . . However, the president can’t say anything public in this regard about Turkey.” . . . R. Kennedy then warned that his comments about Turkey are extremely confidential; besides him and his brother, only 2–3 people know about it in Washington.

. . . After meeting with me he immediately went to see the president, with whom, as R. Kennedy said, he spends almost all his time now.

*Source:* Anatoly Dobrynin, from Russian Foreign Ministry archives, translation from copy provided by NHK, in Richard Ned Lebow and Janice Gross Stein, *We All Lost the Cold War* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), Appendix, 523–526, with minor revisions. [http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/nsa/cuba\\_mis\\_cri/621027%20Dobrynin%20Cable%20to%20USSR.pdf](http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/nsa/cuba_mis_cri/621027%20Dobrynin%20Cable%20to%20USSR.pdf)

---

**WORD BANK**


---

**insurmountable**—unable to be solved  
**NATO**—North Atlantic Treaty Organization

**SOURCE 8.5: THEODORE SORENSON (MODIFIED)**

Note: Theodore Sorenson was the editor of Robert Kennedy's book *Thirteen Days*. The book made Kennedy's diary of the Cuban Missile Crisis public. Here, Sorenson admits that he took top-secret information out of the diary before it was published.

The president [Kennedy] recognized that, for Chairman Khrushchev to withdraw the missiles from Cuba, it would be undoubtedly helpful to him if he could say at the same time to his colleagues on the **Presidium**, "And we have been assured that the missiles will be coming out of Turkey." And so, after the **ExComm** meeting [on the evening of 27 October 1962], as I'm sure almost all of you know, a small group met in President Kennedy's office, and he instructed Robert Kennedy—at the suggestion of Secretary of State [Dean] Rusk—to deliver the letter to Ambassador Dobrynin for referral to Chairman Khrushchev, but to add orally what was not in the letter: that the missiles would come out of Turkey.

Ambassador Dobrynin felt that Robert Kennedy's book did not adequately express that the "deal" on the Turkish missiles was part of the resolution of the crisis. And here I have a confession to make to my colleagues on the American side, as well as to others who are present. I was the editor of Robert Kennedy's book. It was, in fact, a diary of those thirteen days. And his diary was very **explicit** that this was part of the deal; but at that time it was still a secret even on the American side, except for the six of us who had been present at that meeting. So I took it upon myself to edit that out of his diaries, and that is why the Ambassador is somewhat justified in saying that the diaries are not as explicit as his conversation.

Source: Theodore Sorensen, in *Back to the Brink: Proceedings of the Moscow Conference on the Cuban Missile Crisis*, January 27–28, 1989, eds., Bruce J. Allyn, James G. Blight, and David A. Welch (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1992), 92–93.

**WORD BANK**

**Presidium**—high-ranking members of the Soviet government  
**ExComm**—President Kennedy's closest advisors  
**explicit**—clearly stated