

c. The Betancourt government has struck back hard. Its new unified command over the security forces, **set up at US urging,** passed this initial test with flying colors.

d. At least 500 extremists were arrested and the round-up is still going on. Their removal will hamper the Communist drive against elections in major cities like Caracas.

e. We now expect the elections to be held on schedule, a considerable achievement under the circumstances. The elections will be followed, however, by a Communist effort to prevent the March inauguration of the victor.

f. The rub here is that none of the presidential candidates commands President Betancourt's considerable assets for dealing successfully with the harsh realities of Venezuelan politics. The constitution prevents Betancourt from succeeding himself.

g. In the background, as always, looms the military, which could intervene if the president-elect shows signs of being soft on communism.

### 3. USSR-Cuba

a. In the past week **we inter-  
cepted** Cuban military **messages which  
show** that Cuban interpreters are now  
posted at several surface-to-air mis-  
sile (SAM) sites on the island.

b. We think this means that  
on-site training of Cubans has begun  
on schedule. Field training is to  
last six months, after which the  
SAM system may be turned over to  
Castro.

c. In the past month some  
1,500 Soviets arrived in Cuba. Most  
of these were probably SAM experts,  
sent to monitor the training.

d. Prior to their coming, we  
had detected no more than a few  
hundred Soviet military personnel  
entering Cuba since the October  
crisis last year.

e. We estimate that at least  
15,000, and probably closer to  
18,000, have been withdrawn in the  
intervening 13 months, leaving, very  
roughly, 4,000 to 7,000. Those re-  
maining are for the most part ad-  
visors whose main functions are to  
train and supervise Cubans in the  
use of weapons turned over to them.

(Cont'd)

For The President Only - Top Secret

- E. Thailand Prime Minister Sarit, who suffers from an incurable liver disease, is failing. Doctors attending him, including one of our own, give him no more than six months more. Sarit has attempted to arrange for an orderly succession when he does go. The chances of this are not good; Thai politicians and military figures are already jostling one another for position.
- F. USSR Cosmos 22, launched a week ago, was recovered yesterday. It is the eleventh unmanned satellite to be recovered. All recoverable satellites have been launched from Tyuratam, the main Soviet missile test center, and recovered after three to ten days aloft. A series of non-recoverable satellites has been fired from Kapustin Yar.  
(See Chart)  
(INTERCEPTS)