[redacted]

ELECTRICAL RELEASE
7 Aug 62
DIST: [redacted]

FURTHER UNUSUAL SOVIET/CUBAN TRADE
RELATIONS RECENTLY NOTED

1. In addition to the Soviet cargo ships reported earlier as en route or possibly en route Cuba [redacted] at least two more, the F. VAVILOV [UYYU, 12090GT] and the UMAN' [UIFH, 5628GT], have departed the Black Sea declaring for Conakry with low cargo tonnages reported and are presently en route Cuba. Also, there is an indication that three more Soviet merchant ships are following the same general pattern. These are: (a) KHIRURG VISHNEVSKIJ [UYOK, 12016GT], which declared for Accra with 1300 tons of "General" cargo; (b) METALLURG BARDIN [URDP, 12285GT], which declared for Conakry with 1438 tons of "General" cargo; and (c) METALLURG BAJKOV [UWQU, 12017GT], which declared for Casablanca with 140 [sic] tons "General" cargo. It is estimated that these ships may be en route Cuba. Additionally, the cargo ships AL'MET'EVSK [UKKB, 5419GT], BALTIJSK [UVHY, 5585GT], and the IZHEVSK [UICP, 5513GT], which departed the Baltic with unknown cargoes, and the KURA [UYSM, 4048GT], which departed the Black Sea with 2427 tons of grain, are also presently en route Cuba. No unusual circumstances surround these last four ships.

2. Four of the cargo ships reported earlier, as possibly, are now definitely determined to be en route Cuba, i.e., the N. PIROGOV, F. KURCHATOV, LENINOGORSK, and the MEDNOGORSK.

3. Thus far in the 3rd quarter of 1962, 21 Soviet merchant vessels representing 134,107 gross tons (plus 3 possible candidates totaling 36,888 gross tons) are either en route or have arrived in Cuba from the Soviet Union. The following chart provides figures for comparison purposes of tonnages arriving from the USSR (NOTE: Figures represent gross tonnage of vessels involved, not of cargoes actually delivered):

THIS DOCUMENT CONTAINS THREE PAGES

[redacted]
ELECTRICAL RELEASE

3rd Qtr 61		4th Qtr 61		1st Qtr 62		2nd Qtr 62	
July	54,183	Oct	82,596	Jan	103,134	Apr	105,836
Aug	44,576	Nov	36,389	Feb	109,862	May	133,953
Sep	52,798	Dec	64,938	Mar	83,708	Jun	100,362
Total:	151,557		183,923		296,704		340,151
Average	50,519		61,307		98,901		113,383

4. The criteria for originally reporting this activity were: (a) the relatively large number of ships departing the Black Sea and declaring for various ports on the African continent (port and cargo declarations from ships departing the Baltic are not normally noted; therefore, any assumptions attributing anything out of the ordinary to their activity is purely conjectural); (b) the fact that they all declared very low cargo tonnages in comparison with their known cargo capacities; and (c) a distinct lack of [redacted] regarding cargoes and ports of departure/arrival. It must be cautioned, however, that diversionary port declarations by individual ships are not considered extraordinary. In this instance, the fact that so many ships within such a short period of time seemed to be employing this gambit was felt to be noteworthy. Indeed, it might have been considered even more extraordinary if all the ships had plainly declared for Cuba.

5. Therefore, when evidence became available which tended to explain the facts in other than military terms [redacted] some of the apparently extraordinary aspects of this merchant activity could reasonably be explained: (a) the light loading of the vessels might be a reflection of a Soviet inability to furnish industrial/agricultural materials to the Cubans; (b) the military equipment already in Cuba was in excess of what was needed or could be paid for; therefore, the ships were needed to export the material from Cuba (an unprecedented occurrence); and (c) little [redacted] traffic would be expected if the ships were not carrying anything but the stated cargo tonnages.

[redacted]
ELECTRICAL RELEASE

6. There is some evidence to substantiate an assumption that at least some of these ships may be carrying military cargo. It has been past experience that the Soviets generally attempt to conceal military shipments by such means as declaring it "Varied" or "General" cargo. At least nine (not including the three possibilities noted in paragraph 1) of these vessels did, in fact, make such declarations which permits the assessing of a certain amount of the cargo to be possibly military.

7. However, it is considered that any assumptions concerning a general increase or a rapid acceleration of transport of military equipment from the USSR to Cuba is to be treated with extreme reserve.

[redacted]