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Subject file - Cuban - Soviet Ground  
forces - Sept 79.

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T106/79T

PRIME MINISTER'S  
PERSONAL MESSAGE  
SERIAL No. T106/79T

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FM PRESIDENT CARTER

TO PRIME MINISTER THATCHER

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S E C R E T SENSITIVE VIA CABINET OFFICE CHANNELS WH91915

OCTOBER 1, 1979

DEAR MADAME PRIME MINISTER,

I WILL BE ANNOUNCING THIS EVENING MY DECISION WITH RESPECT TO THE PRESENCE OF A SOVIET COMBAT BRIGADE IN CUBA. IN ADVANCE OF MY SPEECH TO THE AMERICAN PEOPLE, I WANT TO EXPLAIN THE BACKGROUND OF MY DECISION AND THE STEPS I WILL TAKE IN THIS CONNECTION.

FIRST, AS TO THE SOVIET BRIGADE ITSELF: IT IS ORGANIZED, TRAINED, COMMANDED AND ARMED AS AN INFANTRY BRIGADE. IT UNQUESTIONABLY HAS A COMBAT CAPABILITY. IN ITS PRESENT FORM, THIS UNIT HAS BEEN IN CUBA AT LEAST SINCE 1976, AND PERHAPS LONGER.

THE BRIGADE DOES NOT POSE A DIRECT MILITARY THREAT TO THE UNITED STATES. WE DO, HOWEVER, REGARD IT AS A SERIOUS MATTER. IT CONTRIBUTES TO TENSION IN THE CARIBBEAN AND CENTRAL AMERICA AND ADDS TO THE FEARS OF SOME COUNTRIES THAT THEY MAY COME UNDER SOVIET OR CUBAN PRESSURE. IT IS PART OF A CLOSER SOVIET-CUBAN MILITARY RELATIONSHIP, WHICH INVOLVES ARMING CUBA WITH MODERN WEAPONS, AND CANNOT BE SEPARATED FROM THE LARGER PATTERN OF SOVIET SUPPORT FOR ARMED CUBAN INTERVENTION IN VARIOUS PARTS OF THE WORLD.

OVER THE PAST THREE WEEKS, WE HAVE DISCUSSED THIS ISSUE AT GREAT LENGTH WITH TOP SOVIET OFFICIALS. WE HAVE MADE CLEAR THAT THE PRESENCE OF A SOVIET COMBAT UNIT IN CUBA IS A MATTER OF GREAT CONCERN TO US.

THE SOVIET UNION DOES NOT ADMIT THAT THE UNIT IN QUESTION IS A COMBAT UNIT. HOWEVER, THE SOVIETS HAVE MADE CERTAIN STATEMENTS TO US WITH RESPECT TO OUR CONCERN:

-- THE UNIT IN QUESTION IS A TRAINING CENTER, WHICH DOES NOTHING MORE THAN TRAINING AND CAN DO NOTHING MORE=

-- THEY WILL NOT CHANGE ITS FUNCTION OR STATUS AS A TRAINING CENTER= WE UNDERSTAND THIS TO MEAN THAT THEY DO NOT INTEND TO ENLARGE THE UNIT OR GIVE IT ADDITIONAL CAPABILITIES=

-- THE SOVIET PERSONNEL IN CUBA ARE NOT AND WILL NOT

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BE A THREAT TO THE UNITED STATES OR ANY OTHER NATION=

-- THEY HAVE REAFFIRMED THE 1962 UNDERSTANDING AND THE  
MUTUALLY AGREED CONFIRMATION IN 1970 NOT TO STATION OFFENSIVE  
WEAPONS IN CUBA AND WILL ABIDE BY IT IN THE FUTURE. WE, FOR  
OUR PART, CONFIRM THIS UNDERSTANDING. T106/791

THESE ASSURANCES HAVE BEEN GIVEN TO ME FROM THE HIGHEST  
LEVELS OF THE SOVIET GOVERNMENT. ALTHOUGH WE HAVE PERSUASIVE  
EVIDENCE THAT THE UNIT IS A COMBAT BRIGADE, THE SOVIET STATE-  
MENTS ABOUT THE FUTURE NON-COMBAT STATUS OF THE UNIT ARE  
SIGNIFICANT. THEY IMPLICITLY RECOGNIZE THAT THE PRESENCE OF  
A SOVIET COMBAT UNIT IN CUBA WOULD BE A MATTER OF CONCERN  
TO US AND TO OTHER NATIONS. HOWEVER, WE SHALL NOT REST UPON  
THESE SOVIET STATEMENTS ALONE.

-- WE WILL ASSURE WITH OUR OWN MEANS THAT NO SOVIET  
UNIT IN CUBA WILL BE USED AS A COMBAT FORCE TO THREATEN THE  
SECURITY OF THE UNITED STATES OR ANY OTHER NATION IN THE  
WESTERN HEMISPHERE. THE UNITED STATES WILL ACT IN RESPONSE  
TO A REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE IN MEETING ANY SUCH THREAT FROM  
SOVIET OR CUBAN FORCES.

-- WE SHALL ESTABLISH A FULL-TIME CARIBBEAN JOINT TASK  
FORCE HEADQUARTERED AT KEY WEST, FLORIDA= THIS WILL SUB-  
STANTIALLY IMPROVE OUR CAPABILITY TO MONITOR AND RESPOND RAPIDLY  
TO ANY ATTEMPTED MILITARY ENCROACHMENT IN THE REGION=

-- WE WILL EXPAND MILITARY EXERCISES IN THE REGION=

-- WE WILL INCREASE OUR ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE TO THE  
CARIBBEAN AND CENTRAL AMERICA TO HELP THEM DEAL WITH UNREST  
BROUGHT ABOUT BY UNMET SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC NEEDS=

-- WE WILL ACCELERATE OUR EFFORTS TO INCREASE OUR  
CAPACITY TO PROJECT OUR MILITARY FORCES WORLDWIDE IN RESPONSE  
TO REQUESTS FOR HELP FROM OUR ALLIES AND FRIENDS=

-- WE SHALL ENHANCE OUR INTELLIGENCE CAPABILITIES TO  
MONITOR SOVIET AND CUBAN MILITARY ACTIVITIES IN CUBA AND  
THROUGHOUT THE WORLD.

THESE STEPS REFLECT MY DETERMINATION TO PRESERVE  
PEACE, TO STRENGTHEN OUR ALLIANCES, TO DEFEND THE INTERESTS  
OF THE UNITED STATES. AT THE SAME TIME, I HAVE CONCLUDED THAT  
THE BRIGADE ISSUE US NO REASON FOR A RETURN TO THE COLD WAR.  
I WILL CONTINUE MY DETERMINED EFFORT TO ASSURE THE U.S.  
SENATE SPEEDILY RATIFY THE SALT II TREATY.

I KNOW THAT YOU AGREE WITH ME THAT TO DELAY SALT WOULD

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HURT THE ALLIANCE AS MUCH AS THE SOVIETS AND MIGHT COMPLICATE  
OUR EFFORT BOTH TO STRENGTHEN OUR DEFENSE POSTURE AND PURSUE  
NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE SOVIETS ON ISSUES OF SECURITY AND ARMS  
CONTROL IN EUROPE.

THE PURPOSE OF THE ACTIONS I WILL BE ANNOUNCING TONIGHT  
AND THE PURPOSE OF SALT II ARE EXACTLY THE SAME. THAT PURPOSE  
IS A STRONG AMERICA, STRONG ALLIANCES, AND A JUST AND LASTING  
PEACE IN THE WORLD. I KNOW THAT I CAN COUNT ON YOUR SUPPORT FOR  
THESE ACTIONS IN THE SERVICE OF OUR COMMON OBJECTIVES.

SINCERELY,  
JIMMY CARTER

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