

## JFK Meeting Tapes 39.1 and 39.1A

**Date:** 1962-10-26

**Participant:** John F. Kennedy

**Participant:** Adlai E. Stevenson II

**Participant:** John A. McCone

**Start Time:** 10:10

**Place:** Unspecified

SCROLLER TITLE: "Get Them Out Ourselves"

SCENE SETTER: Having blockaded Cuba two days earlier, President Kennedy now attempted to force the removal of the Soviet missiles deployed there rather than render them inoperable. He realized the United States would have to "trade them out" or "go in and take them out."

**Adlai E. Stevenson II:** But I want to conclude by making it very clear that the intention here was a standstill, not positive acts. And the standstill was to include the discontinuance of construction, discontinuance of shipping, discontinuance of the quarantine for 48—which we, we'd have to agree how to do that in 48 hours.

After that, we'd negotiate a final settlement, which would relate to the withdrawal of the weapons, or the inoperability of weapons already operable. I would think inoperable becomes . . . meaningless, because during the long-term negotiations we're concerned with the withdrawal of the weapons from the hemisphere [*unclear*].

**John A. McCone:** I don't believe—I don't agree with that, Mr. President. I feel very strongly about it. And I think that the real crux of this matter is the fact that he's got these pointed, for all you know, right now at our hearts. And this is going to produce, I think—it may produce—a situation when we get to [the promised confrontation on] Berlin after the [congressional] elections, which changes the entire balance of world power.

It puts us under a very great handicap to carry out our obligations to our—not only to our Western European allies, but to the hemisphere. And I think that we've got the momentum now. We've got the feeling that these things are serious and that they must be—that threat must be removed before we can drop the quarantine. If we drop that quarantine once, we're never going to be able to put it in effect again. And I feel that we must say that the quarantine goes on [*hitting the table*] until we are satisfied that these are inoperable.

**President Kennedy:** Well, now, the quarantine itself won't remove the weapons. So we've only got two ways of removing the weapons. One is to [*unclear*] . . . is to negotiate them out—in other words, trade them out. And the other is to go in and take them out. I don't see any other way you're going to get the weapons out.

**McCone:** I say that we have to send inspections down there to see what—at what stage they are. I feel that if we lose that . . . But this is the security of the United States! I believe the strategic situation has greatly changed with the presence of these weapons in Cuba.

**President Kennedy:** That's right. The only thing that I am saying is that we're not going to get them out with the quarantine. I'm not saying we should lift the quarantine or what we should do about the quarantine. But we have to all now realize that we're not going to get them out. We're either going to trade them out, or we're going to have to go in and get them out ourselves. I don't know of any other way to do it.

*End of excerpt.*

CITATION: "Executive Committee Meeting of the National Security Council on the Cuban Missile Crisis on 26 October 1962," Tapes 39.1 and 39.1A, John F. Kennedy Library, President's Office Files, Presidential Recordings Collection, *Presidential Recordings Digital Edition* [*The Great Crises*, vol. 3, ed. Philip Zelikow and Ernest May] (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2014–). URL: <http://prde.upress.virginia.edu/conversations/8030018>