

Mates and Missiles: The Menzies Government and the Cuban Missile Crisis



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**Submitted 18 October 2010
Fourth Year Honours Thesis
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Disclaimer

This thesis is the product of my own original research and has not been previously submitted for academic accreditation.

To the best of my knowledge and belief, the above statement is true.

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Synopsis

This thesis examines the Menzies Government's response to the Cuban Missile Crisis of October 1962. This is the first historical investigation of the Crisis in the context of Australian-American relations. Its primary objective, therefore, is to fill a historiographical gap in Australia's Cold War history.

The thesis posits that the Menzies Government's management of Australian-American relations in this period is reflected in its response to the Crisis. The factors that shaped its response, including its anxieties and dependencies, contribute to existing analyses of Australian-American relations. This study, therefore, also illustrates who and what influenced Australian foreign policy at this time.

This thesis relies heavily on primary sources, predominantly declassified government records. Almost all of the archived government records on the Crisis are contained in the files of the Department of External Affairs. Only scattered references to the Crisis can be found in the personal correspondence and papers of Sir Garfield Barwick, Minister for External Affairs; the Cabinet files of the Menzies and Holt Ministries; and other files that include ministerial and departmental correspondence, particularly between the Departments of External Affairs and Prime Minister. The thesis also draws on Hansard. Secondary sources have been used in this thesis including the published memoirs of those who were Members of Parliament or representatives of the diplomatic corps in October 1962, and also, studies on the Crisis; Australian-American relations; and Australian foreign policy during the Cold War.

This thesis documents the Menzies Government's response to the Crisis and reveals that the Menzies Government was circumspect in declaring its support for America's actions. The Menzies Government pledged calculated support to the Kennedy Administration. This reflected its need to balance, on the one hand, its desires to increase Australia's defensive capacity — possibly through offensive weapons and bases — to deal with the growing threat communism posed to stability and security in South-East Asia; and on the other, America's opposition to offensive weapons and bases in Cuba, and the impact that this could have on Australian ambitions. Australia's dependency on the American alliance for its defence, however, was considered paramount. This study demonstrates that the Menzies Government believed the successful management of its relations with America was in Australia's national interest.

Acknowledgements

I am sincerely grateful to my husband, Jason Stanley, for his constant encouragement and support, and to my supervisor, Professor Phillip Deery, for his enthusiasm and guidance throughout my Honours year.

Abbreviations

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| ALP | Australian Labor Party |
| ANZUS | Australia, New Zealand, United States Security Treaty |
| CENTO | Central Treaty Organization |
| DEA | Department of External Affairs (Australian) |
| IRBM | Intermediate-range ballistic missile |
| MP | Member of Parliament (Australian Commonwealth) |
| MRBM | Medium-range ballistic missile |
| NATO | North Atlantic Treaty Organization |
| OAS | Organization of American States |
| SEATO | South-East Asia Treaty Organization |
| UK | United Kingdom |
| UN | United Nations |
| US/USA | United States of America |
| USSR | Union of Soviet Socialist Republics |

Introduction and Literature Review

In October 1962, the world was brought to the brink of nuclear destruction. A definitive episode of the Twentieth Century, the Cuban Missile Crisis¹ marked the closest America and the Soviet Union came to actual conflict — mutual, nuclear annihilation — during the Cold War battle of ideologies between Western democracy and communism.

In simple terms, the Soviet Union had installed nuclear weapons and bases in Cuba. America learned of the placement of medium-range ballistic missiles (MRBMs), capable of carrying nuclear warheads, through photographs taken by reconnaissance flights. It quarantined ships bound for Cuba, with the endorsement of the Organization of American States (OAS), in an attempt to prevent a further build up of weapons. The parties engaged in much private and public diplomacy over the missiles, including through the United Nations (UN).

For America, the missiles were perilously close, placing much of the east coast of America within range of a communist, nuclear attack. For the Soviet Union, the missiles represented a strategic move to even the playing field; America had nuclear missiles in Europe directed at the Soviet Union. For Cuba, the missiles offered protection from America which had expressed great consternation towards its conversion to communism; America had made several covert attempts to topple Dr Fidel Castro's regime since its establishment in 1959.² Ultimately, America and the Soviet Union agreed to peacefully resolve the potential nuclear catastrophe by each declaring to remove nuclear weapons stationed on the other's doorstep,

¹ 'Cuban Missile Crisis' (herein 'the Crisis') is the name given to this event by Western audiences and will be used throughout this thesis for the purposes of consistency with the majority of existing literature. In the former Soviet Union, it is known as the 'Caribbean Crisis', and in Cuba, the 'October Crisis'.

² See Fabian Escalante, *The Cuba Project: CIA Covert Operations 1959-62*, 2nd ed., The Secret War Series 1 (Melbourne: Ocean Press, 2004).

which for them, brought the Crisis to a close. Cuba, on the other hand, still maintains that the Crisis has not ended.³

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The Crisis has fascinated historians, political scientists and sociologists internationally for decades, resulting in an abundance of scholarly output, predominantly from a Western-perspective.⁴ The studies of Michael Beschloss, Raymond Garthoff, Roger Hilsman, Arthur Schlesinger, and Theodore Sorensen, are some of the most notable of the last four decades.⁵ Robert Kennedy's memoir, *Thirteen Days*, a straight forward but insightful account, never goes uncited in the literature.⁶ Of more recent studies, Michael Dobbs' *One Minute to Midnight* is noteworthy as an original, minute-by-minute analysis of the most intense thirteen-day period of the Crisis: 16 to 28 October 1962.⁷ Dobbs draws on American, Soviet and Cuban archival records and testimonies to explore the finer details of the occurrences that make up the Crisis; details that other historians have tended to gloss over or simply repeat in their assessments. He therefore provides new insight on the Crisis, including for example, on the reconnaissance flights, positioning of American ships during the quarantine, and storage location of nuclear warheads, which is absent in the earlier literature.

³ See Mark Laffey and Jutta Weldes, 'Decolonizing the Cuban Missile Crisis', *International Studies Quarterly* 52 (2008): 556.

⁴ More recent literature to emerge has outlined Soviet, and importantly Cuban, perspectives on the Crisis. This is noteworthy, particularly in a post-colonial sense, as for a long period, the American narrative has overshadowed alternative standpoints on the Crisis.

⁵ See for example Michael R. Beschloss, *Kennedy v. Khrushchev: The Crisis Years 1960-63* (London: Faber and Faber, 1991); Raymond L. Garthoff, *Reflections on the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1989); Roger Hilsman, *To Move A Nation: The Politics of Foreign Policy in the Administration of John F. Kennedy* (New York: Delta, 1967); Roger Hilsman, *The Cuban Missile Crisis: The Struggle Over Policy* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 1996); Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House* (London: A. Deutsch, 1965); and Theodore C. Sorensen, *Kennedy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965).

⁶ Robert F. Kennedy, *Thirteen Days: A Memoir of the Cuban Missile Crisis* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1971).

⁷ Michael Dobbs, *One Minute to Midnight* (New York: Arrow Books, 2009).

Given the magnitude and the potential global impact of the Crisis, historians have analysed the responses of other Commonwealth nations indirectly involved in this event. In doing so, they have explicated the international dimension and significance of the Crisis.⁸ Astonishingly, there has not yet been a dedicated historical investigation into Australia's response to the Crisis. The relevant existing literature, including books, journal articles and biographical works, is superficial.

Prue Torney-Parlicki is the only scholar to have examined Australia's response to the Crisis. However, the Crisis was not her focus. Torney-Parlicki's article 'Lies, Diplomacy and the ABC: Revisiting 'the Russo affair'', and biography of Peter Russo, *Behind the News*, detail the Menzies Government's reaction to what it considered were inflammatory comments made by the journalist, Dr. Peter Russo of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC), on 29 October 1962. Russo claimed that both the Americans and Soviets had been dishonest in their handling of the Crisis, and questioned the immediacy with which Australia declared its support for America's actions.⁹ Through 'the Russo affair' case-study, Torney-Parlicki provided a useful insight into Australia's response to the Crisis, and importantly, she posited this response in the context of Australian-American relations. In doing so, Torney-Parlicki revealed the sensitivity of the Menzies Government to supposed anti-American opinion, and its attempts to silence it. However, further examination of the basis for, and extent of, this protectionist-like approach towards the American alliance is needed in order to obtain a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the Menzies' Government's perceptions of

⁸ For the Canadian response to the Crisis, see for example Jocelyn Maynard Ghent, 'Canada, the United States, and the Cuban Missile Crisis', *Pacific Historical Review* 48, no. 2 (May 1979): 159-184; for the British response to the Crisis, see Leonard Victor Scott, *Macmillan, Kennedy and the Cuban Missile Crisis: Political, Military and Intelligence Aspects* (London: Macmillan and St. Martin's, 1999).

⁹ See Prue Torney-Parlicki, 'Lies, Diplomacy and the ABC: Revisiting 'the Russo affair'', *Overland* no. 176 (Spring 2004): 45-50, which is an examination of occasions where the ABC has defended itself against claims it facilitated anti-American sentiment; and Prue Torney-Parlicki, *Behind the News: A Biography of Peter Russo* (Crawley, Western Australia: University of Western Australia Press, 2005), 281-291, where this affair, and thus the Crisis, is explored in the context of Russo's life.

American relations in this period, and specifically, how such perceptions shaped its response to the Crisis. This thesis aims to address these issues.

Apart from scattered references to the Crisis as a key event in the Cold War timeline, studies on Australian-American relations; Australia, New Zealand, United States Security Treaty (ANZUS); and Australian foreign policy during the Cold War, neglect to examine Australia's response to the Crisis. The dispute over West New Guinea, the vulnerability of Thailand in light of instability in Laos, and the looming war in Vietnam, dominate the literature on Australia's involvement in international affairs in the early 1960s. Scholars have noted that Australian foreign policy increasingly looked to America in this period, and although British foreign policy was kept in close view, the American alliance took precedence in consideration of Australia's national interest.¹⁰ In examining Australia's response to the

¹⁰ For studies on Australian-American relations, ANZUS, and Australian foreign policy during the Cold War, specifically in this period, see for example: Glen St J. Barclay, *Friends in High Places: Australian-American Diplomatic Relations Since 1945* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1985), chapter 6; Glen St J. Barclay, *A Very Small Insurance Policy: The Politics of Australian Involvement in Vietnam, 1954–1967* (St Lucia, Queensland: University of Queensland Press, 1988), 14-36; Coral Bell, *Dependent Ally: A Study in Australian Foreign Policy* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1988), 44-86; Philip Bell and Roger Bell, *Implicated: The United States in Australia*, Australian Retrospectives (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1993); Joseph A. Camilleri, *Australian-American Relations: The Web of Dependence* (South Melbourne: Macmillan, 1980), chapter 1; Joseph A. Camilleri, *ANZUS: Australia's Predicament in the Nuclear Age* (South Melbourne: Macmillan, 1987), chapters 1-3; Peter G. Edwards with Gregory Pemberton, *Crises and Commitments: The Politics and Diplomacy of Australia's Involvement in Southeast Asian Conflicts 1948-1965* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin in association with the Australian War Memorial, 1992); Peter G. Edwards, *A Nation at War: Australian politics, society and diplomacy during the Vietnam War 1965-1975* (St Leonards, New South Wales: Allen & Unwin, 1997), 20-24; H.G. Gelber, ed., *Problems of Australian Defence* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1970); Gordon Greenwood and Norman Harper, eds., *Australia in World Affairs: 1961-1965* (Melbourne: F.W. Cheshire, 1968); Norman Harper, *A Great and Powerful Friend: A Study of Australian American Relations Between 1900 and 1975* (St Lucia, Queensland: University of Queensland Press, 1987), part 4; Gerard Henderson, *Menzies' Child: The Liberal Party of Australia 1944-1994* (St Leonards, New South Wales: Allen & Unwin, 1994), 133-145; John Hammond Moore, ed., *The American Alliance: Australia, New Zealand and the United States 1940-1970* (North Melbourne: Cassell Australia, 1970), chapter 4; T.B. Millar, *Australia's Foreign Policy* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1968), chapter 5; Gregory Pemberton, *All the Way: Australia's road to Vietnam* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1987), chapters 1-5; Trevor R. Reese, *Australia, New Zealand, and the United States: A Survey of International Relations 1941-1968* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969); and Alan Watt, *The Evolution of Australian Foreign Policy 1938-1965* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1967).

Crisis, this thesis will reflect on, as well as illuminate, the management of Australian-American relations in this period; it also seeks to contribute to existing analyses of the Menzies Government's attitude towards, and involvement in, South-East Asia during this time.

There are few references to the Crisis in the memoirs of those who were Members of Parliament (MPs) or representatives of the diplomatic corps in October 1962. Those who have commented on the Crisis have not provided insight of any real substance regarding Australia's response. Instead, they have proffered interesting, if random, reflections on American President John F. Kennedy's handling of the Crisis and the importance of this event in the Cold War. Whilst this is helpful in identifying the attitudes and beliefs, even in hindsight, of those involved on the political front, their reflections raise more questions than answers. In the absence of a framework within which to place such reflections, their value — both inherent and to this thesis — remains limited. This thesis will therefore attempt to provide a framework for the following reflections.

In his first memoir, *Afternoon Light*, Sir Robert Menzies, then Australian Prime Minister, wrote of his admiration for Kennedy and his handling of the Crisis. He stated that the Crisis represented the lessons learned by Kennedy and his Administration after the Bay of Pigs affair, where they '*had* gone wrong, grievously wrong'. When Kennedy confronted Soviet Chairman, Nikita S. Khrushchev, over the missile bases in Cuba, Menzies felt Kennedy 'acted with courage and speed, and delivered the most powerful blow against Soviet expansionism that has been struck in post-war history'. Menzies added that as a result of 'Kennedy's *coup* over Cuba', tensions between the West and the Soviet Union were 'lessened

to a remarkable degree'. Menzies had been waiting for such a coup, having claimed to have held the earlier belief:

The historic moment of truth will come when the Soviet Chairman is confronted by a democratic leader who has the power and the personality to say "You go no further", *and who is believed*. And the only man who can say this, and be believed, is a President of the United States.¹¹

Menzies, a self-confessed anglophile,¹² had great and passionate faith not just in Kennedy, but as he more broadly noted, in the American presidency. This thesis will illustrate the extent of the faith in America held by the Menzies Government in October 1962, and subsequently, will attempt to demonstrate who, and what, influenced Australian foreign policy in this period.

Australian Labor Party (ALP) backbencher, Leslie Haylen, was the only parliamentarian in Opposition to have written on the Crisis. In his political autobiography, *Twenty Years' Hard Labor*, Haylen interpreted that the ALP also admired Kennedy and his actions; for Haylen, Kennedy embodied the labour movement goal of the betterment of mankind:

An examination of the Caucus discussions show that it was the consensus that Khrushchev had bungled and that Kennedy had matched him in the missiles for Cuba plan of the Soviet. Kennedy indeed was the Light on the Hill.¹³

Interestingly, this admiration for Kennedy and his response to the Crisis is similar to the view held by Menzies.

Sir Howard Beale, then Australian Ambassador to America, also reflected on Kennedy's handling of the Crisis in his memoir, *This Inch of Time*. Beale acknowledged that the Crisis was a triumph for Kennedy, but unlike Menzies and Haylen, he did not write admiringly of Kennedy's approach. He stated that 'in the end Khrushchev [sic] backed down'; he did not

¹¹ Robert Menzies, *Afternoon Light: Some Memories of Men and Events* (Melbourne: Cassell Australia Ltd, 1967), 145. Emphasis in original.

¹² See Robert Menzies, *The Measure of the Years* (London: Cassell & Company Ltd, 1970), 215. In this, the second volume of his memoirs, Menzies is silent on Kennedy and Cuba.

¹³ Leslie Haylen, *Twenty Years' Hard Labor* (South Melbourne: Macmillan of Australia, 1969), 173.

attribute this to any actions of Kennedy or his Administration. Ultimately, he considered Kennedy's foreign affairs record an 'uneven one' and appears to have concurred with Dean Acheson, former US Secretary of State and unofficial adviser to the Kennedy Administration during the Crisis, that Kennedy was simply 'lucky' as to the outcome.¹⁴ Menzies — albeit in retrospect — appeared to have held greater confidence in Kennedy and his actions than did Beale, his American emissary.

Some political biographies of Malcolm Fraser, a Liberal Party backbencher during the Crisis, have ruminated on Fraser's parliamentary speech on 5 March 1964 when he articulated the importance of the Crisis in the context of the Vietnam War. Alan Renouf in *Malcolm Fraser & Australian Foreign Policy*,¹⁵ and Philip Ayres in *Malcolm Fraser: A Biography*,¹⁶ claimed that this speech represented Fraser's anxiety over Australia's national security. Like Beale, Renouf remarked that 'contrary to general opinion, Fraser drew no comfort from the outcome of the crisis'.¹⁷ Renouf and Ayres assessed that for Fraser, the Crisis symbolised that America and the Soviet Union were willing to use their nuclear weapons for their own interests, but would avoid encounters where a nuclear response could result. Therefore, America would be inclined to retreat from what it may consider to be smaller disputes. For Fraser, such disputes could be ones in which Australian interests would be threatened.¹⁸ This speech highlighted Australia's dependence on its allies; according to Ayres, it demonstrated that the Australian-American alliance was the essential component of Australian foreign relations in the 1960s.¹⁹ This was also reflected in *The Daniel Mannix Memorial Lecture* that Fraser delivered at the

¹⁴ See Howard Beale, *This Inch of Time: Memoirs of Politics and Diplomacy* (Carlton, Victoria: Melbourne University Press, 1977), 184-185.

¹⁵ Alan Renouf, *Malcolm Fraser & Australian Foreign Policy* (Sydney: Australian Professional Publications, 1986).

¹⁶ Philip Ayres, *Malcolm Fraser: A Biography* (Richmond, Victoria: William Heinemann Australia, 1987).

¹⁷ Renouf, *Malcolm Fraser & Australian Foreign Policy*, 41.

¹⁸ Ibid. See also Ayres, *Malcolm Fraser*, 93.

¹⁹ See Ayres, *Malcolm Fraser*, 92. See also Renouf, *Malcolm Fraser & Australian Foreign Policy*, 42.

University of Melbourne in 1987, where he recalled hearing Menzies talk about the supposedly-confidential Cabinet discussions as to how Australia should respond to the Crisis. Fraser claimed to have been told that after much debate among Cabinet members, Menzies declared that it was in Australia's interest to support its American ally; this was, Menzies believed, the only course of action Australia could have taken.²⁰ This thesis will examine the factors — including anxieties and dependencies regarding Australia's national interest — that were considered by the Menzies Government in determining its response to the Crisis; and consequently, Australian foreign policy in this period.

The limited literature on Australia's response to the Crisis suggests that this topic is worthy of historical investigation. It represents the first study to examine the Crisis in the context of Australian-American relations. Its primary purpose, therefore, is to contribute to the history of Australia's Cold War by filling a historiographical gap. The timing of this study is also noteworthy, as aside from Torney-Parlicki's studies, the majority of existing literature was written during the Cold War. Historians now have the benefit of assessing the Cold War from outside rather than from within, and at a time when most of the archived government records have been declassified.²¹ This thesis will draw primarily on those archival records.

In examining Australia's response to the Crisis, this thesis will not detail either the high drama or the private and public negotiations between America and the Soviet Union, including the intricacies of the various resolutions tabled in the UN Security Council. Rather, the emphasis in this thesis will specifically be on how the Menzies Government managed its relations with America in light of the Crisis. Thus, it will build on Torney-Parlicki's initial

²⁰ See Malcolm Fraser, 'The Daniel Mannix Memorial Lecture – Sir Robert Menzies: In Search of Balance', delivered at Wilson Hall, *University of Melbourne* (30 July 1987). Transcript accessed online 5 April 2010: <http://www.unimelb.edu.au/malcolmfraser/speeches/nonparliamentary/mannixmenzies.html>

²¹ See John Lewis Gaddis, 'The New Cold War History', in *Lenin's Legacy Down Under: New Zealand's Cold War*, eds. Alexander Trapeznik and Aaron Fox (Dunedin, New Zealand: University of Otago Press, 2004), 13.

research; offer fresh insight into the Australian-American alliance relevant to Australia's involvement in other international affairs during this period; demonstrate the factors which shaped and influenced Australia's response; and provide a framework for, and add depth to, the memoirs of those who lived this experience.

Interregnum

“Doves and hawks”: 16-22 October 1962

On Tuesday 16 October 1962, President Kennedy was advised by intelligence analysts that medium-range ballistic missiles (MRBMs) had been identified in aerial photographs of Cuba taken by reconnaissance aircraft. As much as the build up of Soviet arms in Cuba troubled America, it came as no surprise — this communist collaboration over weapons began in July 1961.²² But it was this discovery of MRBMs in particular, which transformed American consternation into alarm. From the American standpoint, Cuba no longer had defensive but offensive weapons, capable of delivering nuclear warheads into the southern and eastern parts of America.²³ This realisation marked ‘Day One’ of the Crisis.

Kennedy and his closest advisors privately contemplated these actions and their response for the next week before they made an announcement to their population and most of the world. In that time, his advisors had divided into “doves and hawks” as they considered ways to remove the threat the weapons posed.²⁴ The former advocated diplomatic negotiation through the UN; the latter, prompt military action followed by invasion. After much deliberation, Kennedy decided to first strike with words, not force, via his televised address to the nation on 22 October — ‘Day Seven’ of the Crisis. It was only from this point that Australia learnt of this potentially catastrophic event; due to Australia’s longitudinal position, this was Tuesday 23 October.

²² See cablegram 2771, Donald J. Munro (Australian Embassy Washington) to Department of External Affairs (DEA), 22 October 1962, DEA file TS262/12/8/1, CRS A1838, National Archives of Australia (herein NAA).

²³ America had no early warning mechanisms in the south-eastern corner of the country or in Central and South America, where it also lacked defences; see cablegram UN1622, James Plimsoll (Australian Mission to the UN) to DEA, 8 November 1962, DEA file 262/12/8/1 part 3, CRS A1838, NAA; and also cablegram 2844, Australian Embassy Washington to DEA, 26 October 1962, DEA file TS262/12/8/1, CRS A1838, NAA.

²⁴ See Dobbs, *One Minute to Midnight*, 5.

Chapter One

“A stone setting off an avalanche”: 23-25 October 1962

Whispers that a crisis was afoot first were heard by Donald J. Munro, First Secretary to the Australian Embassy in Washington, on the afternoon of 22 October. Munro advised the Department of External Affairs (DEA) that Kennedy had requested time on television that evening for a national broadcast on ‘A subject of the Highest National Urgency’. This communiqué — received by the DEA at 3:35am on Tuesday 23 October (Australian Eastern Standard Time (AEST)) — was the first to alert the Menzies Government of an impending crisis. The urgency of the subject, Munro felt, was also reflected in Kennedy’s scheduled meetings with the National Security Council, the Cabinet and Congressional leaders of both political parties, who were in the midst of campaigning. Increased American naval presence in the Caribbean hinted at a regional crisis.²⁵ Munro advised the DEA that he and other Heads of Mission had been called to a meeting at the State Department immediately preceding Kennedy’s broadcast.²⁶ Under two hours later, Munro further advised that the subject was Cuba and its ‘offensive capability’; he correctly assumed that he would be briefed that evening on America’s plans to deal with it.²⁷

Munro reported to the DEA: ‘I know that the British have been informed about the nature of the Crisis and what is to be done about it, but they have been sworn to absolute secrecy’.²⁸ He

²⁵ There was suspicion of an impending crisis amongst the American press. See cablegram 2758, Australian Embassy Washington to DEA, 22 October 1962, DEA file 262/12/8/1 part 1, CRS A1838, NAA. There was also such speculation in the British press; see cablegram 5181, Australian High Commission London to DEA, 22 October 1962, DEA file 262/12/8/1 part 1, CRS A1838, NAA.

²⁶ See cablegram 2757, Munro to DEA, 22 October 1962, DEA file 262/12/8/1 part 1, CRS A1838, NAA.

²⁷ See cablegram 2759, Munro to DEA, 22 October 1962, DEA file TS262/12/8/1, CRS A1838, NAA.

²⁸ Ibid. Britain’s awareness of the Crisis was also confirmed in a communiqué from the Australian High Commission, London, which was received by the DEA at approximately the same time that morning; see cablegram 5181, Australian High Commission London to DEA, 22 October 1962, DEA file 262/12/8/1 part 1, CRS A1838, NAA.

added that C.S.A. Ritchie, Canadian Ambassador to America, confirmed this, although claimed to be uninformed. Ritchie, he noted, 'spoke in terms of the "crunch" (a favourite Dean Rusk word) coming for the United States of America with an assessment of offensive capacity, and said that there had recently been a good deal of intelligence material on this';²⁹ Munro suspected that Ritchie had been in contact with US Secretary of State, Dean Rusk, or his staff. Suggestions of British and Canadian awareness of the Crisis indicated that, on the morning of 23 October, Australia was literally in the dark.

Before 10am, Menzies received a personal message from Kennedy, which included an advance copy of his announcement.³⁰ Kennedy noted: 'the evidence that offensive nuclear missiles bases had secretly been installed in Cuba by the Soviet Government is accurate beyond question'. Kennedy emphasised that the placement of missiles had shifted weapons from being defensive in nature — which the Soviets had previously guaranteed — to aggressive. Kennedy reminded Menzies that he had stated publicly a month earlier:

If at any time the Communist build up in Cuba were to... become an offensive military base of significant capacity for the Soviet Union, then this country would do whatever must be done to protect its own security and that of its allies.³¹

He advised Menzies he would undertake the following immediately: impose a nuclear quarantine to halt the further build up of missiles, which he hoped would bring about the removal of the offensive missiles already in Cuba; contact Khrushchev (which had been done) in hope for peaceful negotiations; and request an urgent meeting of the UN Security Council where Adlai Stevenson, American Ambassador to the UN, would table a resolution that called for the missile bases and other offensive weapons in Cuba to be withdrawn under UN supervision. Subsequently, America would lift the quarantine. Importantly, Kennedy

²⁹ See cablegram 2759, Munro to DEA, 22 October 1962, DEA file TS262/12/8/1, CRS A1838, NAA.

³⁰ Teleprinter message, Kennedy to Menzies, 23 October 1962, DEA file 262/12/8/1 part 3, CRS A1838, NAA. Kennedy's message was delivered to Menzies by William C. Battle, American Ambassador to Australia.

³¹ Ibid.

concluded that he hoped Sir James Plimsoll, Australia's Permanent Representative to the UN in New York, would 'work closely with... Stevenson and speak forthrightly in support of the above'.³² The DEA later instructed Plimsoll, as Kennedy requested, to "'speak forthrightly" in support of the resolution (we assume this means in event questions [sic] comes to Assembly)'.³³

Munro attended the intelligence briefing given by George W. Ball, US Under Secretary of State, and Roger Hilsman, Director of the US State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research, with Heads of Mission of America's multilateral and bilateral allies. Ball explained America's aerial reconnaissance of Cuba, evidencing the missile build up. He told attendees that their Heads of State would receive the same briefing in their capitals, where advance copies of Kennedy's television address would also be available.³⁴ There is no evidence, however, that Menzies received such a briefing; he relied on Kennedy's personal assurance and Munro's second-hand briefing, which Munro likely assumed would supplement other information sources. The Heads of Mission then listened to Kennedy's televised address to learn of America's proposed response, which the briefing did not cover;³⁵ the Menzies Government, therefore, had the same information on America's response as the general population.

In his broadcast, Kennedy described the evidence of missile sites in Cuba, and thus its conversion into an 'important strategic base', as having no other purpose 'than to provide a

³² Ibid. Kennedy added that the Australian Ambassador in Washington would be 'briefed on the details'. There is no evidence that Howard Beale, Australian Ambassador to America was briefed; Munro, however, attended the State Department briefing for Heads of Mission.

³³ Cablegram 757, DEA to Plimsoll, 23 October 1962, DEA file 262/12/8/1 part 1, CRS A1838, NAA.

³⁴ Whilst this briefing was being conducted, Dean Acheson — in his capacity as an unofficial adviser to the Kennedy Administration — briefed the North Atlantic Council, the key decision-making body of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO); see cablegram 2771, Munro to DEA, 22 October 1962, DEA file TS262/12/8/1, CRS A1838, NAA.

³⁵ Ibid.

nuclear strike capability against the Western Hemisphere'. He emphasised Soviet deceit as to the nature of the weapons and asserted their placement in Cuba breached the Rio Pact, joint resolutions of Congress, and the UN Charter. Kennedy stated:

We no longer live in a world where only the actual firing of weapons represent a sufficient challenge to a nation's security to constitute national peril. Nuclear weapons are so destructive and ballistic missiles are so swift that any substantially increased possibility of their use or any sudden change in their deployment may well be regarded as a definite threat to peace....

[America would] regard any nuclear missile launched from Cuba against any nation in the Western Hemisphere as an attack by the Soviet Union on the United States requiring a full retaliatory response on the Soviet Union.³⁶

He added that America's allies had been alerted. Further to the course of action outlined in his message to Menzies, Kennedy requested an urgent meeting of the Organization of American States (OAS) to consider 'regional security arrangements'.³⁷

In direct contrast to Kennedy's pronouncements, Munro noted that Hilsman then told Heads of Mission that America had no evidence of nuclear warheads in Cuba.³⁸ Nevertheless, the State Department advised that the missiles would be pointless without nuclear warheads, which could be easily hidden, and they believed storage for them was under construction.³⁹

³⁶ Transcript of Kennedy's broadcast on Cuba, 22 October 1962, DEA file 262/12/8/1 part 1, CRS A1838, NAA. See also Young Hum Kim, ed., *Twenty Years of Crises: The Cold War Era* (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1968), 198-203, for a published transcript of Kennedy's broadcast. Australian Mission to UN later advised the DEA that, whilst the world was on the edge of thermonuclear war, the Soviet Union 'exploded a nuclear device a long way up in outer space' on 22 October 1962; see cablegram UN1500, Australian Mission to UN to DEA, 25 October 1962, DEA file TS262/12/8/1, CRS A1838, NAA.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ See cablegram 2771, Munro to DEA, 22 October 1962, DEA file TS262/12/8/1, CRS A1838, NAA.

³⁹ Ibid. Particular types of crates used for some aircraft and patrol boats for missiles had been sighted; see cablegram 2771, Munro to DEA, 22 October 1962, DEA file TS262/12/8/1, CRS A1838, NAA; and also telegram 2235, Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations to the High Commissioner for the UK Canberra, 27 October 1962, DEA file TS262/12/8/1, CRS A1838, NAA. Rusk reiterated his suspicions regarding nuclear warheads in a telegram to consuls on 23 October; see Telegram (unnumbered) from US Secretary of State, 23 October 1962, DEA file 262/12/8/1 part 1, CRS A1838, NAA. On 24 October, the ABC reported that the presence of nuclear warheads was assumed; see transcript of ABC News titled 'Cuban Crisis', 24 October 1962, DEA file 262/12/8/1 part 1, CRS A1838, NAA. The Australian Embassy, Washington, advised the DEA that the *Miami News* published a story which stated that American intelligence forces learnt that in Cuba were nuclear warheads of the megaton class under Soviet military control; see cablegram 2843, Australian Embassy Washington to DEA, 26 October 1962, DEA file 262/12/8/1 part 2, CRS A1838, NAA. By 8 November, Stevenson and John J. McCloy, advisor in the Kennedy Administration, noted in a briefing to allies that 'Khrushchev had not explicitly confirmed or denied [the] presence [of nuclear bombs and warheads] in Cuba. He had, however, implied they were there and they would be removed'; see cablegram UN1622, Plimsoll to

Munro asked Hilsman how many ballistic missile bases there were, but Hilsman refused to disclose this secret information. He was advised though that all surface-to-air missile sites, one of three intermediate-range ballistic missile (IRBM) sites, and four MRBM sites, would be operational in a week.⁴⁰ This briefing was important for Australia. It was the most detailed information the Menzies Government had received at that point; it gave Munro an opportunity to access evidence of the missiles, such as photographs taken a day apart that demonstrated the pace of site constructions. This was the first evidence of the missile build up in Cuba sighted by a representative of the Menzies Government.

Declassified government records have illustrated that Australia had no knowledge of the Crisis until 23 October. Torney-Parlicki's scholarship on this element of Australia's response to the Crisis, therefore, is incorrect. Torney-Parlicki claimed that Australia became aware of the Crisis two days before Kennedy's broadcast — 20 October — having drawn this conclusion from a DEA communiqué sent to both the Australian Embassy, Washington, and the Australian Mission to the UN.⁴¹ This communiqué, of which the first page was marked as having been sent on 20 October was, however, erroneously dated. A closer examination of the communiqué revealed its true date — 29 October. Not only was this noted on the final page of the communiqué, but its content pertained to matters post-23 October.⁴² Furthermore, the main feature of this communiqué was an extract of Australia's assessment of the Crisis;

DEA, 8 November 1962, DEA file 262/12/8/1 part 3, CRS A1838, NAA. American suspicions were correct. The Soviet Union had indeed placed nuclear warheads in Cuba. An initial shipment arrived in Cuba on 4 October, and another arrived on 23 October — the CIA spotted this latter ship on 19 October but believed it was of no importance and that it contained dry cargo. The nuclear arsenal, however, was significantly greater than the Americans had anticipated; see Dobbs, *One Minute to Midnight*, 58-61, who also provides details of the nuclear weapons in Cuba, and the capacity of the nuclear warheads.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ See Torney-Parlicki, *Overland*, 47; and Torney-Parlicki, *Behind the News*, 285.

⁴² See cablegrams 775 and 2169 respectively (DEA no. O.19418), DEA to Australian Mission to UN and Australian Embassy Washington, 20 October 1962 [sic; actual date 29 October 1962], DEA file 262/12/8/1 part 1, CRS A1838, NAA. NB: pages 2-4 of this cablegram are located later in this file.

an assessment which had not even been written in draft form until 25 October.⁴³ This thesis thereby makes a contribution to existing scholarship on Australia's response to the Crisis: it clarifies when Australia gained such awareness, and corrects misinterpretations that Australia had significant advance notice. In reality, America informed Australia of the Crisis only a few hours before it notified the rest of the world.

Following Kennedy's address, J.F. Nimmo, Deputy Secretary to the Department of Prime Minister, queried the implications of the Crisis for Australia, if any, with Sir John Bunting, Secretary to both the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet. He speculated whether Australia would be requested to assist in what he termed the "blockade". He thought America may ask her allies via the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) or OAS to provide ships, and that Australia too may be asked to contribute, reasoning that 'these days, the Americans are continually looking for friends to join with them in their various enterprises'. Nimmo was apprehensive about Australian participation in a quarantine, and more generally, support for American actions. He recommended:

Any endorsement by Cabinet of the latest U.S. action should be in terms of support of a principle which in no way leaves us open to be called upon by the U.S. to play a part in these physical activities.⁴⁴

⁴³ See draft cablegram 775 and 2169 respectively (DEA no. O.19418) with annotations, William D. Forsyth (DEA) to Garfield Barwick (DEA), 25 October 1962, DEA file 262/12/8/1 part 3, CRS A1838, NAA. The outward cablegram itself is included in DEA file 262/12/8/1 part 1, CRS A1838, NAA.

⁴⁴ Message, Nimmo to Bunting, 23 October 1962, Department of Prime Minister file 1962/912, CRS A1209, NAA. The DEA received correspondence from the Australian Embassy, Washington, on 23 and 24 October, which noted that the press had reported that the US Navy was already sustaining the quarantine with more than 40 ships and 20,000 men, and it was not seeking assistance from the OAS; see cablegram 2775, Australian Embassy Washington to DEA, 22 October 1962, DEA file , 262/12/8/1 part 1, CRS A1838, NAA; and also cablegram 2789, Australian Embassy Washington to DEA, 22 October 1962, DEA file , 262/12/8/1 part 1, CRS A1838, NAA. The DEA received a copy of a communiqué from the Australian Embassy, Washington, to the Department of Defence, on 25 October, which advised that there was no plan to transfer ships from Pacific to assist with the quarantine; see cablegram 2795, Australian Embassy Washington to Department of Defence and DEA, 24 October 1962, DEA file 262/12/8/1 part 1, CRS A1838, NAA. Despite assurances that the Americans had not sought support with the quarantine from other states, the US State Department received offers from half of the OAS membership, and on 30 October, H. W. Bullock, Charge d'Affaires of the Australian Embassy, Buenos Aires, advised the DEA that on 26 October, Argentina made a commitment to send troops to support the quarantine; these troops departed Argentina for the Caribbean on 28 October; see cablegram 2823, Australian Embassy Washington to DEA, 25 October 1962, DEA file 262/12/8/1 part 2, CRS A1838, NAA; and also memorandum 213, Bullock (Australian Embassy Buenos Aires) to Tange (DEA), 30 October 1962, DEA file 262/12/8/1 part 3, CRS A1838, NAA.

Sir Arthur H. Tange, Secretary to the DEA, and Sir Garfield Barwick, External Affairs Minister, also contemplated what the Crisis meant for Australia that morning; Tange documented their conversation, which he shared with senior DEA officials. Barwick noted that the Soviets had objected to bases with offensive capability for a long time and had demanded their dismantlement. They anticipated that the Soviets would create a fuss over missiles in Turkey, including Formosa, given recent conversations they knew Rusk had had with Andrei Gromyko, Soviet Foreign Minister, as to the locations of American bases in Europe.⁴⁵ However, the greatest concern of Barwick and Tange was the possible impact the Crisis could have on future Australian-American cooperation over missile bases. They stated: ‘we should consider carefully the concept that the presence of such bases and weapons on Cuban soil represents an act of Soviet aggression’. Tange and Barwick believed caution was required because Australia would be:

Presumably vulnerable to a Soviet blockade (in the name of a “quarantine”) of any American offensive weapons which may be located on Australian soil at some future time and targeted on the Soviet Union.⁴⁶

Tange and Barwick stated that Australia’s foreign policy position was that it had ‘a distinct interest in preserving the right of powerful allies to put bases and offensive weapons in Australia if we want them’.⁴⁷ Australia, therefore, was willing to host offensive American weapons and bases — as per America’s definition of those in Cuba — not simply ones for defensive purposes. Australian anxieties were concentrated on the threat posed to regional security and stability by the spread of communism in South-East Asia. In furtherance of its national interest, Australia relied on collective defence arrangements, which it termed

⁴⁵ See minute, Tange to DEA officials: Harry, Forsyth, Dunn and Robertson, 23 October 1962, DEA file 262/12/8/1 part 1, CRS A1838, NAA. For a further reference by the DEA to Rusk’s conversation with Andrei Gromyko, Soviet Foreign Minister, see cablegram 2688, Howard Beale (Australian Embassy Washington) to Barwick, 15 October 1962, DEA file TS262/12/8/1, CRS A1838, NAA. Formosa is commonly known as Taiwan.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

‘forward defence’ from January 1962.⁴⁸ This was reflected in defence pacts with its allies, specifically, the ANZUS and South-East Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) Treaties formed in 1951 and 1954 respectively. These arrangements satisfied Australian desires for ‘defence on the cheap’ — it was considered in Australia’s national interest to invest in alliances, more so than in its own military capacity — to secure Australia’s defences.⁴⁹ The Menzies Government embraced this strategy throughout the 1950s, and subsequently, defence spending in 1962-63 totalled only 2.7 percent of gross national product, down from 5.1 percent a decade earlier.⁵⁰ However, Australia sought to expand its offensive capabilities, proportional to the growing threat to its geostrategic interests, from 1961.⁵¹ The Defence Committee, the most senior decision-making branch of the Department of Defence, claimed in January 1962 in its paper, ‘Strategic Basis of Australian Defence Policy’, that ‘Australia cannot defend herself unaided against the military power of the communist nations’.⁵² Thus, Australia’s defence was reliant on the support of its allies. Barwick and Tange’s conversation suggests that Australia’s geostrategic interests could be met through hosting offensive American weapons and bases on its territory, and accordingly, Australia would support the rights of powerful allies to do so. However, Barwick and Tange believed that the Menzies Government could not permit this policy to affect its position on Cuba;⁵³ this would have amounted to Australian endorsement of Soviet actions in Cuba to install offensive weapons and bases on the territory of its ally, which contradicted American policy. If Australia had made its policy known at such a volatile time, its support for its most powerful ally would

⁴⁸ See Stephan Frühling, ed., *A History of Australian Strategic Policy: since 1945* (Canberra: Defence Publishing Service, Department of Defence, 2009), 277.

⁴⁹ See Henderson, *Menzies’ Child*, 135; and L.J. Louis, *Menzies’ Cold War: A Reinterpretation* (Carlton North, Victoria: Red Rag Publications, 2001), 69. See generally, Edwards, *Crises and Commitments*.

⁵⁰ See Edwards, *A Nation at War*, 23.

⁵¹ The Menzies Government announced the purchase of guided missile destroyers in 1961, and in 1963, submarines and F-111 bombers; see Frühling, *A History of Australian Strategic Policy*, 277.

⁵² Defence Committee, Department of Defence, ‘Strategic Basis of Australian Defence Policy’ (January 1962) in Frühling, *A History of Australian Strategic Policy*, 287.

⁵³ See minute, Tange to DEA officials: Harry, Forsyth, Dunn and Robertson, 23 October 1962, DEA file 262/12/8/1 part 1, CRS A1838, NAA.

most likely have been questioned, jeopardising Australian-American relations. Consequently, this would have been to the detriment of Australia's defence policy, and more generally, its national interest. In their development of Australia's position on Cuba, Barwick and Tange determined that the maintenance of Australian-American relations, in light of Australia's dependency on this alliance for its defence, were paramount to any risk that Australia could be subjected to a Soviet-imposed quarantine should it host offensive American weapons and bases in the future.

The DEA sought advice as to the legality of America's quarantine as distinguished from a pacific blockade.⁵⁴ Tange was briefed on the conflicting legal perspectives on pacific blockades and was warned that the opinions of theorists appear to have been overruled by state practice. He was advised that pacific blockades are serious, but justified, measures when enacted under the UN Charter to prevent the outbreak of war; outside the parameters of the UN Charter, many jurists considered it illegal. William D. Forsyth, Assistant Secretary Division II to the UN Branch of the DEA, wrote his telling conclusion on the briefing: 'no clear positive legal basis appears'.⁵⁵ In subsequent briefings to its emissaries, the DEA later adopted the position that any stopping and searching of ships 'could be in conflict with doctrines of the freedom of the high seas, and may be challengeable under international law', and thus, preferred its representatives did not comment on the legality of America's quarantine in light of such uncertainty.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ See minute to Tange (unknown author, possibly Harry), 23 October 1962, DEA file 262/12/8/1 part 1, CRS A1838, NAA. 'Pacific blockade' is a term used in international law (it is not a reference to the geographical area). For further information on pacific blockade, including an overview of jurisprudence preceding the Crisis, see Pitman B. Potter, 'Pacific Blockade or War?', *The American Journal of International Law*, 47, no. 2 (April 1953): 273-274. The shortened term 'blockade' is now more commonly used.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ See cablegrams 775 and 2169 respectively (DEA no. O.19418), DEA to Australian Mission to UN and Australian Embassy Washington, 20 October 1962 [sic; actual date 29 October 1962], DEA file 262/12/8/1 part 1, CRS A1838, NAA. NB: pages 2-4 of this cablegram are located later in this file.

The time at which this advice on the legality of the quarantine was received on 23 October, is unclear but important, with respect to Menzies' statement in Parliament that afternoon where the Government declared its position on the Crisis. If this advice was received prior to Australia's decision to support America's UN resolution, then it is arguable that this shaped the Menzies Government's calculated response. Thus, by declaring support for a UN resolution, Australia sanctioned American actions which, should the resolution pass, would have had legal foundation. America's submission of a UN resolution showed that it, too, was seeking to legitimise its actions. Alternatively, the absence of such advice before Parliament sat could likewise have influenced the Menzies Government's deliberate response by safely confining Australian support to the UN.

Prior to Menzies' parliamentary statement being drafted, Ralph Harry, First Assistant Secretary to the DEA, was asked to contact A.J. Eastman, Australian Senior Officer to the DEA in London, to obtain the British Cabinet's reactions and attitude on the quarantine, and Kennedy's declaration that missiles launched from Cuba against any country in the Western Hemisphere would be considered a Soviet attack warranting retaliatory action against it. Harry attempted to do so at 2pm, and noted that Menzies would address Parliament at 3pm, but Eastman did not return Harry's call until 7pm.⁵⁷ Time differences meant that it was 4am in London when Harry called Eastman, who responded at 9am; a reply before 5am was an unreasonable expectation. This attempted communication highlights two points: first, the extent to which the Menzies Government valued Britain's views on America's response to the Crisis by seeking them prior to publicly declaring its position; and second, that the Menzies Government developed its position without such knowledge, and thus, influence.

⁵⁷ See record of telephone conversation, Harry to Eastman, 23 October 1962, DEA file 262/12/8/1 part 1, CRS A1838, NAA.

The Crisis was the subject of Cabinet discussions on 23 October. Bunting minuted that Menzies read Kennedy's message to Cabinet and that the Government would support America's proposed UN resolution, 'although Australia of course is not itself a member of the [UN] Security Council'. It also confirmed that Menzies should make a statement to Parliament, which 'at this stage *should not be more detailed than necessary*'.⁵⁸ Such comments aligned with Nimmo's views and reflected the DEA's concerns as to the legality of the quarantine, as well as the uncertainty surrounding possible implications for Australian foreign and defence policies.

Ralph Harry prepared Barwick for questions on Australian obligations under ANZUS in relation to the Crisis. Harry, a Rhodes scholar who was recruited to the DEA as a graduate,⁵⁹ was the most appropriate official to brief Barwick on ANZUS; he was instrumental in its creation through his assistance to Sir Percy Spender, then Minister for External Affairs, and Sir Alan Watt, then Secretary to the DEA.⁶⁰ In Harry's view, Article 3 of ANZUS eliminated any possible treaty obligations that America had with Australia to consult it over the Crisis, as the 'threat from Cuba could not be regarded as "in the Pacific"'. He further stated that a literal interpretation of Articles 4 and 5 on 'armed attack on the metropolitan territories of any of the parties in the Pacific area', would have no application, as no part of American metropolitan territory had been subjected to an attack.⁶¹ However, when William Forsyth briefed Barwick on 25 October, he noted:

⁵⁸ See Cabinet decision 495, 23 October 1962, DEA file 262/12/8/1 part 1, CRS A1838, NAA. Emphasis added. In its meeting, Cabinet also approved Menzies' statement.

⁵⁹ See Peter G. Edwards, *Arthur Tange: Last of the Mandarins* (Crows Nest, New South Wales: Allen & Unwin, 2006), 84. See also Ralph Harry, *The North was Always Near*, Australians in Asia no. 13 (Queensland: Griffith University, 1994), 2-3.

⁶⁰ Edwards, *Arthur Tange*, 55; and also Percy Spender, *Exercises in Diplomacy: The ANZUS Treaty and the Colombo Plan* (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 1969), 106.

⁶¹ See minute, Harry to Barwick, 23 October 1962, DEA file 262/12/8/1 part 1, CRS A1838, NAA.

Whether the mainland of U.S.A. is thus excluded is not perfectly clear and we might not wish to exclude parts of Australia which are not “in the Pacific” (e.g. Western Australia, South Australia, etc.).⁶²

Ambiguity has surrounded ANZUS since its inception regarding when the parties can invoke it, and thus, the extent of their obligations. Australia had its national interest in focus; it did not want to read ANZUS too narrowly on this occasion in case America would one day interpret it similarly, and in effect, limit its obligations to come to Australia’s defence.

Unsurprisingly, ‘International affairs’ was the leading item on Parliament’s agenda on the afternoon of 23 October. Menzies told the House that Kennedy demonstrated that the Soviet Union had installed ‘offensive nuclear weapons’ in Cuba, and that consequently, America was subjected to ‘a very grave threat, at close quarters’. Menzies mentioned Kennedy’s personal message and acknowledged Kennedy’s reference to the significance of regional defence arrangements. Menzies reiterated that America’s UN resolution called for the missile bases and other offensive weapons in Cuba to be withdrawn under UN supervision. He added:

We welcome the readiness of the U.S.A. to bring the matter promptly before the [UN]... We have instructed our own Ambassador to the [UN] to do all in his power to support the passing of this resolution... We do not under-estimate the gravity of the situation, a gravity profoundly demonstrated by both the tone and substance of the President’s broadcast... Indeed the whole matter will serve to test whether the Soviet Union’s constant advocacy of peace possesses either sincerity or substance.⁶³

⁶² See draft cablegram 775 and 2169 respectively (DEA no. O.19418) with annotations, Forsyth to Barwick, 25 October 1962, DEA file 262/12/8/1 part 3, CRS A1838, NAA. According to Millar, the establishment of the naval communications base at North West Cape meant that it could be assumed that Australia’s western seaboard was within the scope of the Treaty; see Millar, *Australia’s Foreign Policy*, 119.

⁶³ *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates* (herein *CPD*), vol. House of Representatives (herein H of R) 37, 23 October 1962, 1780-1781. Menzies’ statement was repeated in the Senate that afternoon by Sir William Spooner, Minister for National Development; see *CPD*, vol. Senate (herein S) 22, 23 October 1962, 1028-1029. Also, the Government was advised on 24 October that Menzies’ comments were outlined in the French newspaper, *Le Monde*; see cablegram 1383, likely Australian Embassy Paris to DEA, 24 October 1962, DEA file 262/12/8/1 part 2, CRS A1838, NAA.

Arthur Calwell, Leader of the Opposition, then spoke, echoing Menzies' sentiment.⁶⁴ Afterwards, Menzies received a message via Nimmo advising that William C. Battle, American Ambassador to Australia, and Donald W. Lamm, First Secretary to the American Embassy in Canberra, heard his statement and expressed their personal appreciation.⁶⁵ Battle also publicly acknowledged Menzies' 'marvellous, firm and unhesitating support' at a dinner hosted in his honour by the Australian American Association. According to the *Adelaide Advertiser*, which later published his comments on 24 October, Battle stated: 'I am sure that the President and the US people are deeply appreciative of the prompt and vigorous way he came with all his moral support to us today'.⁶⁶ The next day, H. Neil Truscott, Head of the Information Branch of the DEA, informed Tange that although most newspapers mentioned Menzies' parliamentary statement, few provided further comment and 'there was no adverse criticism of it'. According to Truscott, the majority of Australian newspapers had expressed sympathy towards America's response;⁶⁷ thus, the general absence of disapproval indicated that the Menzies Government's response was accepted in the Australian print media.

The calculated nature of Australia's response is apparent when contrasted against the Philippines' response. Diosdado Macapagal, President of Philippines, proclaimed:

[It] supports this action as well as any other action which may be necessary to repel any threat to the peace or any act of aggression by which the communist powers propose to achieve their objective of world domination.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ See *CPD*, vol. H of R 37, 23 October 1962, 1781. Menzies' and Calwell's statements were circulated later that afternoon to: Australian Embassy, Washington; Australian High Commission, Ottawa; Australian Mission to the UN; and the Australian Consulate General, New York; see cablegram O.19180, DEA to various Australian legations, 23 October 1962, DEA file 262/12/8/1 part 1, CRS A1838, NAA.

⁶⁵ See message, R.J.L. (likely of the Department of Prime Minister) to Menzies, 23 October 1962, Department of Prime Minister file 1962/912, CRS A1209, NAA.

⁶⁶ 'Tribute To PM', *Adelaide Advertiser*, 24 October, 1962. Lamm telephoned Nimmo on 24 October and asked him to show Battle's tribute to Menzies; see note, Nimmo to Menzies, 24 October, Department of Prime Minister file 1962/912, CRS A1209, NAA.

⁶⁷ See minute, Truscott to Tange, 25 October 1962, DEA file 262/12/8/1 part 1, CRS A1838, NAA.

⁶⁸ Transcript of Macapagal's statement on Cuba, 23 October 1962, DEA file 262/12/8/1 part 2, CRS A1838, NAA.

It was not in Australia's national interest to give America such broad assurances given its concerns, and the uncertainty surrounding the Crisis.

The Australian Government's deliberate statement of support to America's UN resolution indicated that Menzies had faith in the UN as a forum for dispute resolution. This would surprise Howard Beale, Australian Ambassador to America, who felt that the negative experience Menzies gained from his involvement in the U2 Affair of May 1960, resulted in him having 'no high opinion of that body as an impartial deliberative assembly'.⁶⁹ In that sense, the Menzies Government's response to the Crisis, that is, its desire for a UN solution,⁷⁰ may be unexpected. According to Maynard Ghent, John Diefenbaker, the Canadian Prime Minister, also wanted a UN solution to the Crisis, but felt that Kennedy simply sought UN approval for his actions.⁷¹

On the evening of 23 October, Menzies replied to Kennedy assuring him of the Australian Government's support for America's UN resolution, and that Plimsoll had been 'suitably instructed'.⁷² In a further communiqué to Plimsoll, the DEA repeated its instructions regarding the resolution, and importantly, advised him that it was studying implications for Australia in four areas: bases, blockade, regional defence arrangements, and possible escalation; however, it did not elaborate. The DEA also requested information on the

⁶⁹ Beale, *This Inch of Time*, 141. For discussion on the Menzies Government's doubts during the period 1948-54 over the UN's ability to influence world affairs; see David Lowe, *Menzies and the 'Great World Struggle': Australia's Cold War 1948-1954* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 1999), 19-20. Sir Alan Watt, then Secretary to the DEA, commented on Menzies' distrust of the UN in his study of Australian foreign policy; see Watt, *Australian Foreign Policy*, 306-307.

⁷⁰ See cablegrams 775 and 2169 respectively (DEA no. O.19418), DEA to Australian Mission to UN and Australian Embassy Washington, 20 October 1962 [sic; actual date 29 October 1962], DEA file 262/12/8/1 part 1, CRS A1838, NAA. NB: pages 2-4 of this cablegram are located later in this file.

⁷¹ See Maynard Ghent, *Pacific Historical Review*, 164.

⁷² Message, Menzies to Battle for Kennedy, 23 October 1962, DEA file 262/12/8/1 part 1, CRS A1838, NAA. Menzies included with his message his statement made in Parliament earlier that day.

reactions of the British, West European and leading Latin delegations, in an effort to gauge how its response fared to other nations.⁷³

In light of its desire for a UN solution, Australia made significant efforts to monitor and analyse the state of affairs at the UN.⁷⁴ William Forsyth provided Tange and Harry with an outline of the potential course of events following an urgent meeting of the UN Security Council, which showed no promise that America's resolution would pass. Nonetheless, there was hope that a UN solution was still achievable. Alternatively, Forsyth asserted, America would have to especially rely on its regional arrangements, most likely the OAS. Forsyth concluded: 'as you have [noted] there is very likely to be a move for [a UN General] Assembly resolution condemning all foreign bases. We should have to oppose such a resolution'.⁷⁵ Whilst Australia did not want America to be held hostage to Soviet weapons, it did not want to eliminate the possibility of hosting American bases and weapons on Australian soil in the future; the Menzies Government believed that the attainment of American weapons and bases would conform to its forward defence policy, and therefore, its geostrategic interests. It would also further embed Australian-American relations.

Also on the evening of 23 October, the DEA received a cable from the Australian High Commission in London regarding a press statement issued by the British Foreign Office immediately following Kennedy's address. The Press Officer stated: 'At present I can only

⁷³ See cablegram O.19188, DEA to Plimsoll, 23 October 1962, DEA file 262/12/8/1 part 1, CRS A1838, NAA. Throughout the Crisis, the DEA corresponded with its legations to obtain official, and unofficial, positions of the following governments: Belgium, Canada, France, Ghana, Japan, Malaysia, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Philippines, Poland, United Arab Republic, West Germany, and Yugoslavia; see correspondence (various dates) DEA files 262/12/8/1 parts 1-3, CRS A1838, NAA. The abundance of correspondence led DEA officials to worry that the machine would get jammed; see note with handwritten contributions from various DEA officials, 25-29 October, following cablegram 681, Australian Embassy The Hague to DEA, 24 October 1962, DEA file 262/12/8/1 part 1, CRS A1838, NAA.

⁷⁴ See cablegram O.19376, DEA to Australian Mission to the UN, 25 October 1962, DEA file 262/12/8/1 part 1, CRS A1838, NAA.

⁷⁵ Minute, Forsyth to Tange and Harry, 23 October 1962, DEA file 262/12/8/1 part 1, CRS A1838, NAA.

say that we were informed about [the Crisis] in advance... [and] US Ambassador, [David] Bruce, called on the Prime Minister at midday at his own request to convey the news'.⁷⁶ Whilst Britain was indeed informed of the Crisis in advance, this press statement falsely suggested that Britain was treated like other allies, such as Australia, and made aware of the Crisis on the day of Kennedy's broadcast. According to L.V. Scott, the historian of Britain's response to the Crisis, the British learnt of the Crisis on 19 October, possibly as early as 17 October.⁷⁷ Britain, according to Munro, was sworn to secrecy,⁷⁸ and it did not provide Australia with any indication of this news. Whilst America and Britain were Australia's closest allies, it did not share with either nation the special relationship that America and Britain shared with each other.⁷⁹

In his statement to consuls on 23 October, Rusk also indicated that there was equity among allies as to the moment they were told of the Crisis:

Every allied government was advised and informed [of the Crisis] beforehand. This was supplemented by comprehensive briefings just prior to the President's speech for all the NATO, OAS, SEATO and [Central Treaty Organization (CENTO)] mission chiefs here.⁸⁰

Like the British Foreign Office's press statement, Rusk's communiqué did not reflect the different treatment America's allies actually received; some heads of states received greater notice and in-person briefings — Menzies received neither. America expected repercussions in Berlin, and thus, it gave greater advance notification of the Crisis to Britain, France, and

⁷⁶ Cablegram 5189, Australian High Commission London to DEA, 23 October 1962, DEA file 262/12/8/1 part 1, CRS A1838, NAA. The statement concluded that the British Cabinet would consider the issue further in the morning (23 October, London time).

⁷⁷ It is possible that Britain became aware of the Crisis on 17 October via intelligence channels; see Scott, *Macmillan, Kennedy and the Cuban Missile Crisis*, 39.

⁷⁸ See cablegram 2759, Munro to DEA, 22 October 1962, DEA file TS262/12/8/1, CRS A1838, NAA.

⁷⁹ The special relationship that existed between America and Britain in this period was, in part, a result of the close relationship between Kennedy and Sir David Ormsby-Gore, British Ambassador to America; see Scott, *Macmillan, Kennedy and the Cuban Missile Crisis*, 94; and Dobbs, *One Minute to Midnight*, 215.

⁸⁰ Telegram (unnumbered) from US Secretary of State, 23 October 1962, DEA file 262/12/8/1 part 1, CRS A1838, NAA.

West Germany. These allies were provided with additional and more detailed information.⁸¹ At this point, Australia still relied on information from the day before provided by Munro. This suggests that adverse reactions were not anticipated in Australia's region, nor required its involvement; but at the time, differences in America's communications with its allies were not known to Australia. The DEA had limited information regarding the reactions of NATO members, but believed they had 'grave misgivings' over America's handling of the Crisis. It was also concerned about implications for American bases abroad and possible retaliation against Soviet actions involving NATO or other allies. The DEA believed 'it may be feared that the Russians will seek, under cover of American preoccupation with Cuba, to move against Berlin'. Although Cuba is outside the geographical bounds of NATO, America's claims as to its offensive capacity — which could seemingly strike America's mainland — brought the Crisis, in the DEA's view, within the bounds of the NATO Treaty. Furthermore, an attack on North America or Europe would be considered 'an armed attack against them all';⁸² this exacerbated Australian uncertainty as to the support it was expected to provide to its Western allies should the Crisis escalate.

On 23 October, Macmillan sent a message to Menzies. Macmillan stated: 'I thought it right to send a message straight away assuring the President of our full support in the Security Council'. Like Australia, Britain recognised the need to stand firm with its Western allies. However, Macmillan expressed apprehension that he did not know where 'American action

⁸¹ For example, on 19 October, Ray Cline, Deputy Director for Intelligence of the CIA, briefed in-person, British intelligence officials: Sir Kenneth Strong, Director of the Joint Intelligence Bureau; Sir Hugh Stephenson, Chairman of the Joint Intelligence Committee; Sir Burke Trend, Cabinet Secretary-designate; and Thomas Brimelow of the British Embassy, Washington. Ormsby-Gore and British Prime Minister, Harold Macmillan, were subsequently advised; see Scott, *Macmillan, Kennedy and the Cuban Missile Crisis*, 39-48. Furthermore, Kennedy had instructed Dean Acheson to brief in-person French President, Charles de Gaulle and the NATO Council. Walter C. Dowling, American Ambassador to Germany, was likewise instructed to brief West German Chancellor, Konrad Adenauer; see R.F. Kennedy, *Thirteen Days*, 29-30; Scott, *Macmillan, Kennedy and the Cuban Missile Crisis*, 48.

⁸² Paper on points for public presentation (unknown author and audience, possibly Harry to Tange or Barwick), 23 October 1962, DEA file 262/12/8/1 part 1, CRS A1838, NAA.

will lead us'. He detailed a variety of possible scenarios that could unfold, including that Khrushchev might instigate some sort of response in other parts of the world, for example, in Berlin, or to Australia's alarm, South-East Asia. The primary concern of Macmillan though, was that the Soviets would take any opportunity available to them to exploit the differences of interest between America and her European allies. He concluded:

I should be most glad to have your reactions and I think we should keep in close touch as the situation develops. For your private information, if the situation were to get enlarged beyond the purely Caribbean context I should feel it my duty to take some action to try and prevent any possible escalation to war. But I certainly do not intend to take any initiative in the present uncertain circumstances.⁸³

Macmillan's message, and Britain's official response which Australia received the following day,⁸⁴ verified that Australia and Britain held the same initial views on the Crisis; both pledged support for America's UN resolution, but simultaneously, they wanted to keep their distance given the uncertainty surrounding the Crisis and thus their involvement.

On 24 October, Menzies replied to Macmillan's message. He confirmed that he also received a message from Kennedy and that he had already made a parliamentary statement on Kennedy's broadcast that day 'agreeing at once to his request for support in the United Nations'. Menzies also noted that Australia was

conscious of the uncertainties you mentioned in your letter and we are keeping developments under close study. Above all, however, I agree with you that we must avoid giving the Russians opportunities for exploiting any differences, however small, amongst members of the alliance.⁸⁵

Whilst Australia accepted it was not in the same realm of threat as Europe regarding possible reactions involving Berlin, it nonetheless, felt it too was exposed to possible exploitation by

⁸³ Message, G. Kimber (High Commission for the UK Canberra) to Menzies from Macmillan, 24 October 1962, DEA file 262/12/8/1 part 1, CRS A1838, NAA. Kimber noted in the covering letter that similar messages had also been sent to John Diefenbaker, Prime Minister of Canada; Sir Keith Holyoake, Prime Minister of New Zealand; and Ayub Khan, President of Pakistan. This message was also forwarded by Bunting to Tange; see letter, Bunting to Tange, 24 October 1962, DEA file 262/12/8/1 part 1, CRS A1838, NAA.

⁸⁴ See cablegram 5222, Australian High Commission London to DEA, 23 October 1962, DEA file 262/12/8/1 part 1, CRS A1838, NAA.

⁸⁵ Message, J.F. Nimmo on behalf of Menzies to G. Kimber for Macmillan, 25 October 1962, DEA file 262/12/8/1 part 2, CRS A1838, NAA.

the Soviets. Menzies' reference to Russian opportunities possibly reflected Australia's concerns regarding future weapons and bases on its soil, and thus subsequent Soviet-imposed quarantines; and also, Australia's 'need to prevent a situation arising which would concentrate US attention on the Caribbean and Europe, and thus reduce her capability to take effective action, if necessary in South East Asia'.⁸⁶ Australia's geostrategic interests primarily depended, according to the Defence Committee, 'on the availability of formidable United States military power in South East Asia'.⁸⁷ From Australia's perspective, the diversion of such power elsewhere would have left it vulnerable to regional, communist threats, and even limited war.⁸⁸

On the morning of 24 October, Britain's *Daily Telegraph* cabled the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, as to whether Australia was aware of the Crisis on 19 October⁸⁹ — the same date L.V. Scott, the historian of Britain's response to the Crisis, claimed Britain was informed.⁹⁰ Sir John Bunting, Secretary to both the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, wrote on the telegram to Allan T. Griffith, his principal advisor on foreign affairs and defence: 'what is behind this?'⁹¹ Griffith suspected the newspaper was 'sniffing for a "lack of consultation" story' in light of discontentment that had built in Britain over America's perceived unilateral action. He added: 'press says this morning that Britain informed yesterday morning in advance, i.e. same time as we were... PM "on the ball"

⁸⁶ Cablegrams 775 and 2169 respectively (DEA no. O.19418), DEA to Australian Mission to UN and Australian Embassy Washington, 20 October 1962 [sic; actual date 29 October 1962], DEA file 262/12/8/1 part 1, CRS A1838, NAA. NB: pages 2-4 of this cablegram are located later in this file.

⁸⁷ Frühling, *A History of Australian Strategic Policy*, 288.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 286-287.

⁸⁹ See telegram (unnumbered), *Daily Telegraph* to Prime Minister's press office, 24 October 1962, Department of Prime Minister, folio 41, file 1962/912, CRS A1209, NAA.

⁹⁰ See Scott, *Macmillan, Kennedy and the Cuban Missile Crisis*, 39.

⁹¹ Handwritten note from Bunting to Griffith on telegram (unnumbered), *Daily Telegraph* to Prime Minister's press office, 24 October 1962, Department of Prime Minister, folio 41, file 1962/912, CRS A1209, NAA.

statement immediately might suggest earlier notice'.⁹² Griffith naively assumed that Australia and Britain were notified of the Crisis on the same day, and that Menzies' prompt statement, indicated Australia had advance knowledge of the Crisis. Apart from Munro's suspicions that the British and Canadians knew on 23 October, such assumptions could explain why there is no evidence of any angst or anger on the part of the Menzies Government as to when it acquired knowledge of the Crisis. It was unconscious of its unprivileged situation, having found out about the Crisis on 23 October — four days later than Britain.

On 24 October, Dr W. De Comtes, Charge d'Affaires of the Austrian legation, met with Harry. In their discussion on Cuba, Dr De Comtes expressed his surprise that Menzies was in a position to respond so swiftly, compared to Western European states. Harry responded:

I pointed out that because of the longitude of Australia, Mr Menzies had had several hours in which to study the matter and the Australian Cabinet considered the issues before he made his statement yesterday afternoon. During this period the European statesmen were in bed.⁹³

Apart from this initial occasion, time differences were to Australia's disadvantage. Macmillan stated that for Britain, this made receiving and disseminating news 'quite complicated'.⁹⁴ For Australia this proved even more difficult; it was more than nine hours behind events as they unfolded in America and Europe, which affected its ability to keep abreast of issues and engage with its allies in a timely manner.⁹⁵

In Parliament on 24 October, the Menzies Government was questioned by both Government and Opposition Members as to what the Crisis meant for Australia, having had a day to mull

⁹² Minute, Griffith to Bunting, 24 October 1962, Department of Prime Minister, folio 41, file 1962/912, CRS A1209, NAA.

⁹³ Record of conversation, Harry with De Comtes, 24 October 1962, DEA file 262/12/8/1 part 1, CRS A1838, NAA.

⁹⁴ Transcript of Macmillan's statement in the House of Commons on 31 October 1962 enclosed with message from Macmillan to Kimber for Menzies, 1 November 1962, DEA file 262/12/8/1 Part 3, CRS A1838, NAA.

⁹⁵ London was nine hours behind Canberra; New York and Washington were 14 hours behind (non-daylight saving times).

over Menzies' statement. Gordon Bryant, Labor MP, questioned Australia's commitment to any potential conflict that may arise:

If war actually breaks out between the United States and Cuba or the United States and Russia, will Australia be automatically committed? Has the Australian Government entered into any outright commitment in this matter?⁹⁶

Menzies refused to respond to what he deemed hypothetical questions.⁹⁷ The other question — without notice — to Barwick from Max Fox, Liberal MP, pointed out that South-East Asian states, and not just Australia, may seek to host weapons and bases of their allies. Fox asked whether any South-East Asian governments — recipients of Soviet aid — had assured the Australian Government or UN that 'they will not permit Russia to establish nuclear bases in those countries'. Barwick replied:

no such assurance has been received... [nor] sought. Most of the countries which accept aid from the Soviet follow a non-alignment policy and have been quite consistently opposed to the establishment of nuclear weapon bases in their areas.⁹⁸

Barwick noted that India, Ceylon and Burma had all received Soviet aid and had pledged that they would not manufacture or house nuclear weapons.⁹⁹ However, there were Asian countries in closer proximity to Australia, which the Menzies Government would have considered more likely to have become Soviet satellite states. Barwick's reply did not convey the Menzies Government's unease over the possibility that some South-East Asian states may draw inspiration from Cuba. Therefore, Australia's concerns regarding the ramifications it might face should it host American weapons and bases, were amplified by its uncertainty as to whether its South-East Asian neighbours had like desires.

Menzies and Calwell's parliamentary statements of the previous day had been passed to the US State Department. David Cuthell, Director of the Office of Southwest Pacific Affairs,

⁹⁶ *CPD*, vol. H of R 37, 24 October 1962, 1858.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ *CPD*, vol. H of R 37, 24 October 1962, 1863.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

expressed the State Department's appreciation of Menzies' statement and noted it was 'the first one received'.¹⁰⁰ This comment, though, is misleading. Whilst Menzies' statement may have been the first *public* declaration of support, Australia was not the first to pledge its support to America. Macmillan had sent a message to Kennedy on the afternoon of 22 October which privately noted Britain's support for America's UN resolution;¹⁰¹ Britain could do so with such speed because it had advance notice of the Crisis. By advising Australia that it was the first to respond, the State Department possibly gave Australia a false sense of importance in its relations with America. Additionally, Malcolm Fraser claimed Menzies was the first international leader to respond to the Crisis in *The Daniel Mannix Memorial Lecture* delivered at the University of Melbourne in 1987.¹⁰² This misrepresentation, therefore, lingered for at least 25 years following the Crisis, possibly longer in the absence of a detailed examination on Australia's response to this event. This study has clarified that Australia was encouraged to believe that the swiftness of its response was more significant than it perhaps was, which furthered Australia's belief that its relations with America were stronger and closer than in reality.

Plimsoll cabled the DEA outlining a conversation between himself and Eric Louw, South African Foreign Minister, on 24 October. Louw approached Plimsoll regarding his misgivings about Kennedy's statement. Louw felt that the transfer of weapons from one country to another did not amount to aggression; America, he thought, was being hypocritical. Plimsoll attempted to convince Louw otherwise; he highlighted the threat the offensive weapons posed to America and claimed it was illogical to compare similar actions by other states in different corners of the globe. He elaborated:

¹⁰⁰ Cablegram 2787, Australian Embassy Washington to DEA, 23 October 1962, DEA file 262/12/8/1 part 1, CRS A1838, NAA.

¹⁰¹ Kennedy received Macmillan's message at 3pm on 22 October. See Scott, *Macmillan, Kennedy and the Cuban Missile Crisis*, 46-56.

¹⁰² See Fraser, 'The Daniel Mannix Memorial Lecture – Sir Robert Menzies: In Search of Balance'.

It was not valid to say that because the United States was doing something in one place the Soviet Union could do it somewhere else. We had to look at the total world picture and recognise that there was a delicate balance of power in the world as a whole which is made up of disparate elements on each side. Anything which upset this delicate balance by radically altering a single major element was like a stone setting off an avalanche and constituted danger to world security.¹⁰³

Plimsoll provided Louw with Menzies' parliamentary statement, which prompted Louw to ask, if the present situation escalated to conflict, whether Australia would be in it 'boots and all' with America. Plimsoll replied: 'Australia was wholly supporting the United States. Australia would take the view that anything that threatened the security of the United States or would make it hesitant to defend its allies would be a threat to our own security'.¹⁰⁴ Plimsoll's remarks to Louw highlight two points. Firstly, Fraser adopted like comparable views on Australia's national security to Plimsoll, and in a speech to Parliament in 1964, Fraser posited that as a result of the Crisis, America would be reluctant to enter into issues which largely did not affect its own interest.¹⁰⁵ In other words, their primary concern was that Australia's national security could be jeopardised if America would hesitate in coming to Australia's defence. Plimsoll made it plain that Australia did not want to invoke any such hesitation in its relations with America on whom its policy of forward defence depended. Secondly, it appears that Plimsoll interpreted his Government's instructions to do "all in his power" to support America's UN resolution, perhaps more broadly than intended. The Menzies Government had adopted a reserved approach in pledging its support for America's resolution — which was considered all that was necessary at that stage — yet Plimsoll gave Louw the impression that Australia was in with the Americans, 'boots and all'. Whilst Australia's support for America was unequivocal, Plimsoll's comments did not reflect the Menzies Government's cautious response, which stemmed from its significant concerns as to how the Crisis could impact on its national interest. Finally, in response to Louw's doubt

¹⁰³ Cablegram, Plimsoll to DEA, 23 October 1962, DEA file 262/12/8/1 part 1, CRS A1838, NAA.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ See Renouf, *Malcolm Fraser & Australian Foreign Policy*, 41; and Ayres, *Malcolm Fraser*, 93.

regarding America's actions, Plimsoll remarked: 'the question now posed to us was not what the United States should have done but what we should do in the [sic] light of American policy as now announced'.¹⁰⁶ Plimsoll's comments are characteristic of how Australia perceived its relations with America in this period. Australia's policies on issues, which differed markedly from American policy, included the West New Guinea dispute, the United Kingdom's (UK) application to join the European Economic Community, and discussions over non-recognition of China. All were largely overlooked by America.¹⁰⁷ This signalled to the Menzies Government that it had little influence over American foreign policy, even where Australia's interest was at stake; its capacity, according to Peter Edwards, the official historian of Australia's involvement in South-East Asian conflicts, was 'humiliatingly weak'.¹⁰⁸ Australia, though, could not afford to allow such humbling experiences to put its geostrategic interests at risk. Recent events in Laos, Thailand and Vietnam had increased the likelihood of regional instability. Australia had become ever more dependent on the American alliance for its security and the Menzies Government had come to accept that such dependency had a price. In 1962, in particular, it actively sought to do all it could to confirm America's commitment to Australia's defence and the security of its region — as well as relieve any tension in its bilateral relations. This is evidenced by its commitments to Thailand and Vietnam, and importantly, the approval of the establishment of an American naval communications base at North-West Cape in Western Australia in May that year.¹⁰⁹ The Crisis, therefore, presented itself as another fitting opportunity for Australia to support its most important ally, America, and maintain goodwill in its relations; ultimately in furtherance of Australia's geostrategic interests.

¹⁰⁶ Cablegram, Plimsoll to DEA, 23 October 1962, DEA file 262/12/8/1 part 1, CRS A1838, NAA.

¹⁰⁷ See Edwards, *Crises and Commitments*, 230-232.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 232.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 231-244. See also Bell, *Dependent Ally*, 64-86. For a more detailed discussion on the factors that contributed to Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War, see especially: Gregory Pemberton, *All the Way*; and Barclay, *A Very Small Insurance Policy*.

On 25 October, the DEA received a cable from Plimsoll who noted his separate conversations of the previous day with Sir Muhammad Zafrulla Khan, Pakistan's Permanent Representative to the UN, and James Barrington, Burma's Ambassador to America and Canada. According to Plimsoll, Khan thought that America would not consider U Thant, Acting Secretary General of the UN, appropriate for the role of mediator given he was a national of a neutral state. Khan asked Plimsoll to advise the Americans on his behalf that he would be available — he did not want to approach them directly. In his conversation with Barrington, Plimsoll received an update on the views of uncommitted countries. A criticism, noted by Barrington, was that America should have sought a UN solution to the matter before having acted so fast. Plimsoll told Barrington this was America's only option due to the speed at which the missile bases were being constructed, which Barrington did not believe was possible. Plimsoll added that he had viewed the photographs and had found them convincing; however, Barrington had not seen them, and claimed that the Americans had not talked to him since the Crisis arose.¹¹⁰ In some respects, this was encouraging for Australia; compared to Barrington, Plimsoll was in regular communication with the Americans. Plimsoll advised the DEA that he spoke to the Americans on behalf of Khan. Plimsoll thought they 'showed some interest and were pleased to know this'. He also advised the Americans of his conversation with Barrington, and noted his impressions

from talking to many representatives... that a lot more had to be done to convince them that a real and immediate threat existed to the United States and also to satisfy doubt (such as Barrington's) about the speed at which the threat could arise. I said that the Americans ought to show the photographs to as many persons as possible from the uncommitted countries. I suggested that they ought to do this also down the line to junior persons in delegations from NATO, SEATO and CENTO because quite junior persons could influence delegations in corridor conversations and my feeling was that even in countries allied to the United States there was some disbelief down the line. I added... although the permanent representatives of the Latin American countries were supporting the United States position, this was not true of many of the junior Latin American representatives.¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ See cablegram UN1483, Plimsoll to DEA, 24 October 1962, DEA file 262/12/8/1 part 1, CRS A1838, NAA.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

The Americans told Plimsoll that they thought Stevenson's speech would cover most of his suggestions; they had seen the great impression the photographs had made on the francophone African states that afternoon and also noted that some photographs would be presented that evening in the UN Security Council.¹¹² These conversations indicate that Plimsoll was well respected amongst ambassadors and particularly active within the halls of the UN; his relationship with the American delegation was strong and known. As instructed, Plimsoll ensured he did 'all in his power' to rally support for America, and thus made certain that Australian-American relations were successfully managed at the UN.

In Parliament on 25 October, Bill Hayden, Labor MP, stated that Britain did not consider itself committed to America. Hayden asked Menzies whether the Government had 'already committed the Australian nation to the active support of any side in this peace threatening situation'. Menzies effectively declined to answer the question, believing he was being invited 'to make a considerable and considered statement on foreign affairs'.¹¹³ Menzies' unwillingness to comment on the nature of Australia's commitment seemed as calculated as Australia's position on the Crisis — its support had been deliberately confined to America's UN resolution, and was in no way a general assurance; however, accentuation of such considered support could have indicated to America that Australia's pledge was not as strong as it appeared, which would have likely been damaging to Australian-American relations, and thus, not in Australia's national interest. It is likely that Menzies had this in mind when he refused to respond to Hayden's question. Les Johnson, Labor MP, then asked Menzies whether Australia had consulted with Britain prior to his statement in Parliament on Tuesday. Assuming the Government had not, Johnson enquired:

¹¹² Ibid. The photographs were put on display in the UN building from 25 October; see cablegram UN1499, Australian Mission to the UN to DEA, 25 October 1962, DEA file 262/12/8/1 part 2, CRS A1838, NAA.

¹¹³ *CPD*, vol. H of R 37, 25 October 1962, 1936.

Is this the first time that Australia has taken a position capable of involving this country in war without consulting the United Kingdom? Does this development signify that Australia has cut its traditional ties with the United Kingdom and now slavishly follows the policies of the United States of America?¹¹⁴

Menzies responded that Johnson was

in error in thinking that on all occasions of this kind we are under an obligation to consult some other country before we express our own views. Frequently we have done so; sometimes we have not done so. This was a matter of singular moment and of some urgency. We gave it consideration at once — the same morning. We did not propose to remain silent on a matter of this kind or to fail to discharge the duty to inform honourable members of the view taken by the Government.¹¹⁵

This was the reality — Australia responded promptly and expressed its own view. What Menzies did not disclose, however, was that it had unsuccessfully attempted to consult Britain over its reaction to the Crisis, and that Australia opted to respond promptly, unaware of British views. Whilst Australia's alacrity may have intimated to the Opposition that the Government slavishly followed American foreign policy, its response was a considered, not generic, one. Regarding the quarantine, Jim Cairns, Labor MP, asked Menzies:

Will he consider associating Australia with action taken in the United Nations and elsewhere, directed to the vital task of preventing a clash between American and Russian ships in the vicinity of Cuba?¹¹⁶

Menzies retorted with frustration that Plimsoll had been instructed

to further, by such means as are within his power, the success of the resolution moved by the United States of America. That resolution is one eminently calculated to relieve this tension. It puts the onus, it is true, on the other people to dismantle these offensive weapons and to refrain from supplying them, but it also states that if this is done, the quarantine measures adopted could be lifted and should be lifted, and that the whole matter should be dealt with under United Nations supervision. That seems to us to be a method admirably within the spirit of the Charter and admirably consistent with the general policy of the Government.¹¹⁷

Thus, further to his statement on 23 October, Menzies reiterated his faith in the UN system from which he hoped a solution would prevail.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁴ *CPD*, vol. H of R 37, 25 October 1962, 1939.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ *CPD*, vol. H of R 37, 25 October 1962, 1940.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.* See also cablegrams 775 and 2169 respectively (DEA no. O.19418), DEA to Australian Mission to UN and Australian Embassy Washington, 20 October 1962 [sic; actual date 29 October 1962], DEA file 262/12/8/1 part 1, CRS A1838, NAA. NB: pages 2-4 of this cablegram are located later in this file.

That evening, Barwick and Ivan Skripov, First Secretary of the Soviet Embassy in Canberra, met over the Crisis. Skripov had been instructed by his Government to provide Australia with a copy of Khrushchev's speech dated 23 October and to ask it 'to use its good offices with its friends and allies to avoid the breaking out of nuclear war'. Barwick replied that 'it was the USSR rather than Australia that had the capacity to avoid nuclear war'. Skripov reiterated his wish and noted that the Soviet Union could and would not accept particular American actions. He then asked for Australia's position on a summit conference, which Barwick said was an issue for the Americans and Soviets.¹¹⁹ This suggests Barwick's reluctance to become overly involved in the Crisis. It also implies that Barwick needed time to obtain American and British positions on a summit conference before Australia pronounced its own views. However, Barwick did state to Skripov — in true lawyer fashion — that the Soviet Union's abrupt cancellation of prior summit conference plans 'were not a good precedent'.¹²⁰ It is evident that Barwick, a staunch anti-communist, was distrustful of Soviet intentions; the Crisis compounded his pre-existing beliefs.¹²¹ He aimed to protect Australia's national interest by ensuring that he did not give Skripov any ammunition with which to exploit any differences of opinion on summit conferences between Australia and its allies.

The Menzies Government's concerns as to whether it could be subjected to a Soviet quarantine should it host American weapons and bases in the future, was reinforced in discussions on 25 October between Richard A. Woolcott, member of the Australian Delegation to the Seventeenth Session of the UN General Assembly, and Soviet representatives, B. Ivanov, Political Affairs Counsellor of the Soviet Permanent Mission, and

¹¹⁹ See record of conversation, Barwick with Skripov, 25 October 1962, DEA file 262/12/8/1 part 1, CRS A1838, NAA.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ See David Marr, *Barwick*, 2nd ed. (Crows Nest, New South Wales: Allen & Unwin, 2005), chapters 8, 13 -14.

V. Lessiovski, Deputy Director of the Programme Division of the Technical Assistance Board. According to Woolcott's record of conversation, Ivanov asked him

what, for example, would happen if the Soviet Union imposed a blockade on say, Turkey or on Australia if she was to accept American nuclear weapons on her territory and if the Soviet navy at the request of China imposed a naval blockade of Australia.¹²²

The Soviet representatives also maintained that 'offensive nuclear weapons' were not in Cuba, despite Menzies' reference to them in his parliamentary statement. Woolcott noted that according to Lessiovski, only Australia had made such a citation. He added that Ivanov and Lessiovski claimed to have not understood how America had persuaded its allies to accept its unilateral course of action and its lack of consultation even though it 'threatened to involve all the United States' allies in war'. The Soviets, Woolcott believed, had adopted a divide and conquer approach. In response, Woolcott focused on the undoing of the 'delicate nuclear balance' — as Plimsoll had done with Louw — which had been maintained between the two parties to date. The Soviets, though, dismissed his argument stating that for years America had encircled the Soviet Union with nuclear weapons. Woolcott noted that the Soviets had put this argument forcefully to Afro-Asian states who were not unmoved by such views; this was in addition to claims that the weapons in Cuba were defensive and deterred American invasion.¹²³ This also furthered Australia's trepidation that America's resolution would face a difficult path in the UN, which undercut the Menzies Government's hopes for a UN solution to the Crisis.

¹²² Record of conversation, Woolcott with Ivanov and Lessiovski, 25 October 1962, DEA file 262/12/8/1 part 3, CRS A1838, NAA.

¹²³ Ibid. Support from the Afro-Asian states was considered essential in ensuring that the American resolution would pass if brought before the UN General Assembly. Australia actively sought the support of Afro-Asian states. For example, on 25 October, the United States Embassy contacted the DEA on behalf of the State Department to advise that Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, Prime Minister of Nigeria, intended to support America's resolution but it had a policy of non-alignment and faced domestic issues. The United States Embassy requested Alan Renouf, Australian High Commissioner in Lagos, and other Commonwealth High Commissioners, to encourage Balewa, in order to guarantee his support. Renouf was also asked to share Menzies' parliamentary statement with Balewa. Renouf was instructed accordingly by the Menzies Government; see cablegram O.19475, DEA to Australian High Commission Lagos, 26 October 1962, Department of Prime Minister file 1962/920 part 1, CRS A1209, NAA.

This chapter illustrates that, contrary to previous scholarship, Australia did not become aware of the Crisis until 23 October. The Menzies Government had only a few hours advance notice of the Crisis before Kennedy informed the rest of the world. In contrast to Britain, France, and West Germany, which had more notice and information, Australia was in the dark — unbeknown to itself. It relied on Kennedy's personal reassurances and the evidence sighted by its embassy in Washington regarding the build up of missiles. It sought British views on the matter, in vain, and thus was uninfluenced by them. Yet none of these factors prevented the Menzies Government from promptly and publicly declaring its position on the Crisis on the same day it became aware of it. The Government pledged calculated support for America's UN resolution, which perhaps unexpectedly, reflected Australia's desire for a UN solution. Within the UN — courtesy of its active representative, Plimsoll — Australia's support was more broadly pronounced, although not to the detriment of its national interest; this possibly enhanced Australian-American relations, at least in UN circles. However, most significantly, the Menzies Government's deliberate pledge of support revealed three concerns: firstly, its uncertainty over American actions, particularly their legality and any expectations and obligations as to Australia's direct involvement in the Crisis; secondly, its concerns regarding the potential impact of the Crisis on its geostrategic interests, namely, the possibility of it hosting offensive American weapons and bases on Australian soil in order to strengthen its capacity to deal with the increasing threat communism posed to regional security; and thirdly, its apprehension that its South-East Asian neighbours may have intended to become Soviet satellites. Therefore, the Menzies Government's position on the Crisis was shaped by its national interest. This was reflected in its uncertainties and concerns and its growing dependency on its forward defence policy — essentially the American alliance — which was demonstrated by its eager support for American interventions in

South-East Asia in this period. The Crisis, in short, was another chance for the Menzies Government to entrench its relations with America.

Chapter Two

“Once bitten, twice shy”: 26-28 October 1962

On 26 October, Harold Macmillan, British Prime Minister, sent a message to Menzies thanking him for his initial views on the Crisis. He had already sent Menzies a copy of his speech made that day in the House of Commons. Macmillan emphasised three points. Firstly, he acknowledged why America followed through with its declarations of 22 October, and noted that if Kennedy had not done so, ‘he would have struck a severe blow at allied confidence in American declarations’. Secondly, Macmillan stated, in a manner symbolic of Cold War rhetoric:

We should learn the lesson of the pre war period and not become so alarmed by a particular crisis that we settle it at the expense of being a point or two down in the larger struggle... Thus a weak settlement may easily do more harm than good to the long term prospects of peace.¹²⁴

By no means did Macmillan want the Crisis to become a point-scoring opportunity for the Soviets. Thirdly, in light of Soviet deceit, Macmillan claimed that trust was not enough in international relations and stressed the need for verification in future exchanges with the Soviet Union. Macmillan also said that, should negotiations move beyond Cuba and into ‘larger issues’, it would be important for Britain and Australia to consult with each other ‘to ensure that our own positions are properly protected’.¹²⁵ Throughout the Crisis, it was these ‘larger issues’, which were Australia’s and Britain’s primary concerns — ones Australia was being careful to ensure did not cloud its position on the ‘Cuban question’.

In the afternoon of 26 October, the DEA received a communiqué from Donald Munro, First Secretary to the Australian Embassy, Washington, outlining his meeting with W. Averell

¹²⁴ Message, Macmillan to Menzies, 26 October 1962, DEA file TS262/12/8/1, CRS A1838, NAA.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

Harriman, Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs.¹²⁶ Harriman noted his appreciation for Menzies' parliamentary statement and advised that a letter was being written — 'pressure of work had delayed it'. Harriman added that America was most satisfied with reactions in the press and public in all countries apart from Britain, where he thought the response was 'soft'. He was also perturbed by the attitude of Hugh Gaitskell, Leader of the British Labour Party and the Opposition,¹²⁷ who was acrimonious over America's handling of the Crisis and the state of British-American relations.¹²⁸ Australia had done itself a service by distinguishing itself from Britain. The Menzies Government responded promptly to America's claims and relied on the photographs of missile sites viewed by Munro in Washington on 22 October, and Kennedy's personal reassurance that the evidence was beyond dispute. In contrast, Britain, which was aware of the Crisis days prior and armed with further information, was less forthright than Australia in responding to the Crisis. According to Munro, Harriman described the Kennedy Administration's intentions over Cuba as 'resolute but not rigid'. Kennedy intended to exhaust the UN process, presenting an opportunity for Khrushchev to avoid humiliation. This commitment to the UN process would likely have pleased Australia.

A proposal in the UN for nuclear free zones in both Latin America and Africa was one of the 'larger issues' that arose during the Crisis. William B. Buffum, Deputy Director of the Office of UN Political and Security Affairs, advised the Australian Embassy, Washington, that this

¹²⁶ See cablegram 2824, Munro to DEA, 25 October 1962, DEA file 262/12/8/1 part 2, CRS A1838, NAA. Munro originally had an appointment with Alexis Johnson, Deputy Under Secretary for Political Affairs, but due to Johnson's schedule, it was arranged for Munro to meet instead with Harriman. Munro ensured the DEA that his meeting with Harriman was in no way of lesser value because Harriman was involved in high level discussions within the State Department, and the Australian Embassy, Washington, had been informed that the senior State Department officials worked as a team. Munro obviously felt a need to clarify that whilst he was bumped from Johnson's schedule, Harriman had access to important and credible information on the Kennedy Administration's position that would be useful for the Menzies Government.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ See Scott, *Macmillan, Kennedy and the Cuban Missile Crisis*, 91-92.

proposal had surprised America.¹²⁹ In the same meeting in which Harriman commented on Britain's response to the Crisis, he confirmed to Munro that America was not adverse to nuclear free zones;¹³⁰ they would ensure that the equilibrium between the Soviets and the Americans was unlikely to become unbalanced. For the Menzies Government, however, calls in the international community for nuclear free zones most likely caused unease over whether its desires to bolster Australia's defensive capacity with offensive weapons under its forward defence policy would be hampered. Such apprehension was reflected in Munro's question to Harriman over possible implications of nuclear free zones in South-East Asia. Harriman advised that there were no implications because China was engaged in the region and was not a UN member.¹³¹ Nevertheless, nuclear free zones remained an issue for the Menzies Government into the following year when, in the lead up to the 1963 election, the ALP campaigned on a nuclear free zone in the southern hemisphere.¹³² Finally, in response to Munro's further questions, Harriman also advised that discussion on bases could not be excluded.¹³³ This was yet another 'larger issue' which would have furthered the Menzies Government's concerns regarding its forward defence policy, and thus its regional interests.

On 26 October, the DEA also received information from Sir James Plimsoll, Australia's Permanent Representative to the UN, advising it to expect discussion on bases. Plimsoll had been told, in confidence, by A.W. Cordier, UN Under Secretary, that America was 'prepared for a United Nations commission to look at things going beyond Cuba'. This surprised Plimsoll. He did not believe that America would agree to the 'dismantling of bases

¹²⁹ See cablegram 2814, Australian Embassy Washington to DEA, 25 October 1962, DEA file 262/12/8/1 part 2, CRS A1838, NAA.

¹³⁰ See cablegram 2824, Munro to DEA, 25 October 1962, DEA file 262/12/8/1 part 2, CRS A1838, NAA.

¹³¹ Ibid. For discussion on Australian-American relations in this period with regards to China, see Timothy P. Maga, 'The Politics of Non-recognition: the United States, Australia, and China, 1961-1963', *Journal of Australian Studies* 14, no. 27 (1990): 8-18.

¹³² See Edwards, *Crises and Commitments*, 278.

¹³³ See cablegram 2824, Munro to DEA, 25 October 1962, DEA file 262/12/8/1 part 2, CRS A1838, NAA.

everywhere' even though this would probably be what the Soviets would suggest. Plimsoll asked Cordier whether he would likewise inform others of America's position, and noted that Cordier's response was that he would talk to 'Poland and probably Sweden and perhaps some others who he thought might be playing a key role at present'.¹³⁴ Cordier's remarks indicated that he believed Australia played a vital role in the Crisis, at least within the UN, which would have brought satisfaction for Plimsoll and the Menzies Government.

The DEA received another cable from Plimsoll that day with his views on the legality of the quarantine. He agreed with the DEA's position that one way America could have justified its quarantine, in the absence of UN approval, was to rely on OAS endorsement. He then stated that 'in the last resort, however, we would have to maintain that irrespective of legality the United States and other American countries are acting in this way from the simple motive of survival'. In other words, America acted in self-defence and this was paramount to any conflict with principles of international law. Plimsoll agreed that it was possible that America would intervene militarily to dismantle the bases and oust Castro, although he had not received any communication to that effect. Nonetheless, Plimsoll noted that 'a feeling that something might happen is growing here'. Although Plimsoll agreed with the Menzies Government's position on the Crisis as outlined by the DEA, he stated that if the matter was brought before the UN General Assembly, Australia's position would depend on the current state of affairs and 'what flexibility the Americans can show as to the range of subjects that might be brought under discussion'.¹³⁵ Essentially, Plimsoll advised the DEA against being rigid — he wanted to ensure Australia was flexible and thus able to respond to the rapidly changing circumstances of the Crisis. The Menzies Government could rely on Plimsoll to act

¹³⁴ Cablegram UN1494, Plimsoll to DEA, 25 October 1962, DEA file 262/12/8/1 part 2, CRS A1838, NAA.

¹³⁵ Cablegram UN1504, Plimsoll to DEA, 26 October 1962, DEA file 262/12/8/1 part 2 CRS A1838, NAA in relation to cablegrams 775 and 2169 respectively (DEA no. O.19418), DEA to Australian Mission to UN and Australian Embassy Washington, 20 October 1962 [sic; actual date 29 October 1962], DEA file 262/12/8/1 part 1, CRS A1838, NAA. NB: pages 2-4 of this cablegram are located later in this file.

in Australia's national interest, given the value he placed on Australian-American relations despite the risk, as was evident in the previous chapter in his conversation with Eric Louw, South African Foreign Minister, that he would commit Australia beyond its intentions. Plimsoll also felt that the DEA had overlooked an important factor regarding the missile build up in formulating its position on the Crisis. Plimsoll noted that although the DEA had referred to the threat the missiles posed to American security in earlier communiqués, he thought that the DEA could have been more forthright and, subsequently, felt that Australia had given insufficient attention to the serious impact the Crisis could have on Soviet policy worldwide, and thus, the global balance of power. His impressions stemmed from

unofficial speculation [in New York] that Khrushchev's recent delays on Berlin were prompted by a desire to wait until Cuba had been built up, not as a bargaining counter in itself but as lead in to a basic readjustment of relative strategic strength.¹³⁶

This was in contrast to information the Menzies Government received from the Australian High Commission, London, who advised that some British officials, felt Khrushchev's actions were for the purposes of bargaining, and not a more general attempt to adjust the balance of power.¹³⁷ Clearly, Soviet intentions were unknown to Australia and its allies.

On 27 October, following its correspondence with Plimsoll regarding Australian foreign policy, the DEA sent a cable to some of its legations to clarify Australia's position on the Crisis.¹³⁸ The DEA emphasised that it did not want the Crisis to distract the Americans and Europeans from matters arising in South-East Asia or inhibit its allies' 'capability to take effective action' to maintain regional security.¹³⁹ Apart from noting that it had reservations

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ See cablegram 5304, Australian High Commission London to DEA, 26 October 1962, DEA file 262/12/8/1 part 2, CRS A1838, NAA.

¹³⁸ See cablegram AP138 (DEA no. O.19506), DEA to Australian legations in: New York (UN); London; Lagos; Dar es Salaam; Paris; the Hague; Cairo; Tokyo; and all other posts except Dili, 27 October 1962, DEA file 262/12/8/1 part 2, CRS A1838, NAA.

¹³⁹ Ibid. The China-India border dispute was, for the Menzies Government, a timely example of such concerns. It had been overtaken by the Crisis; see J.D.B. Miller, 'Australia and the Indian Ocean Area, 1961-1965', in Greenwood and Harper, *Australia in World Affairs*, 432. Furthermore, when questions were asked about this

regarding the quarantine, the DEA did not refer to the quarantine in any further detail in this communication — it was an issue that Australia did not want its legations to entertain. Rather, it preferred that its legations focused on the clandestine acts and deceit of the Soviet Union; the importance of regional defence arrangements; and the hypocrisy of the Soviet Union's own statements in that it had previously declared that it did not need 'missile bases outside her own territories'.¹⁴⁰ On the contrary, Foss Shanahan, New Zealand's Permanent Representative to the UN, thought that whilst the American position was not perfect, international legal considerations regarding for example, the quarantine, were irrelevant. Shanahan also thought that the Crisis was one which the UN was unable to manage; thus it would be resolved by the 'two great powers' and that other states, particularly Afro-Asian states, would have little impact.¹⁴¹ This was in stark contrast to Plimsoll's views and actions, and that of America, to obtain the support of non-committed Afro-Asian states in the UN.

In light of the uncertainty surrounding Soviet actions and intentions regarding Cuba and Berlin, the DEA felt it pertinent to keep a close watch on Soviet activity in its region. On the evening of 27 October, the DEA sent another communiqué to its legations to ascertain the views of foreign offices on possible ramifications of the Crisis in South-East Asia.¹⁴² The DEA advised legations that it considered that the Soviets would have wanted to avoid initiating disturbances that were not within its full control, and that it would have discouraged its allies, in particular North Vietnam and China, from augmenting international hostilities. The DEA added that the Soviet Union's preference was 'to concentrate on exploiting

dispute in the Senate, it appeared that there was little awareness of the current state of affairs; see *CPD*, vol. S 22, 24 October 1962, 1080 and 1084.

¹⁴⁰ See cablegram AP138 (DEA no. O.19506), DEA to Australian legations in: New York (UN); London; Lagos; Dar es Salaam; Paris; the Hague; Cairo; Tokyo; and all other posts except Dili, 27 October 1962, DEA file 262/12/8/1 part 2, CRS A1838, NAA.

¹⁴¹ See cablegram 282 (commentary no. 6 of New Zealand Mission to UN), Shanahan to Holyoake, 27 October 1962, DEA file 262/12/8/1 part 1, CRS A1838, NAA.

¹⁴² See cablegram O.19502, DEA to Australian legations in: Washington; New York; Vientiane; Tokyo; London; Ottawa; New Delhi; Phnom Penh; Paris; Saigon; Singapore; and Hong Kong, 27 October 1962, DEA file 262/12/8/1 part 2, CRS A1838, NAA.

international public reactions against the United States rather than confuse issues by initiating war like ventures elsewhere'. Nevertheless, it ruminated whether China would see this as an opportunity to '[test] the United States position in the Far East', and whether North Vietnam would 'delay withdrawal of their forces still further and continue to obstruct inspection' regarding the Laotian settlement; although the DEA thought it 'unlikely that Hanoi would wish to risk escalation of the present conflict in South Vietnam by overt intervention'.¹⁴³ The first reply the DEA received to its communiqué was from the Australian High Commission in London on the morning of 28 October. The Australian High Commission advised that the British Foreign Office, albeit in the absence of a detailed assessment, identified South East Asia 'as an area where the West is vulnerable and that it must therefore be included with other possible areas where pressure could be applied at this time'.¹⁴⁴ This underlined the Menzies Government's concerns that there could be repercussions from the Crisis in its region, which could involve instability. American and European preoccupation with Cuba and Berlin amplified Australian anxieties that its allies — on whom its defence arrangements depended — may not come to its aid.

At 9:15am on 28 October, the DEA received a cable from the Australian Embassy, Washington. It detailed a statement released at 12:15pm on 27 October by the White House in response to an 'offer by Khrushchev to withdraw offensive weapons from Cuba if the USA would withdraw missiles from Turkey'. The Kennedy Administration's statement acknowledged that within the last 24 hours, 'several inconsistent and conflicting proposals' had been made by the Soviet Union.¹⁴⁵ Six minutes later the DEA received a further cable from the Australian Embassy, Washington, noting that Pierre Salinger, White House Press

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Cablegram 5307, Australian High Commission London to DEA, 27 October 1962, DEA file 262/12/8/1 part 2, CRS A1838, NAA.

¹⁴⁵ See cablegram 2848, Australian Embassy Washington to DEA, 27 October 1962, DEA file 262/12/8/1 part 2, CRS A1838, NAA.

Secretary, had clarified that there were two messages from Khrushchev: the first was received on the night of 26 October; the second had been transmitted via the Soviet news service, Tass, on the morning of 27 October.¹⁴⁶ That afternoon, 28 October, before the DEA learnt of the nature and content of Khrushchev's letters, it received the text of Kennedy's reply to Khrushchev dated 27 October. Kennedy welcomed Khrushchev's intentions 'to seek a prompt solution to the problem' as noted in his first letter. Kennedy reiterated America's policy — as declared on 22 October — and noted that only once these demands were met, would America lift the quarantine and give 'assurances against an invasion of Cuba'. Once tensions were eased, Kennedy stated that it would be possible 'to work toward a more general arrangement regarding "other armaments"', as proposed in your second letter which you made public'.¹⁴⁷ The DEA had to try and piece together Salinger's White House statement and Kennedy's reply to Khrushchev, in an attempt to make sense of the events of 27 October. The state of the Crisis was clarified to Plimsoll, who subsequently briefed the DEA, at a meeting convened by Adlai Stevenson, American Ambassador to the UN, for representatives of the major allied powers on 27 October;¹⁴⁸ most likely it was a great source of pride and satisfaction for Australia to be in such company. Stevenson confirmed that on the evening of 26 October, Kennedy received a letter from Khrushchev which advised that the Soviets would accept the proposed solution. However, on the morning of 27 October, an additional message from Khrushchev to Kennedy was broadcast via Tass and sent to Washington. This second message introduced the issue of American bases in Turkey, and therefore, broadened the context of discussions. America then had both an official message from Khrushchev and

¹⁴⁶ See cablegram 2849, Australian Embassy Washington to DEA, 27 October 1962, DEA file 262/12/8/1 part 2, CRS A1838, NAA.

¹⁴⁷ Cablegram 2855, Australian Embassy Washington to DEA, 27 October 1962, DEA file 262/12/8/1 part 2, CRS A1838, NAA.

¹⁴⁸ See cablegram UN1519, Plimsoll to DEA, 27 October 1962, DEA file 262/12/8/1 part 2, CRS A1838, NAA. Countries that participated in the meeting included: United Kingdom; France; Canada; Germany; Norway; Italy; Japan; Turkey; Iran; Haiti (Chairman of Latin American group); Chile and Venezuela (Latin American members of UN Security Council).

this additional one. Khrushchev's demand for the removal of Turkish bases complicated matters; the Jupiter missiles in Turkey were installed by NATO and thus, Stevenson asserted, could only be dealt with by the NATO Council and with Turkey's consent.¹⁴⁹ According to Plimsoll, such a proposal 'would unbalance the defence structure of Europe', and this would undoubtedly have global repercussions. It was noted that the White House statement 'was not intended as a rejection', and in Kennedy's reply to Khrushchev — which the DEA had seen before it received Plimsoll's notes on his meeting with Stevenson — it was posited that the Turkish bases would inhibit a quick resolution of the Crisis over Cuba. Plimsoll wrote that it was possible that America would be happy to discuss general disarmament 'but that Cuba was a separate question'.¹⁵⁰ It was clear that the second letter had baffled the Kennedy Administration. Stevenson admitted that had it not been for that letter and the question over Turkey, 'he had hoped to be discussing today the modalities of running down and assurances'. Stevenson requested that representatives speak with other delegations and stress to them: that the urgency of the situation and the Crisis was a result of the Soviets' introduction of offensive weapons in Cuba; that the inclusion of Turkey in negotiations would complicate matters; and that negotiations should be confined to Cuba. Plimsoll then added to Stevenson's request:

We ought also to get across the point that it was not only the US that had been deceived by the Soviet Union but all others countries as well. As late as yesterday, some Africans were saying to me that they remained unconvinced that there were any missile installations on Cuba despite the photographs, and another representative had told me, after talking to the Russians, that he had no reason to think there were any Russian military on the island. Khrushchev himself had pulled the rug from under the feet of such persons. The communist delegations would no doubt be fanning out now among other delegations with a new line to spread Khrushchev's latest position and we should try and inculcate among the uncommitted countries a feeling of "once bitten, twice shy".¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁹ Ibid. The missiles in Italy and Turkey were stationed as a result of a NATO Council decision in December 1957.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

Plimsoll concluded that his suggestion was accepted by the representatives.¹⁵² Again, Plimsoll demonstrated his confidence amongst his colleagues, particularly the Americans, in suggesting strategies for gaining the support of non-committed countries — Stevenson requested what the Americans wanted the representatives to do and Plimsoll suggested how they should do it. Plimsoll's desire to ensure the non-committed countries were onside also reflected the Menzies Government's concerns regarding its neighbours and its national interest; for Australia, this was an attempt to guarantee that South-East Asian states would not become Soviet satellites in its region.

In fulfilment of his promise to stay in touch, Macmillan sent Menzies two messages on 28 October. Macmillan wanted to share with Menzies, a message he had sent to Khrushchev regarding his second letter to Kennedy. Macmillan expressed to Khrushchev Britain's willingness to discuss other issues such as disarmament and test bans, which Khrushchev had raised, but emphasised that the priority was to deal with the missiles in Cuba at first instance. Macmillan told Menzies: 'I trust that you will feel that this represents a reasonable proposal to Mr Khrushchev and that you will use your influence to support my approach'.¹⁵³ Macmillan hoped that Menzies, too, would support discussions on larger issues following settlement of the Crisis. Australia had thus received requests for support from both of its great and powerful friends during the Crisis.

It has been demonstrated in this chapter that the Menzies Government found out about the letters between Kennedy and Khrushchev in a disjointed manner, mainly due to time differences. This made it more difficult for Australia to follow the Crisis as it unfolded. Plimsoll was able to clarify events, although Soviet intentions remained unknown. Again, he

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Messages, Macmillan to Menzies, 28 October 1962, DEA file 262/12/8/1 part 3, CRS A1838, NAA. The messages differ greatly in length; this passage draws on the lengthier of the two messages.

displayed his dynamism at the UN, where the Crisis had prompted discussion over larger issues, specifically: foreign bases, nuclear disarmament, nuclear test bans, and nuclear free zones. Britain was particularly interested in disarmament and sought the Menzies Government's support on this matter; thus, Australia had to juggle the requests and interests of both its allies. The Menzies Government had concerns about these larger issues. It believed disarmament and nuclear free zones would inhibit its geostrategic plans to increase its defensive capacity, such as through the attainment of American offensive weapons and bases, which again, reflected its concerns over instability in South-East Asia. Australia did not want its neighbours to become Soviet satellites. These concerns were exemplified in various ways: attempts to persuade uncommitted countries to show their support for America's resolution at the UN; enquiries with its legations regarding possible repercussions of the Crisis in South-East Asia; and close monitoring of Soviet activity in its region. Australia was concerned that American and European fixation on Cuba and Berlin would leave its region vulnerable to the communist bloc.

Chapter Three

“Step back from danger”: 29-31 October 1962

On the morning of 29 October, the DEA received communiqués from the Australian Embassy, Washington, with news that Khrushchev had agreed to dismantle and remove Soviet missile bases installed in Cuba. In his reply to Khrushchev and his White House statement, Kennedy welcomed Khrushchev's decision and emphasised UN verification of the dismantlement of weapons and bases, in order for the quarantine to be lifted.¹⁵⁴ Kennedy's message concluded:

I agree with you that we must devote urgent attention to the problem of disarmament, as it relates to the whole world and also to critical areas. Perhaps now, as we step back from danger we can, together make real progress in this vital field. I think we should give priority to questions relating to the proliferation of nuclear weapons, on Earth and in outer space, and to the great effort for a nuclear test ban... the United States Government will be prepared to discuss these questions urgently, and in a constructive spirit, at Geneva or elsewhere.¹⁵⁵

Effectively, larger issues, such as nuclear disarmament and test bans, were on the table. Time differences meant that Australia went to bed on 28 October with the world on the brink of thermonuclear war and awoke on 29 October to reports that the Crisis appeared to be over; for Australia, the Crisis seemed to have ended as quickly as it had begun.

America believed it could add the Crisis to its Cold War victory list. Plimsoll noted in a cable to the DEA that, in a press conference, Dean Rusk, US Secretary of State, requested the press not to boast about the outcome of the Crisis. He was concerned that if the Crisis were depicted too much as a Soviet defeat, Khrushchev could feel pressured to restore his glory by undertaking action elsewhere. Clearly, this remained a possibility and relations were still

¹⁵⁴ See cablegrams 2860 and 2858 respectively, Australian Embassy Washington to DEA, 28 October 1962, DEA file 262/12/8/1 part 3, CRS A1838, NAA.

¹⁵⁵ Cablegram 2860, Australian Embassy Washington to DEA, 28 October 1962, DEA file 262/12/8/1 part 3, CRS A1838, NAA.

sensitive;¹⁵⁶ as was noted in the previous chapter, Australia was already monitoring the prospect of Soviet activity in South-East Asia.

On 29 October, William Battle, American Ambassador to Australia, forwarded a message from Kennedy to Menzies in response to Menzies' letter dated 23 October. Kennedy stated he was 'most pleased and grateful' for Menzies' letter and his forthright parliamentary statement on the Crisis. Interestingly, Kennedy noted:

Such prompt and vigorous support from your government comes as no surprise, but it is specially reassuring to know that we can count on active assistance from our closest friends during the troubled days that lie ahead.¹⁵⁷

The Menzies Government's anti-communist views, and the close relations that had developed between Australia and America in the previous decade, meant that America was convinced it had Australia's support before it had so declared. It was not completely unreasonable for America to have made such an assumption: Australia had previously demonstrated to America that it could respond swiftly to requests for support. Australia's entry into the Korean War,¹⁵⁸ and its more recent commitments to Thailand and Vietnam, evidenced Australia's willingness to support American interventions, but in furtherance of its own regional concerns. Thus, it appears that the Kennedy Administration did not feel it had to gain Australia's support for this Crisis. Whilst America may have overestimated the extent of Australia's support for its actions — its pledge was not an open-ended one — Australia nonetheless met American expectations, and it did so more quickly, and with less evidence, than America provided to other allies.

¹⁵⁶ See cablegram UN1532, Plimsoll to DEA, 28 October 1962, DEA file 262/12/8/1 part 3, CRS A1838, NAA.

¹⁵⁷ Message from Kennedy to Battle for Menzies, 29 October 1962, Department of Prime Minister file 1962/912, CRS A1209, NAA.

¹⁵⁸ In 1950, whilst Menzies was in transit to Washington, Sir Percy Spender, then Minister for External Affairs, arranged for Australia to promptly and publicly commit troops to Korea before Britain; see David Lowe, *Australian Between Empires: The Life of Percy Spender* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2010), 134.

In the afternoon of 30 October, Donald Munro, First Secretary to the Australian Embassy, Washington, responded to the DEA's earlier inquiry on repercussions of the Crisis in South-East Asia. Munro described his conversation with Averell Harriman, Assistant Secretary of the Far East, on 29 October which, given recent events, did not focus on possible repercussions in South-East Asia whilst America was preoccupied with Cuba, but rather, on post-Crisis impact in the region. According to Munro:

Harriman's general attitude appeared to be that the Cuban crisis could have repercussions in South East Asia and the Far East, not so much because of communist countries in the area seeking to take advantage of the United States preoccupation with Cuba as because of conflicting attitudes within the bloc itself.¹⁵⁹

Harriman added that even if Cold War tensions were lessened and this had a positive effect on issues such as Berlin and disarmament, he thought this was unlikely to extend to the Far East because of the Soviet Union's influence over China and Vietnam.¹⁶⁰ Therefore, like the British Foreign Office, Harriman believed that there could be ramifications in South-East Asia about which Australia should be concerned, although Harriman did not attribute such ramifications to the Crisis, but to relations between the communist states. Irrespective of their catalyst, consensus from Australia's most important allies that it could face repercussions in its region, would likely have exacerbated existing concerns of the Menzies Government. Munro also asked Harriman whether a deal over bases in Cuba and Turkey was possible. Harriman's response was that Kennedy and Khrushchev had reached an understanding and the 'tradeable elements' were reflected in their letters; his further comments, however, indicated that the Jupiter missiles would eventually be obsolete and the bases in Turkey would not be there forever.¹⁶¹ Finally, Munro and Harriman further discussed nuclear free zones in more detail, which enabled Munro to obtain a deeper understanding of the American

¹⁵⁹ Cablegram 2871, Munro to DEA, 29 October 1962, DEA file 262/12/8/1 part 3, CRS A1838, NAA.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ See cablegram 2879, Munro to DEA, 29 October 1962, DEA file 262/12/8/1 part 3, CRS A1838, NAA. Munro and Harriman only met once that day however, Munro reflected the different issues discussed in separate cablegrams; 2871 and 2879. This view was later reflected in R.F. Kennedy, *Thirteen Days*, 72-73.

position. Harriman confirmed that America was open to the idea of them and could see their advantages in Latin America and Africa, but maintained that China would obstruct such a zone in the Far East.¹⁶² Nuclear free zones had quickly become an important issue. Harriman had requested Australia's views on such zones which prompted Munro to seek instructions from the DEA on the Menzies Government's position.¹⁶³ Nuclear free zones in Africa and Latin America would have limited locations for housing nuclear weapons. Whilst in some respects, this may have increased Australia's likelihood of hosting its allies' weapons and bases, which would have furthered its forward defence policy, it was felt that 'Australia would be isolated into a very awkward position' through its increased exposure to regional threats;¹⁶⁴ indeed, Cuba exemplified, that weapons and bases could be speedily constructed. Again, Australia was faced with the challenge of wanting to adopt its own position on the issue at hand against the need to maintain its relations with its most important ally, America — both required careful consideration of Australia's national interest. Nuclear free zones were yet another formidable issue for Australia.

Some sections of Australian society responded directly to Barwick over the Menzies Government's position on the Crisis. In their cables to Barwick, the Union of Australian Women simply urged 'no Australian alliance with Yanks against Cuba'; the crew of *SS Age* called for 'non interference [in] internal affairs [of] Cuban people'; and J. Lowry of the Port Kembla branch of the Waterside Workers Federation who was employed on *SS Age*, demanded that the Australian Government 'condemn [the] latest threat to world peace'. The crew of *SS Mount Keira*, also insisted that the Australian Government 'protest to [the]

¹⁶² See cablegram 2879, Munro to DEA, 29 October 1962, DEA file 262/12/8/1 part 3, CRS A1838, NAA. America endorsed Brazil's proposal for a nuclear free zone in Latin America on 30 October; see cablegram 2885, Australian Embassy Washington to DEA, 30 October 1962, DEA file 262/12/8/1 part 3, CRS A1838, NAA.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ See minute, Griffith to Bunting regarding enclosed draft message from Menzies to Macmillan, 30 October 1962, Department of Prime Minister file 1962/912, CRS A1209, NAA.

American Government against [the] threatened invasion of Cuba'.¹⁶⁵ Barwick received one letter of support for the Menzies Government's response from L.K. Appleton, a member of the public, who stated that 'all level headed and freedom loving Australians will be proud that our Government has taken a stance squarely behind America's action in the Cuban affair'.¹⁶⁶ Barwick also received a telegram from the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom on 26 October, which recommended the 'Government support United Nations Secretary General's proposals for disengagement'.¹⁶⁷ In total, Barwick received six cables: four protested against the Crisis and the Government's position; one welcomed it; and the other was neutral. In contrast, the Australian Embassy, Washington, advised the DEA that Pierre Salinger, White House Press Secretary, 'reported a deluge of 4,000 telegrams to the President running 12 to 1 in his favour'.¹⁶⁸ The response of New Zealanders to the Crisis reflected the other extreme. The DEA obtained a record of conversation between F.W. Truelove of the Australian High Commission, Wellington, and K. Piddington, European and American Affairs Division, New Zealand DEA, Wellington. Piddington advised Truelove that New Zealand Prime Minister, Keith Holyoake, had received 55 cables of which only five supported the Government's stance; the other 50 purported that it should have 'adopted a more neutral position'. Piddington noted that of this 50, while some represented 'an organised effort by the nuclear disarmers, many of them appear to be genuine independent expressions of protest'. He also noted that this volume of protest was significantly more than

¹⁶⁵ Series of telegrams to Barwick, 23-24 October 1962, DEA file 262/12/8/1 part 1, CRS A1838, NAA.

¹⁶⁶ Letter, Appleton to Barwick, 25 October 1962, DEA file 262/12/8/1 part 3, CRS A1838, NAA. Appleton also thought American consular offices and property in Australia needed 'the maximum protection possible for a possible repetition of communist instigated interference with their property as instanced in Sydney at the time of the "Rosenberg" affair a few years ago'. Appleton added 'nothing could be more pathetic and spineless on our part than to let the commos and traitors in our own country cause inconvenience and embarrassment to officials of the American Government in such circumstances'. G. C. Lewis, Barwick's Private Secretary, sent a reply to Appleton on 29 October thanking him for his expression of support for the Menzies Government's position on the Crisis and noted that his points as to 'the protection of American diplomatic and consular offices' in Australia had been taken into consideration; see Letter, Lewis to Appleton, 29 October 1962, DEA file 262/12/8/1 part 3, CRS A1838, NAA.

¹⁶⁷ Telegram, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom to Barwick, 29 October 1962, DEA file 262/12/8/1 part 3, CRS A1838, NAA.

¹⁶⁸ Cablegram 2783, Australian Embassy Washington to DEA, 23 October 1962, DEA file 262/12/8/1 part 1, CRS A1838, NAA.

what the New Zealand Government had received over the Suez Crisis.¹⁶⁹ Compared to the public reaction in America and New Zealand, Australia fared in between; more striking was that very few cables were received.

On 31 October, Macmillan sent another message to Menzies and attached the parliamentary statement he had made that afternoon. In his message, Macmillan remarked of his relief that ‘American firmness had induced Khrushchev to undertake under United Nations verification the dismantling of missile bases in Cuba’. He emphasized the need for verification in dealings with the Soviet Union, as well as China, in light of Soviet duplicity regarding the Crisis. Macmillan also noted: ‘I hope we can look forward to progress on wider issues such as disarmament’.¹⁷⁰ In his reply to this and other recent messages from Macmillan, Menzies stated:

I agree with you that the situation is one which can only be improved by continuing to give firm support to the resolute stand taken by the United States. I had felt it important myself to make our public position from the beginning one of unequivocal support for the President.¹⁷¹

Australia’s pledge of support for America was indeed unequivocal; it had given deliberate support for America’s UN resolution. The extent of Australian support beyond the realms of the UN, however, was not made plain. Menzies’ reiteration of his firm support for Kennedy buries the doubt and uncertainty shared privately by officials of the DEA, and also the Department of Prime Minister, particularly regarding the legality of the quarantine and expectations as to Australia’s participation in it. It is difficult to ascertain the extent of Menzies’ faith in Kennedy and his Administration during the Crisis; apart from the approval he gave to messages drafted on his behalf and the delivery of his parliamentary statement, he does not appear to have personally made a significant contribution to Australia’s response to

¹⁶⁹ See record of conversation, Truelove with Piddington, 30 October 1962, DEA file 262/12/8/1 part 3, CRS A1838, NAA.

¹⁷⁰ Message from Macmillan to Kimber for Menzies enclosed with transcript of Macmillan’s statement in the House of Commons on 31 October 1962, 1 November 1962, DEA file 262/12/8/1 Part 3, CRS A1838, NAA.

¹⁷¹ Message, Menzies to Macmillan, 31 October 1962, DEA file 262/12/8/1 part 3, CRS A1838, NAA.

the Crisis.¹⁷² Thus, Menzies' comments to Macmillan could reflect his more personal views, rather than the apprehension expressed by Barwick and other departmental officials who appear to have carried the burden of Australian foreign policy formulation and diplomacy during this Crisis.

Barwick had decided to make a statement in Parliament on the Crisis when it resumed. The DEA suggested it would be useful to include in the booklet of documents to be tabled in Parliament, the messages exchanged between Kennedy and Menzies. It is likely that the DEA wished to publish these messages as it believed they highlighted Australia's importance to America, and moreover, the strength of Australian-American relations. Menzies, however, refused permission for their publication after much communication between the eager DEA, and the reluctant Department of Prime Minister.¹⁷³ The friction between the DEA and the Department of Prime Minister, outlined in Edwards' biography of Sir Arthur Tange, is also apparent in the departmental correspondence over publication of these messages. It is particularly revealing that the Department of Prime Minister, rather than the DEA, still managed relations with the United Kingdom — a relationship that apparently required the direct involvement of the Prime Minister.¹⁷⁴ The Menzies Government's management of American and British influences during the Crisis also involved dealing with divergent views in Canberra towards Australia's allies.

¹⁷² Bell asserts that, in the post-war period, Menzies played a more passive role in decision-making and diplomacy regarding international affairs, and the bulk of the work was undertaken by the various Ministers for External Affairs; see Bell, *Dependent Ally*, 44.

¹⁷³ See minute, J.F. Nimmo (Department of Prime Minister) to Menzies, 1 November 1962, Department of Prime Minister file 1962/912, CRS A1209, NAA; correspondence between Nimmo and Bunting, 31 October 1962, Department of Prime Minister file 1962/912, CRS A1209, NAA; and handwritten note, Forsyth to Barwick, 31 October 1962, DEA file 262/12/8/1 part 3, CRS A1838, NAA.

¹⁷⁴ For further discussion on the friction between the Departments of External Affairs and Prime Minister, see Edwards, *Arthur Tange*, 132. This echoed the more long-standing and profound tension between the Departments of External Affairs and Defence; for this see David Horner, *Defence Supremo: Sir Frederick Shedden and the Making of Australian Defence Policy* (St Leonards, New South Wales: Allen & Unwin, 2000).

This chapter shows that the critical phase of the Crisis ended abruptly for Australia, which awoke to the news on 29 October. As the Crisis itself receded, larger issues, such as nuclear free zones, became increasingly problematic for Australia. There were other challenges too, including ones that required the Menzies Government to look inwards. A close reading of correspondence between the Departments of External Affairs and Prime Minister revealed tensions over the management of Australia's relations with America and Britain. Also revealed is that Kennedy expected Australia's support on the Crisis; such expectations were not unreasonable given Australia's recent support for American interventions in South-East Asia. Kennedy, however, most likely overestimated the extent of Australia's support. As has been argued, the Menzies Government had serious reservations over the Crisis, especially regarding possible repercussions in its region. These were mostly expressed by officials in the Departments of External Affairs and Prime Minister. Menzies does not appear to have made a significant personal contribution to the Crisis, and thus it is difficult to determine his faith in the Kennedy Administration throughout the Crisis. Some members of the Australian public also had reservations, which were directed at the Menzies Government's handling of the Crisis; they did not, however, appear to present challenges for it.

Chapter Four

“Not yet out of the wood”: November-December 1962

On 1 November, Sir Ronald Walker, Australian Ambassador to France, informed the DEA that he had spoken about the Crisis to Charles Lucet, Director General of Political Affairs at the French Foreign Ministry. Regarding ramifications from the Crisis in South East Asia and the Far East, specifically Laos and Vietnam, Walker advised that Lucet believed that America's handling of the Crisis had enhanced its position in the region.¹⁷⁵ Whilst the DEA may have found this news promising, Lucet's comments did not appear to be based on any rigorous assessment, and thus, his positive outlook was probably insufficient to diminish Australian concerns — supported by American and British views — that the Crisis could have repercussions in South-East Asia.

That afternoon, the DEA received a cable from the Australian Embassy in Washington, outlining a discussion its officials had with Ronald I. Spiers, Chief of the Office of Political Affairs in the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, on 31 October. Spiers confirmed America's interest in nuclear free zones; it favoured their development through regional agreements external to the UN framework and believed that they would have greater weight if developed in this manner. Australian Embassy officials put forth the Menzies Government's concerns as to what nuclear free zones would mean for Australia, specifically, that they would be 'unpoliced and their establishment would upset the concept of "balanced disarmament"'. Spiers claimed that Australian anxieties were unfounded. He stated:

¹⁷⁵ See cablegram 1416, Walker to DEA, 31 October 1962, DEA file 262/12/8/1 part 3, CRS A1838, NAA.

Africa and Latin America (except Cuba) by contrast with Europe had no nuclear weapons and the problem was the comparatively simple one of prevention. The creation of nuclear free zones there would not go counter to the global requirement for balanced disarmament. It might not be possible particularly in Africa to obtain the signature of all states (e.g. there would be the difficulty of the Portuguese territories) but the exception would not be of vital significance to the issue of East West balance. He also argued that the agreements need not be without provisions for supervision.¹⁷⁶

In light of Spiers' comments, Australia could be deemed to have overreacted. There was still every possibility that its Asian neighbours could host nuclear weapons, but nuclear free zones in Africa and Latin America would not significantly alter the current state of affairs. Australian officials noted that, according to Spiers, America considered that Western interests would strongly benefit from regional agreements and would help them "in dealing with future Cubas".¹⁷⁷ This echoed the views of Averell Harriman, Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, articulated to Donald Munro, First Secretary to the Australian Embassy, Washington, days prior. This further highlighted that Australia would need to give careful consideration to the impact its conflicting views on nuclear free zones could have on American relations.

The DEA received a telegram from the Australian High Commission in London regarding nuclear disarmament. A.D.F. Pemberton-Pigott of the British Foreign Office, suggested to Australian officials that now was the time to try to take steps forward in this area. Sir Patrick Dean, Permanent Representative of the UK to the UN, and P.R.H. Wright, First Secretary to the British Embassy in Washington, had been instructed to undertake bilateral discussions in New York over expressions of interest declared during the Crisis regarding disarmament. The British hoped the Soviets would be willing to negotiate, but were conscious that America would be unlikely to entertain concessions following the Crisis.¹⁷⁸ Australia found itself in an

¹⁷⁶ Cablegram 2897, Australian Embassy Washington to DEA, 31 October 1962, DEA file 262/12/8/1 part 3, CRS A1838, NAA. Emphasis in original.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ See cablegram 5415, Australian High Commission London to DEA, 1 November 1962, DEA file 262/12/8/1 part 3, CRS A1838, NAA.

interesting situation — its American friends were primarily concerned with nuclear free zones in Africa and Latin America and its British friends wanted to concentrate on disarmament.¹⁷⁹ Australian officials conveyed the Menzies Government's position on disarmament to Pemberton-Piggot: they noted the importance Australia placed on circumventing a commitment, or an obligation to agree to a commitment, that would inhibit Australia's defence including by nuclear means.¹⁸⁰ Clearly Australia was concerned about the effect nuclear disarmament could have on the South-East Asian region.

Parliament sat on 6 November; it was the first sitting since 25 October. In his statement to Parliament, Barwick, rather than Menzies, provided a summary of the key events in the Crisis and detailed the Government's policy; Prime Ministers Harold Macmillan of Britain, John Diefenbaker of Canada, and Keith Holyoake of New Zealand had already made similar statements.¹⁸¹ Barwick opened with comments on Soviet duplicity and repeated Kennedy's description that such actions were “‘clandestine, reckless and [a] provocative threat to world peace’... [which] took the world to the edge of disaster’. However, disaster was averted due to, he stated, America's swift action in collaboration with its allies in the OAS and the bringing of the matter before the UN; he also acknowledged the restraint exercised by Kennedy and Khrushchev throughout negotiations to resolve the Crisis peacefully. The Menzies Government credited America and its OAS partners for their cooperation over regional defence, which was of great importance to Australia. Barwick also felt it critical to underline the danger of assuming that the Crisis was completely resolved and the peril averted — we were ‘not yet out of the wood’. He then credited Kennedy for his

¹⁷⁹ Ibid. Britain was open to nuclear free zones in Africa, but unsure about such zones in Latin America; it believed that the Latin American states supported nuclear free zones in order ‘to oblige Cuba to “submit to nuclear freedom”’. Britain did not think that nuclear free zones in either area would impair the West's strategic position.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ See *CPD*, vol. H of R 37, 6 November 1962, 2049-2054. This was the longest statement the Menzies Government made on the Crisis and it came exactly two weeks after Australia became aware of it.

determination to eliminate the Soviet threat, which he claimed had to be met for the sake of the American population, and beyond:

Peoples in many parts of the world are allied for defence with the United States. If the United States had proved unable to defend herself and her Latin American friends against the threat from Cuba how much could peoples thousands of miles away, faced with similar threats and pressures, have relied on United States assurances that she would assist to defend them?¹⁸²

This, Barwick claimed, would have given the Soviets grounds to repeat their ‘monstrous blackmail’ elsewhere. Barwick then reiterated that the Australian Government ‘was quick to make its attitude clear’ and that Kennedy wrote to Menzies ‘expressing his appreciation of the promptitude of Australia’s publicly stated support’. Barwick emphasised the Soviets’ treatment of its satellites¹⁸³ in an attempt to deter Australia’s South-East Asian neighbours of such ambitions. According to Barwick, there were several outcomes of the Crisis. Firstly, there was a need for verification. Secondly, Western allies united when faced with this Soviet nuclear threat. Thirdly, the UN had a key role: it provided a forum where the Crisis could be resolved and actively encouraged its solution. Finally, the Crisis demonstrated the degree to which the Soviet Union considered Cuba ‘as merely an instrument for the pursuit of its own policies’. The impact the Cuban regime would have on the complete resolution of the Crisis was still unclear; missiles and bases were still in the process of being dismantled and removed from Cuba and Castro had been uncooperative over permitting verification of this by UN observers. Vigilance, stressed Barwick, was most necessary.¹⁸⁴ Whilst negotiations during the Crisis indicated that broader issues could possibly be settled with the Soviets, Barwick warned

there can be no guarantee that [the Soviet Union], or other members of the communist bloc, will not again seek to gain an advantage before or in the course of negotiations that may take place, in an effort to achieve a position from which they might hold the world to ransom.¹⁸⁵

However, there was a qualification:

¹⁸² Ibid., 2050.

¹⁸³ Ibid., 2051-2054.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 2052-2054.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 2054.

This does not mean that Australia will not enthusiastically support every bona fide move for the relief of tension and for general and complete disarmament and in the mean time for the cessation of nuclear testing. Australia will continue to do so but it does mean that every proposal must be examined realistically and due safeguards for performance insisted upon at every stage.¹⁸⁶

Australia, thus, had declared its position on disarmament and nuclear testing. Although it declared its support for disarmament, this was not without a disclaimer: each proposal required stringent examination. The Menzies Government — apprehensive as to what disarmament would mean for Australia's geostrategic interests — yet again gave a calculated expression of support in preservation of its national interest. As for nuclear free zones, Barwick left that unsaid.

On the evening of 10 November, the DEA received a cable from Munro advising that in his view, 'the critical period of confrontation between the two great world powers has now passed, and some assessment may be made of crucial foreign policy issues'. The now less critical period permitted consideration of whether the Kennedy Administration's response to the Crisis was well chosen to meet its aims. Munro thought that the imposition of the 'partial naval blockade' and the warning of further action was a 'smooth operation'. Nevertheless, the blockade and other actions were

taken in the grand manner of traditional power politics. It passed over the more recently established procedures for consultation of allies, consideration of Afro-Asian attitudes, and advance reference to the United Nations.¹⁸⁷

Munro claimed that this path had drawbacks as outlined by American journalist, James Reston, in the *New York Times* on 26 October:

This brisk and sudden diplomacy cannot be pursued without cost. The political reaction within the nation and the alliance has been gratifying to the [Kennedy] Administration, but it is misleading because it is not the same as private reaction. Privately there are several misgivings.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Cablegram 3019, Munro to DEA, 9 November 1962, DEA file DEA file 262/12/8/1 part 3, CRS A1838, NAA.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

Such misgivings, Munro added, referred to the nature of consultation, which he described as ‘merely formal and perfunctory’. He asserted that despite America receiving prompt statements of support from its allies, there was a great deal of suspicion about American intentions, particularly among British officials. Munro felt that this could have negatively influenced the unity of the Western alliance if the Crisis were protracted. Such suspicions were compounded by concerns, especially British ones, that the outcome of the Crisis would tempt America to ‘act brashly and impetuously’, and consequently, lead the Western alliance into unnecessary conflict with the communist bloc.¹⁸⁹ The Menzies Government remained uncertain of American actions throughout the Crisis and this was reflected in the calculated support it provided the Kennedy Administration.

In Parliament on 6 December, Bill Hayden, Labor MP, questioned Menzies as to whether Cuba had become ‘a strategic target of paramount importance’ when bases capable of launching nuclear missiles had been installed there, and whether American actions to remove such bases were justified. Interestingly, he also asked Menzies if he thought that

Australia would similarly become a strategic target of paramount importance if bases capable of discharging nuclear weapons were established here and whether nations objecting to the presence of such bases on Australian soil would be justified in taking action similar to that taken by the United States of America over the bases in Cuba.¹⁹⁰

Menzies replied: ‘I have not seen any description by competent United States authorities of Cuba as “a strategic target of paramount importance”’.¹⁹¹ Hayden, however, was quoting Kennedy who had referred to Cuba as an ‘important strategic base’ in his televised national address on 22 October.¹⁹² Menzies had embarrassingly overlooked this description by the American President. Menzies also made it clear that the Government’s position, as stated on

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ CPD, vol. H of R 37, 6-7 December 1962, 3168-3169.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Transcript of Kennedy’s broadcast on Cuba, 22 October 1962, DEA file 262/12/8/1 part 1, CRS A1838, NAA. See also Young Hum Kim, ed., *Twenty Years of Crises: The Cold War Era* (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1968), 198-203, for a published transcript of Kennedy’s broadcast.

23 October, remained and he would not entertain hypothetical and speculative questions.

Menzies stated:

I do not propose to speculate on the attitude of unnamed countries to the hypothetical situation of nuclear bases being established in this country at some time in the future, especially since I have indicated on previous occasions that Australia has no nuclear bases in its territory and does not at present seek them. However, until such time as agreement is achieved on general and complete disarmament, this Government does not intend to deny itself in advance the right to ensure by whatever means may be necessary the effective defence of this country.¹⁹³

So whilst Menzies claimed that Australia had not sought nuclear bases, it had given this issue serious consideration; it had time before agreement on general and complete disarmament would be reached. It did not want to close the door on any possible options for securing Australia's defences — but Menzies could see that the door was closing.

This chapter has demonstrated that in November and December 1962, the broader, if related, issues of nuclear free zones and disarmament were receiving as much attention as the aftermath of the Crisis. It was clear that America favoured nuclear free zones, and Britain, disarmament. The Menzies Government, however, was concerned about what both issues could mean for Australia's national interest; it accepted that its relations with its allies would need careful management in light of its differing views. It is unlikely that the Government's anxiety was eased by suggestions that the introduction of nuclear free zones, for example, would not significantly alter the current state of affairs in its region. It did not announce its stance on nuclear free zones in December when it declared its position on nuclear tests and disarmament — its views were calculated, just as they were over the Crisis. Barwick believed that Australia could remain confident that America would come to its defence if faced with a Soviet threat, as evidenced by the determination shown by the Kennedy Administration during the Crisis to defend itself and its regional partners. However, the Crisis had demonstrated that America had acted unilaterally with little consideration for its allies and

¹⁹³ CPD, vol. H of R 37, 6-7 December 1962, 3168-3169.

their interests; consultation was superficial: 'merely formal and perfunctory', as previously noted. Australia though, had also focused heavily on its national interest; so much so that Menzies had failed to recall that for America, Cuba represented an important strategic base.

Conclusion

From November, the Crisis eventually subsided. The missiles and bases in Cuba had been dismantled, crated and returned to the Soviet Union. Khrushchev had also agreed to remove the Ilyushin-28 bombers, which had increased tensions over whether they, too, were offensive in nature. The quarantine was lifted but American aerial surveillance of Cuba continued. Kennedy was frustrated that the Soviets had been unable to persuade Castro to agree to UN inspection of missiles sites; as such, Kennedy claimed that his agreement with Khrushchev had not been fulfilled. Subsequently, Khrushchev did not obtain the non-invasion of Cuba pledge from Kennedy that he sought. But the Soviets did not walk away from the Crisis empty-handed. It was later revealed that during the darkest days of the Crisis, Kennedy and Khrushchev secretly dealt over the Jupiter missiles in Turkey in exchange for the removal of missiles in Cuba. The Americans and Soviets ultimately ended the Crisis with a *quid pro quo*; a settlement in which the Cubans were absent.

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The Menzies Government's response to the Crisis reveals a great deal about the manner in which it managed its relations with America as at October 1962, and more generally, in the early 1960s. This thesis, the first historical investigation to examine the Crisis in the context of Australian-American relations, clarifies that contrary to existing scholarship, the Menzies Government was not aware of the Crisis until 23 October. It did not receive significant advance notice of the Crisis as previously suggested. The Menzies Government learnt of the Crisis only a few hours before Kennedy's televised address from Washington on 22 October, and at that point, received limited information. It was oblivious to the fact that other allies, namely Britain, France and West Germany, had received more privileged treatment from the Kennedy Administration.

The Government's response to the Crisis was mainly managed by officials in the Departments of External Affairs and Prime Minister; the direct contribution of Menzies is unclear. The tension between these departments regarding the management of Australia's relations with America and Britain was evident in this study.

Importantly, this thesis has demonstrated the different nature of the Menzies Government's response: in public and in private. The speed of Menzies' public declaration of support for America's UN resolution in Parliament on 23 October inclined some to believe that Australia had rushed to the aid of its great and powerful friend, having taken little time to give the matter proper consideration. This thesis has shown, however, that this was not the case. The Menzies Government gave the matter much thought. It also sought Britain's position on the Crisis, although without success. This suggests the importance the Government placed on ensuring the Kennedy Administration received a prompt response, rather than wait for British views; as a result, Australia's position was not influenced by Britain. The calculated nature of the Government's pledge of support for America's UN resolution reflected its private reservations over America's actions; it was not in Australia's national interest for it to give America open-ended assurances. The Menzies Government was both uncertain and concerned about three main matters: the legality of the quarantine; any expectations and obligations regarding its direct involvement in the Crisis; and the possible impact the Crisis — and any precedent it set — could have on Australia's geostrategic interests. It wanted to strengthen its defensive capability to respond to the increasing threat communism posed to regional security and stability, including through offensive means. It thought that it would be in Australia's best interests to host American weapons and bases on Australian soil. In this respect, Australian foreign policy did not align with American foreign policy over the actions of the Soviet Union in Cuba. The Government, however, could not afford to apply its policy

to the situation in Cuba and risk jeopardising its relations with its most important ally, on whom it depended for its defence.

The Crisis had shown Australia that in the face of a Soviet threat, it could depend on America. Its dependency on the American alliance had in fact grown. This was demonstrated by the Menzies Government's support for American interventions in South-East Asia at this time — the Crisis presented itself as yet another opportunity for the Menzies Government to embed its relations with America. Thus, it was not surprising that Kennedy expected Australia's support over the Crisis. This was despite his decision to act unilaterally with little consideration for, and consultation with, its allies. Kennedy, however, probably overestimated the extent of Australia's support and underestimated the extent to which the Government was principally focused on Australia's national interest. This was especially reflected by its regional concerns that its South-East Asian neighbours could become Soviet satellites like Cuba, and that its allies' preoccupation with Cuba and Berlin could leave Australia vulnerable to actions of the communist bloc.

In light of its anxieties over the intentions of its neighbours, Australia worked feverishly in the UN to persuade uncommitted countries to support America's UN resolution. Its proactive approach in the UN — which was perhaps at times beyond the scope the Government intended — and the deliberate nature of its support, also suggested, perhaps unexpectedly, that the Menzies Government sought a UN solution to the Crisis.

Whilst the Crisis began and ended rather quickly for Australia, it had prompted discussion over larger issues, specifically: foreign bases, nuclear disarmament, nuclear test bans, and nuclear free zones. These issues lingered on for some time after the Crisis. America's

attention was on nuclear free zones, which it favoured. Britain, however, was focused on disarmament, and sought the Menzies Government's support on this issue. Therefore, late in 1962, the Menzies Government had to juggle the requests and interests of both its key allies. When the Menzies Government announced its position on nuclear tests and disarmament, its support for such initiatives was again calculated, just as it had been over the Crisis. Its apprehensions about the effect both matters could have on its national interest, for reasons similar to those associated with the Crisis, highlighted that Australia would need to continue carefully to manage its relations with Britain, and most importantly, with America.

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