KHRUSHCHEV, CASTRO, AND KENNEDY: MOTIVATION, INTENTION, AND
THE CREATION OF A CRISIS

by

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ABSTRACT

The Cuban Missile Crisis is thought by many to have been the most dangerous moment in the Cold War and perhaps, in human history. Historians’ ‘understanding’ of this event has undergone dramatic evolution. Continued study of this event remains valid as long as international conflict remains a reality; historians, political scientists, and policymakers investigate this event in an attempt to understand and alleviate future foreign policy and conflict. Recently declassified documents and recordings and the end of the Cold War between the Soviet Union and the United States have made more information available regarding the nature of the crisis, its creation, and resolution. It is evident, however, that a greater volume of information pertaining to the crisis has not led to consensus, or a greater understanding of the causes and consequences of the event. Most historians do agree that Nikita Khrushchev, Fidel Castro, and John Kennedy each played a pivotal role in the crisis and its resolution.

This project draws on a variety of sources regarding the crisis and its administrators in an attempt to create an historiography of the available information regarding this important event. It begins with a discussion about the available information on the Cuban Missile Crisis and a history of the pre-crisis Cuban-American relationship. I have investigated this crisis from the perspective that the character, actions and policies of Khrushchev, Castro, and Kennedy were inexorable in instigating and resolving the crisis. I hope that this project will provide educators and students of
history with a greater understanding of the opposing views regarding the motivations and actions that resulted in the Cuban Missile Crisis and its outcome.
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KHRUSHCHEV, CASTRO, AND KENNEDY: MOTIVATION, INTENTION, AND THE CREATION OF A CRISIS

The Cuban missile crisis is one of the most explored topics in American history. More than four decades from the date of this nuclear showdown, the Cuban missile crisis continues to be a source of much controversy and opposing historical interpretation. The declassification of many relevant documents and recordings regarding the crisis, meetings between ‘key figures’ of the three nations and administrations involved, and the Soviet policy of *glasnost* has provided further information for interpretation and discussion. Rather than providing a more unified and concrete understanding and interpretation of the crisis, this additional information has, in fact, increased the debate surrounding this event, its causes, and aftermath. The added documentary and audio information has enriched the discussion of one of the most pivotal moments of the Cold War.

Rather than fading into history, the past forty years have in fact, made available many new sources of information regarding the missile crisis of October, 1962 that have encouraged new scholarship and brought us perhaps closer to understanding the whole event, its causes, consequences, and significance. The distance from this event and the end of the Cold War have freed many key figures to speak more frankly about the event and their role in it. Between the years 1987 and 2002, American, Cuban, and Soviet scholars and participants of the crisis met in Hawk’s Cay in the Florida Keys, Cambridge, Massachusetts, Moscow, Antigua, and Havana to participate in discussion about the confrontation in 1962 and how to avoid similar crises in the future. The
participants in these discussions varied between the different meetings, but notable attendees include Robert McNamara and Dean Rusk, Secretaries of Defense and State within the Kennedy Administration during the time of the crisis, Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko, former ambassador to the United States Anatoly Dobrynin, Sergei Khrushchev, son of the Soviet premier, Sergo Mikoyan, son and executive secretary of First Deputy Premier Anastas I. Mikoyan and Fidel Castro, as well as many others.¹ Scholars and historians disagree about both the value and accuracy of this specific forum and in their interpretation of what was said at these conferences. In his article Remembering the Cuban Missile Crisis: Should We Swallow Oral History?, Mark Kramer criticizes the accuracy of the accounts of Soviet scholars and policy makers and suggests that our understanding of “the Soviet role may, if anything, be more confused than before” and continues, “On the Soviet side, the question of ulterior motives is far more intractable.”² Authors Blight, Allyn and Welch reply to this criticism by recognizing and emphasizing that all historical sources have limitations and that their use of written documents in correlation with the oral accounts is necessary and certainly more effective than ignoring the accounts of key players in this crisis.

James G. Blight, Bruce Allyn, and David Welch, all present at the conferences, have written a number of books exploring the crisis. Their book Cuba on the Brink: Castro, the Missile Crisis, and the Soviet Collapse investigates the words of crisis participants at the 1992 Havana conference as well as relevant documents in a process they call ‘critical oral history.’ The authors of this work argue that analysis and understanding of Cuba’s role in the crisis has been markedly absent in traditional
discussion regarding this event. This belief is echoed by many other scholars, including Raymond L. Garthoff, special assistant for Soviet bloc political/military affairs in the State Department during the Kennedy administration and author of *Reflections on the Cuban Missile Crisis*, who was also present at all six conferences.

Perhaps most important to the revised and improved discussion of the actual thirteen days that constituted the Missile Crisis is the declassification of many Soviet and Cuban documents. In their impressive work, “*One Hell of a Gamble*: Khrushchev, Castro, and Kennedy, 1958-1964,” Timothy Naftali and Aleksandr Fursenko draw upon notes of Presidium meetings and the resources of multiple Russian archives including those of the Soviet Politburo and the KGB. This is supplemented with information from American archives. The documentation and accompanying interpretation in “*One Hell of a Gamble*” provide readers and historians with a greater understanding of the Soviet-Cuban relationship as well as the roles and motivations of both Fidel Castro and Nikita Khrushchev, all of which have been missing from traditional discussions of the Cold War and specifically, the Cuban Missile Crisis.

In early summer of 1962, JFK asked a secret service agent, Robert Bouck, to install taping systems in the Oval Office and Cabinet Room. Kennedy was able to discretely turn the recorder on and off; only he and his brother Robert Kennedy were aware that discussion was often being recorded. It is unclear why JFK had the recording devices installed. Clearly and understandably angry and embarrassed after the failed 1961 Bay of Pigs operation, it has been suggested JFK had the recording devices installed after several policy advisers who had supported the invasion plan in closed session
claimed later to have advised against it. Others believe he wished to have a source of information from which to write his memoirs after leaving the White House. Regardless of his intentions in creating the recording system and resulting tapes, JFK likely never imagined that they would become public information through the Freedom of Information Act and the Presidential Records Act. This belief is encouraged by the fact that JFK later installed a device to record telephone conversations in which he frequently made statements that could have incriminated him personally and politically.

The legitimacy, validity, and accuracy of these recordings as an historical source has been greatly criticized and acclaimed. Critics dismiss these tapes because the Kennedy brothers knew they were being recorded and JFK could decide when to turn the recorder on and off. Thus, while their colleagues were frankly and honestly processing and discussing the crisis presented to them, the Kennedy brothers were consciously manipulating their personal images in the historical record. This criticism is countered by Sheldon Stern, an historian of the Kennedy Library and one of the first to listen to and transcribe and interpret the Kennedy Tapes; he suggests that because no one knew how the Cuban Missile Crisis would turn out, the Kennedy brothers had no way of knowing which decision and point of view would later be viewed as “right.” “Even if President Kennedy had tried to ‘pose’ for history, how could he have known which point of view would later be judged favorably by historians?”

In addition to possible conscious decisions to shut the recorders off at certain times, human error and the desire for secrecy resulted in occasionally failing to turn the recorders on at all, or sometimes not until the middle of a meeting or discussion. Stern
does clearly argue, however, that beyond turning the recorder on and off, JFK had little opportunity to technically manipulate the recordings. The tape recorder was located in the White House basement and manned by two CIA agents who changed the tapes and packaged them up for storage. Stern does recognize the shortcomings of the Kennedy recordings as an historical source, that JFK and RFK knew they were being recorded, and the recording system required it be manually activated and thus was vulnerable to human error and manipulation, but it is also clear that he and others feel these recordings are a valuable and exciting source. The recordings and transcripts have provided a remarkable insight into the processes of the Executive Committee of the National Security Council (ExComm) that shaped the American response to the crisis and President Kennedy’s role in those important decisions.

Further investigation has also been helpful in understanding Cold War ideology, rhetoric, and assumptions that precipitated the crisis and the respective actions and responses of Cuba, the Soviet Union, and the United States. Jutta Weldes investigates one central question in *Constructing National Interests: The United States and the Cuban Missile Crisis* - why did the Kennedy Administration believe that missiles in Cuba threatened national interest to the point of requiring their removal? Weldes provides a well-written analysis of fairly standard conclusions regarding Cold War posture and assumptions; she cites the American belief that the Soviet Union was an expansionist power seeking world domination and the American dislike for Fidel Castro and his revolution as the reasons that Kennedy and his advisors could not fathom the idea that the missiles were part of an entirely legal attempt by the sovereign nation of Cuba to defend
itself. The work of Weldes and other scholars illustrates the necessity of investigating the Cuban Missile Crisis within the larger context of the Cold War, in which this specific event and the affected administrations were merely momentary characters in a discourse written and well-established by 1962. To gain a more complete understanding of the Cuban Missile Crisis, one must first understand the conditions, history, and assumptions of the Cold War and the history of Cuban-American interactions prior to the crisis.

In addition to the Soviet and Cuban perspective, Alice L. George argues that another key player in the discussion of the history, effects, and significance of the Cuban Missile Crisis has been markedly absent – that of the American citizen. In her book *Awaiting Armageddon: How America Faced the Cuban Missile Crisis*, George states: “Because my research shows that this frightening week touched American lives in a dramatic way, I conclude that the Cuban Missile Crisis represents an often overlooked national passage that almost certainly contributed to changes in the American state of mind.” The reaction of the American public to this event may not have seriously altered the outcome - beyond JFK’s constant awareness of possible consequences to his political career - but discussion of the social consequences of this event is crucial to a full understanding of its significance.

Discussion of the Cuban Missile Crisis seems further than ever from arriving at a consensus interpretation; it appears in fact, that the scholarly investigation of this topic is just getting started. The actual danger inherent in this crisis is widely debated. Many feel that those thirteen days in October, 1962 “brought the world to the abyss of nuclear destruction and the end of mankind,” while others claim, equally convincingly, that the
missiles in Cuba represented a threat only to American credibility and the credibility of the young President Kennedy, but posed no actual physical danger. The Cuban Missile Crisis has even greater social, political, and military importance beyond its significance as a nuclear showdown between superpowers who were enmeshed in the Cold War for nearly fifty years. It has affected the psyche of the American citizen, and shaped and influenced future foreign policy, international conflict resolution, and national posture. Scholars recognize the value in studying the topic of the Cuban Missile Crisis as a case study in diplomacy, conflict resolution, Cold War posture, the personalities of Khrushchev, Castro, Kennedy, and key players in their administrations, as well as international and domestic politics. Though Cold War posture has evolved into national posture in the War on Terror, all of these issues continue to resonate with many citizens and governments of the world. Both the mistakes and accomplishments of all involved are important to understanding the Cuban Missile Crisis and its consequences; the newly available evidence will encourage and enhance this worthy quest to understand and learn from this crisis so as to be better equipped when nations and governments face future decisions concerning international (mis)understanding, militarism, and diplomacy.

**Background: Cuban-American Relations**

The Caribbean Sea and in fact, the entire western hemisphere, is an area of great geopolitical interest to the United States. Sugar, coffee, oils, fish, and many other goods entice those seeking economic benefit. Americans soon recognized that military and political hegemony in the region was profitable. The proximity of the Caribbean Sea and
the islands within it to the United States intensified the belief that Americans should control the trade, politics, and military affairs of that region. When Spain, Russia and other European countries appeared to be taking steps toward strengthening and reorganizing their empires, parts of which were in the western hemisphere, President James Monroe responded in his annual address of December, 1823 by warning European powers not to intervene in the western hemisphere, and further that any such intervention would be interpreted as a hostile action toward the United States.

We owe it, therefore, to candor, and to the amicable relations existing between the United States and those powers, to declare that we should consider any attempt on their part to extend their political system to any portion of this hemisphere as dangerous to our peace and safety... We could not view any interposition for the purpose of oppressing [the newly independent nations], or controlling in any other manner their destiny, by any European power in any other light than as the manifestation of an unfriendly disposition toward the United States. vii

Though at the time, the United States possessed neither the military or political power to enforce such a statement, it became a cornerstone of future American foreign policy. It was later strengthened by Theodore Roosevelt in 1904, who stated that “chronic wrong-doing or impotence” might “require intervention by some civilized nation, and in the western hemisphere the adherence of the United States to the Monroe Doctrine may force the United States, however reluctantly, . . . to exercise an international police power.”viii In what became known as the Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine, Teddy Roosevelt went beyond the proclamation of the Monroe Doctrine that European powers were not to intervene in the western hemisphere; his corollary justified American intervention as a “police power.” Both the Monroe Doctrine and the Roosevelt
Corollary would be invoked to justify American intervention in Latin America on multiple occasions.

Americans have long believed that they hold a special place in the world. Tenants of Puritan belief in a utopian society of chosen individuals are still prevalent in Americans’ vision of themselves and their nation upon the world stage and have resulted in a uniquely American self-image and world view. Manifest Destiny, the widely proclaimed and pursued conviction that American institutions and cultural characteristics were superior to those of other human societies and thus it was the right and duty of Americans to export their institutions and belief systems to other locations and peoples of the world led expansionists to consider the island of Cuba rightfully American territory by the early nineteenth century. Cuba’s geographic location encouraged some to unabashedly argue that it was connected by alluvial deposits of the Mississippi River to the United States and thus belonged rightfully to the Americans. Its proximity to the southern U.S. encouraged many to envision the extension of the slave-based, plantation economy into the island despite its status as a Spanish colony.

Illegal efforts to acquire Cuba by fomenting a revolution were as equally unsuccessful as attempts by the Pierce Administration to purchase the island. Frustrated by Spain’s refusal to sell what many Americans felt was rightfully theirs, American ministers to Spain, France, and England met in Belgium and issued the Ostend Manifesto. Though quickly rescinded by their superiors, the manifesto stated that Cuba “belongs naturally” to the United States and if Spain refused to legally transfer control of Cuba to the Americans “we should be justified in wresting it from Spain if we possess the power;
and this upon the very same principle that would justify an individual in tearing down the burning house of his neighbor if there were not other means of preventing the flames from destroying the home.”

Perhaps the greatest significance of the Ostend Manifesto is its authors’ conviction and proclamation that the politics and unrest on the small island of Cuba represent a threat to American national security.

As the United States steamed toward its own Civil War, the questions of Cuba’s annexation became a sectional issue, as northern states feared the addition of another slave state and then was lost in the chaos of war and wartime politics. Though the public quest for Cuba was temporarily abandoned, it would soon be the site of and excuse for the Spanish-American War.

Gary B. Nash and Julie Roy Jeffrey state, “[T]hroughout history, the American people have actively and sometimes forcefully imposed their ideas and institutions on others. The international crusades of the United States, well intentioned if not always well received, have usually been motivated by a mixture of idealism and self-interest.”

This was true of American involvement with Cuba in the Spanish-American War of 1898.

By the late 1890s, the Cuban question regained the focus of American citizens, businessmen, and politicians. Politicians wished to reduce, or eliminate, European influence from the Caribbean region. Profiteers leered at trade and investment opportunities and wished to establish shipping lanes and ports for U.S. commerce. Many wished to develop a canal in Central America that would link the east and west coasts of the United States and provide access to the profitable markets of Asia. Military advisers
recognized the value of naval control of the region as evident in Alfred T. Mahan’s discourse, *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History* (1890) in which he argues that national influence is dependent upon naval power and thus American military superiority rested on its ability to muster and maintain a formidable navy in both the Pacific and Atlantic oceans.

The Cuban question was, however, catapulted back into American discourse by actions of the Cuban revolutionaries against Spanish rule. In the early 1890s, the Cuban economy collapsed, largely due to the American response to the depression of 1893 with protectionist tariffs. As depression in Cuba fueled unrest, anti-Spanish forces attempted to gain control of the island. By 1896, citizens of the United States had invested more than $30 million in Cuba, mostly in mines and sugar plantations, encouraging Congress to declare that the U.S. government “should be prepared to protect the legitimate interests of our citizens, by intervention if necessary.”

In addition to economic interests, many American citizens recognized the Cuban independence movement as not entirely unlike their own revolution against the British. Fueled by the “yellow journalism” of William Randolph Hearst and equipped with revolutionary, republican rhetoric, numerous individuals and organizations were outraged by the atrocities committed by the Spanish against the Cubans. These groups and individuals encouraged American support of the Cubans in their quest for independence and raised funds and awareness for the struggle.

In reality, the governments of Spain and the United States had agreed that regardless of how this dispute turned out, power would not be transferred to the Cubans
themselves. In fact, a negotiated settlement between Madrid and Washington seemed plausible until 1898 when two incidents infuriated Americans and ‘justified’ a declaration of war. First, a confidential letter written by Spanish official Dupuy de Lome was intercepted that stated President McKinley was a “weak, venal, and vacillating politician.” This letter was quickly made public and fueled fury against Spain within the American citizenry. Additionally, the U.S. Battleship Maine was rocked by an explosion while in Havana harbor. The source of the explosion, which killed 262 Americans, was deemed to be the result of a Spanish attack, though many have suggested it was the result of an internal problem. McKinley presented Spain with an ultimatum that included a Spanish assurance that there would be no further hostile actions, the repayment of cost associated with the damage to the Maine, and finally, Cuban independence. President McKinley knew that Spain would not accept this last request and so prepared for war; he requested a declaration of war from Congress on April 11, 1898. Congress recognized Cuban independence and authorized the use of force against Spain; in an intriguing additional resolution, the Teller Amendment, Congress stated that the United States did not intend to annex the island of Cuba. The declining Spanish empire was defeated in less than four months.

The Platt Amendment was added to the new Cuban constitution by the United States in 1901. The Platt Amendment provided beneficial economic rights to Americans, guaranteed a naval base at Guantanamo Bay, and the right to intervene in the affairs of the island “for the preservation of Cuban independence, and the maintenance of a government adequate for the protection of life, property, and individual liberty.”
Franklin Roosevelt would later abrogate the Platt Amendment after Fulgencio Batista’s rise to power, but retained the right to use the military base at Guantanamo Bay.

The American Good Neighbor Policy of the 1930s changed the style of American interference in Latin America from one of direct intervention to a more discrete form of political meddling. Cuba went through a series of leaders in the 1930s, with U.S. officials watching with great interest and interfering when deemed necessary. Throughout this period of leadership transition within Cuba, the United States maintained close contact with Sergeant Fulgencio Batista, who led the revolution in 1933 against the government of Machado and then encouraged Ramon Grau San Martin to resign in 1934. As American politicians and businessmen became increasingly concerned about the communist influence in Latin America, post World War II American foreign policy evolved from one that tried to prevent the rise of fascism to one more concerned with halting the advance of communism. U.S. support undoubtedly figured into Batista’s decision to run for president in 1940. Batista’s democratically elected administration, as well as the other administrations of the 1940s, lost legitimacy because of their corruption and disorder.

In March, 1952, prior to the scheduled presidential elections in June, in which Batista remained a distant third candidate, Batista took control of the government in a military coup. President Prio, his family, and close associates left Cuba with little resistance. The idea to instigate a coup was presented to Batista by younger officers who sought his leadership because of his success in the 1930s. Unlike in the 1930s and 1940s,
Batista did not have much popular support within the Cuban population and so relied on militarism to stay in office.

Fidel Castro, who was running for a seat in Congress in 1952, was outraged by the military coup and became a leading proponent of armed insurrection within the anti-Batista movement. Castro and 165 secretly trained and prepared to attack and capture Moncada Barracks in Santiago de Cuba, distribute weaponry to the population, and incite a national insurrection. The attack of July 26th, 1953 ended disastrously for Castro and his followers; many were tortured and killed, and the rest were imprisoned. The Cuban population was simultaneously horrified by the brutal response of the Batista regime and inspired by the efforts of the young Cuban insurgents. Fidel Castro captivated public attention and at his trial introduced a concise political vision of reform and defended himself with dignity and eloquence before being sent to jail. In 1955, Batista released political prisoners, including Fidel Castro, who resumed opposition activities from his place of exile, Mexico.

In 1954, Batista staged an election and used his ‘re-election’ to claim legitimacy and justify his regime. Following the 1954 election, Batista introduced a number of concessions, including the release of political prisoners from which Fidel Castro greatly benefited. Meanwhile however, the Batistianos continued policies that favored wealthy regime supporters at the expense of the working class. Labor leaders of the July 26th Movement and the communists worked collaboratively in an attempt to improve conditions for workers within the sugar industry, though they remained entirely different organizations with separate and often opposing methods and goals.
The United States welcomed Batista’s firm control of Cuba; the American ambassador to the island, Earl E.T. Smith explained American support for the dictator, “Our two nations I feel will always be the closest of friends and allies in the common fight against communism.” The United States’ support of a series of dictators in Latin America, including Batista in Cuba, was “a cold-blooded calculation: that dictatorial regimes would be more predictably and efficiently anticommunist than other types of governance, including democratic systems.” Similar to their self-interested abandonment of numerous other Latin American dictators, American politicians decided in 1958 that Batista was more damaging than beneficial to both economic interests and the Cold War anticommunism crusade. Many believed that “Batista had evolved into the worst kind of Latin despot – a leader offensive and corrupt enough to draw the ire of the American people but not powerful enough to stave off disorder in his own country.”

United States officials felt justified in revoking support of many dictators they previously supported when they felt that allowing said dictator to remain in power would, rather than prevent communism, in fact encourage the growth of a left-wing revolutionary movement. By 1958, the anti-Batista movement had mobilized diverse groups and constituted a significant threat, and the ruling regime was rapidly deteriorating. Additionally, the United States placed an arms embargo on the island nation, following a hostage situation instigated by Fidel and Raul Castro. American officials were torn however, between condemning the brutal Batista regime and
encouraging the opposition movement in which a young Fidel Castro was rising to a dominant position.\textsuperscript{xix}

Fidel Castro was born into a wealthy family that owned a large sugar plantation in Oriente. He graduated from the University of Havana and briefly practiced law before beginning his career as the leader of the July 26\textsuperscript{th} Movement. Following their defeat at the Moncada Barracks on July 26\textsuperscript{th}, 1953, Fidel and his band of rebels were imprisoned and then exiled to Mexico. In 1956, he returned to the mountains of Cuba and continued to build a rebel movement. The July 26\textsuperscript{th} Movement, so-called after the date in which Castro and a small band of rebels recklessly attacked the Moncada Barracks, was an umbrella anti-Batista organization that was made up of various professionals and groups of different political beliefs. Fidel Castro, though a suspicious enigma to most in Washington, captured the imaginations of many in Cuba and the United States. In the summer of 1958, however, rebels led by Raul Castro kidnapped nineteen American and Canadian civilians and thirty enlisted men of the Navy and Marines, claiming U.S. support of the Batista regime to be their reason for the action.\textsuperscript{xx} The hostages were released the next month after Washington halted the delivery of some weaponry to Batista.

American officials felt their suspicions of the young rebel had been realized; the CIA was sent to prevent Fidel Castro from assuming power from the declining Batista regime. Though the July 26\textsuperscript{th} Movement had come to house a variety of different individuals and organizations of different classes and goals, Fidel Castro remained the single leading figure of the movement due in part to his engaging personality and in part
to social and economic conditions within Cuba. Despite the efforts of the CIA, on January 1, 1959, Batista and his close associates fled Cuba and Castro triumphantly entered Havana with the support of the majority of the Cuban population. William Wieland frankly stated his fears and those of his fellow Washington colleagues; “Fidel Castro is surrounded by commies. I don’t know whether he himself is a communist. . [But] I am certain he is subject to communist influences.”\textsuperscript{xxi} CIA agents traveled to Cuba both before and after Castro’s takeover to arrive at a conclusion regarding this question – unsuccessfully.

Nikita Khrushchev and other Moscow officials had also been trying to assess the political persuasion of Fidel Castro and the Cuban revolution. The July 26\textsuperscript{th} Movement and the Cuban Communist party – the Partido Socialista Popular (PSP) – had a history of public disagreements and different agendas. Most notably, the PSP condemned violent revolution, and denounced the rebels’ attack on the Moncada barracks. Interestingly enough, two of the Cuban leadership triumvirate – Raul Castro and Ernesto ‘Che’ Guevara – were communists. Raul Castro, Fidel’s younger brother, joined the communist party as a student at Havana University and apparently hid his membership from his brother. Che Guevara, a physician, though openly communist denounced the PSP as a passive and irrelevant group. When leadership within the PSP seemed to be reconsidering some of its beliefs regarding armed revolution, and with Raul’s encouragement, Che did join the PSP in 1957. Raul and Che however, represented a very different breed of communism from the traditional leadership of the PSP.\textsuperscript{xxii} Fidel Castro was indeed, “surrounded by commies.”\textsuperscript{xxiii} Raul Castro’s effort to hide his membership
in the communist party from his brother was concerning to both the PSP and the Kremlin. Though both were encouraged by the leanings of Che and Raul, everyone was aware that the man who truly controlled the path and character of the revolution was Fidel.

Less than four months after replacing Batista, Fidel Castro visited the U.S. as a guest of the American Society of Newspaper Editors. Many sympathized with Castro and his fellow revolutionaries, though initial enthusiasm faded for many when reports emerged of the execution of more than 500 officials of the former Batista regime. Rumors of the socialist nature of the revolution also surfaced. When he visited the U.S. in April, 1959 Fidel Castro was hounded by questions regarding his position on communism. In a speech at the National Press Club he stated “We are against all kind of dictators. . .That is why we are against Communism.”xxiv While Fidel Castro was in the United States making statements denouncing communism, Raul was trying to establish a relationship between Cuba and the Soviet Union. Upon his brother’s ascension to the post of prime minister, Raul had gained control of the Cuban armed forces. In an effort to both cultivate a relationship with Moscow and strengthen the military capabilities of the revolutionary government, Raul sent Lazaro Pena, a member of the PSP to request aid for the Cuban military in the form of Spanish communists who recently graduated from the Soviet military academy and could serve as advisers “to help the Cuban army. . .on general matters and for the organization of intelligence work.”xxv The Kremlin had indirectly already given much aid to the military efforts of Castro and his revolutionaries. In 1958, the Czech government received a request for weaponry from the rebels and requested the guidance of Moscow. Khrushchev, feeling especially sensitive to Chinese
criticisms that it did not do enough to support revolutions throughout the world, in¬
stucted Prague to provide the Cubans with the requested weaponry, though they did attempt to hide their involvement by allowing only those of German and Czech design.

In addition to the request from Raul for the guidance of the Spanish communists, at the behest of PSP general secretary Blas Roca, Pena also encouraged the Soviets to “develop economic relations with Cuba. . . to buy Cuban sugar and to provide the country with manufacturing and agricultural equipment.” Requests for the expansion of economic relations between Cuba and the Soviet Union and that the Soviet Union “unleash its propaganda organs in support of Fidel” were denied, however, in a large part because Moscow was still unsure of the character of the Cuban revolution and its leading figure.

It is unclear when and why Fidel Castro decided to accept communism and steer his revolution toward an alliance with the Soviet Union. Though he associated with members of the communist party throughout his days at Havana University he chose not to join them and vociferously argued that changes in Cuba were possible only through violent revolution and not by the inaction of the PSP. After his consolidation of power he continued to resist and disclaim communism to the point of causing a rift between himself and Che and Raul. There were many political reasons for Fidel to deny the communist tendencies of his revolution, perhaps the most obvious being the CIA orchestrated overthrow of Jacobo Arbenz in 1957; Castro did not wish to provoke a U.S. attack. Fidel was also surely aware of a warning from Egyptian leader Gamal Abdel
Nasser to Che Guevara to maintain independence and sovereignty from any superpower.xxvi

While publicly denouncing communism, Castro paradoxically introduced socialist agrarian reform policies and then chose the author of those policies, PSP member Osvaldo Dorticos, to be President of Cuba in 1959.xxvii Though the position wielded very little real power - that would remain in the hands of Fidel - it assured the PSP that the revolution would proceed in their favor. Fidel slowly began to agree that his greatest enemies were the noncommunist members of the July 26th movement and began replacing them with PSP members. Some dissidents were imprisoned and exiled. He also began to seek greater military and economic assistance from the Soviet Union. Both nations cautiously yet optimistically negotiated an agreement to exchange Cuban sugar for Soviet goods.

Though publicly dismissive of Chinese attacks, Khrushchev was undoubtedly conscious of them as he continued to increase aid in the form of materiel and personnel to the young Cuban revolution, enough so that he set up a “chance” meeting with KGB agent Nikolai Leonov and Raul Castro while the Cuban was touring Czechoslovakia in 1960.xxviii Reacting to fears that perhaps Castro was losing interest in an alliance with the Soviet Union and was turning toward the Chinese, Leonov sought to reestablish the Cuban-Soviet partnership. Raul Castro and Che Guevarra had very publicly proclaimed that revolution would be necessary to establish socialist governments and that the support of stable communist regimes by way of weaponry and personnel should be encouraged. Additionally, Khrushchev and the Soviets recognized that Fidel Castro was first a
revolutionary, and second a communist, thus increasing their concern that he may abandon the Soviets to pursue the more active revolutionary path advocated by the Chinese. At the meeting with Leonov, Raul Castro predicted an imminent U.S. invasion, citing Cuban nationalization of all American oil refineries, and the reactionary further reduction of the annual sugar quota the U.S. would purchase from the island.xxx

Simultaneously, the KGB intercepted an American transmission that reported that officials in the Pentagon believed an immediate attack against the Soviet Union was necessary so as to destroy their nuclear missile capabilities before they could close the missile gap.xxx Khrushchev responded to the combined threat of the possible Sino-Cuban alliance and American attack by publicly stating:

> It should be borne in mind that the United States is now not at such an unattainable distance from the Soviet Union as formerly. Figuratively speaking, if need be, Soviet artillerymen can support the Cuban people with their rocket fire should the aggressive forces in the Pentagon dare to start intervention against Cuba. And the Pentagon could be well advised not to forget that, as shown at the latest tests, we have rockets which can land precisely in a preset square target 13,000 kilometers away. This, if you want, is a warning to those who would like to solve international problems by force and not by reason.xxxi

Khrushchev’s arrogant and generally inaccurate claims of Soviet nuclear capabilities were nothing new or extraordinary; this threat was significant in that it established nuclear protection for the island of Cuba. With this single statement, Khrushchev assured the Cubans, Chinese, and Americans that the Soviets were committed to supporting communism throughout the world, and more specifically, in Cuba. Fidel Castro expressed his appreciation for Khrushchev’s nuclear deterrent by arranging for Raul to visit Moscow; during his visit, Raul further solidified the Soviet-
Cuban alliance both by his presence in the USSR on an official visit and by gaining further military and economic aid. Khrushchev’s declaration of nuclear protection and growing alliance with the Castro regime illustrates his desire to prove Soviet prowess abroad, but more significantly, it illustrates the importance of the revolution in Cuba as his avenue for doing so.

John Fitzgerald Kennedy’s inaugural address highlighted Cold War concerns. “Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe to assure the survival and success of liberty.”xxxii The new Kennedy Administration believed that the U.S. needed to stand up to the Soviet Union, which they believed to be an aggressive power currently on the offensive, while simultaneously reaching out to developing nations and taking greater leadership among its allies in the West. Prior to his inauguration, JFK sought the advice of outgoing president, General Dwight D. Eisenhower. Eisenhower warned Kennedy that the Soviet Union was on the offensive and would pose an extremely grave threat. He also expressed concern about the growing popularity of communism in third world nations, specifically noting problems in Southeast Asia, “If Lao should fall to the Communists, then it would be a question of time until South Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand and Burma would collapse.” The Domino Theory strongly influenced the decisions of the Kennedy Administration as well as those of the later Johnson, Nixon, and even Reagan administrations. Eisenhower expressed further concern about the government in Cuba and encouraged Kennedy to support guerrilla operations against Castro.xxxiii
Kennedy, perhaps also influenced by the intense anticommunism of his father, strongly believed in the need to actively prevent communism from expanding beyond the Soviet and Chinese bloc. He also, however, intended to make a concerted effort to improve U.S.-Soviet relations. Khrushchev also seemed eager for a moderate détente and requested high-level talks, which Kennedy responded to warmly, but made it clear that he could not participate in a summit immediately due to both foreign and domestic political concerns. Kennedy did act immediately on the issue of Cuba.

Kennedy inherited a rather disorganized and unclear policy regarding Cuba. The Eisenhower administration planned to overthrow the Castro regime through both overt attacks and covert sabotage. It soon became evident that a paramilitary force would be necessary to remove Castro, but it was undecided what kind of force would be adequate and what the role of the U.S. would be in creating and funding it. By the time Eisenhower left office, early planning and actions had been taken to establish a 1,500 man guerrilla army in Guatemala. The plan neglected to hide U.S. involvement to Kennedy’s satisfaction so he required two new conditions for future planning; the invasion had to occur at night and at a location where there would be little resistance, and if air support was necessary it would need to come from Cuban air bases, thus the “territory seized should contain a suitable airfield.” Kennedy’s requirements greatly limited the possible landing areas and perhaps resulted in the failure of the operation. The revised plan called for landing at Playa Giron on the Bay of Pigs. Because it was an isolated beachhead and Kennedy did not wish to employ U.S. air support, the Bay of Pigs
location left the landed exiles to defend themselves and decreased the likelihood of inciting a general uprising throughout the island.

In early April, 1961 – right after agreeing to meet Khrushchev in Vienna in early June – Kennedy approved the plan for the invasion at the Bay of Pigs with conditions that made U.S. involvement further invisible. Kennedy believed the best way to pursue American interests was to simultaneously promote diplomacy with the Soviet Union and take covert military action against Castro.

The Cubans and Soviets had very different views about U.S. intentions regarding an invasion of Cuba. Perhaps because of encouraging signs of better relations with the new Kennedy administration, Khrushchev ignored concerns of the PSP that an American invasion was imminent and supporting intelligence of the KGB that suggested the rebels in Guatemala were finalizing preparations for a Cuban invasion also went unnoticed. Soviet inaction may also be partly attributed to the fact that they had twice reacted to seemingly false Cuban calls of an American threat in October and January. Additionally, Kennedy proclaimed that “there will not be, under any conditions, any intervention in Cuba by United States armed forces, and this government will do everything it possibly can – and I think it can meet its responsibilities – to make sure that there are no Americans involved in any actions inside.” Khrushchev alleviated Cuban fears, and so the attack at the Bay of Pigs came as a surprise.

On April 15th, 1961, Cuban émigrés began the attack on the airfields, hoping to establish air superiority by destroying combat aircraft, including the T-33 jets given to Batista by the United States. The exile force, working with archaic WWII propeller
planes depended upon air superiority to have any chance of success. The CIA mistakenly believed the T-33s were unarmed and then Kennedy changed the invasion plan on April 16th after a discussion at the U.N., prompted by the strafing of the airfields the previous day, in which U.S. Ambassador Adlai Stevenson was forced to deny any U.S. involvement, an issue that further tinged his relationship with JFK. Wishing to avoid further questions about the American role in the situation in Cuba, JFK decided against the planned second air strike. According to Aleksandr Fursenko and Timothy Naftali, “This decision doomed the operation.” The initial air strike had disabled only 60% of the Cuban air force and air superiority was necessary for the small band of émigrés to hold the isolated beachhead for any extended period of time.\textsuperscript{xxxvii} After brief successes against Castro’s surprised forces, the émigrés found themselves trapped on the beachhead and facing sure and swift defeat. McGeorge Bundy stated, “The situation in Cuba is not a bit good. The Cuban armed forces are stronger, the popular response is weaker, and our tactical position is feebler than we had hoped.”\textsuperscript{xxxviii} Without air support, Castro’s tanks and air force were able to pummel the defenseless rebels. Kennedy now faced the difficult decision of abandoning the Cuban exiles or initiating greater U.S. support. At the suggestion of his advisers, Kennedy grudgingly agreed to the use of unmarked American jets to protect the Cubans, however, timing errors resulted in their ineffectiveness anyway. By April 19\textsuperscript{th}, American officials concluded the invasion had been a total failure and attempted to evacuate the remaining émigrés; 1,189 surrendered to Castro’s forces, 14 were rescued by the U.S. military.\textsuperscript{xxxix}
The Bay of Pigs invasion was an utter and complete failure. The awkward and embarrassing attack resulted in a unified and publicly socialist Cuba. The Castro regime was further strengthened by the image of a colossus enemy and the creation of a police state organized by Soviet agents and the most despotic members of the PSP. The belief that counterrevolutionaries and American politicians wished to invade and overthrow the Castro regime had now been realized and both the Soviets and Cubans wished to prevent the operation from being successful the next time.

John F. Kennedy was very personally and deeply affected by the botched invasion. Though he fully accepted responsibility for the failed operation, some suggest that it further solidified Kennedy’s distrust of military advisers and experts. Conversely, many senior military officers, especially in the Navy, Air Force, and CIA, as well as Cuban exiles and anti-communist Americans saw Kennedy as a “gutless appeaser.” Historian Sheldon Stern reports that “the president, passionately encouraged by his brother Robert Kennedy, also developed a preoccupation, if not an obsession, with getting rid of Castro and erasing this blot on the Kennedy record. . . Cold War ideology, combined with personal anger over the Bay of Pigs, had created a powerful incentive for the Kennedy’s to launch a “secret war” to get even in Cuba.” May and Zelikow agree that “Kennedy, and his brother even more, longed for some redeeming opportunity.” Robert Bissell, CIA director before John McCone, “considered RFK a fanatic on the subject of Castro.” Most historians agree that John, and especially Robert Kennedy became obsessed with the issue of Cuba and the Castro regime, and this was certainly
intensified by the Bay of Pigs fiasco. JFK himself recognized during the later missile
crisis that many American allies saw Cuba “as a fixation of the United States and not a
serious military threat. . . . They think that we’re slightly demented on this subject.”\textsuperscript{xliv}
Kennedy met with Khrushchev at the pre-arranged summit in Vienna, only two months
after the Bay of Pigs invasion and was “made to feel young and inexperienced, a
weakling who had lacked the courage to finish off Castro.”\textsuperscript{xlv} Following the summit,
Kennedy told a \textit{New York Times} reporter, “I think he thought that anyone who was so
young and inexperienced as to get into that [Cuban] mess could be taken. And anyone
who got into it and didn’t see it through had no guts.”\textsuperscript{xlvi} Furthermore, the Soviet Union,
despite Khrushchev’s rhetoric regarding détente between the superpowers, continued to
also speak of Soviet military and nuclear missile superiority, and to fund and aid
revolutionary movements in third world countries, most notably in Laos. Southeast Asia
was becoming an increasingly sensitive locale in the scope of the Cold War.

Though Kennedy certainly admired Eisenhower, he portrayed his own
administration as being comparatively young and imaginative in terms of the Cold War.
Kennedy, however, was also determined to not be viewed as weak compared to the
retired General. Khrushchev certainly appeared the stronger leader at the end of 1961;
The Bay of Pigs invasion perhaps marred the confidence of the new administration,
encouraging some officials - especially the Kennedy brothers - to react to missiles in
Cuba in a more hostile and belligerent fashion. Naftali and Fursenko however, come to a
different conclusion; they suggest that Kennedy was always conscious that many
government and military officials, as well as members of the general American public felt the U.S. was “being seen as a paper tiger.” Though the appearance of weakness was a top concern, Naftali and Fursenko portray Kennedy as a man of deeper character and concerns:

John Kennedy...worried that the Bay of Pigs and the indeterminate outcome in Laos were sending the wrong signals about his resolve to use all means to defend U.S. interests overseas. But the brothers, especially the president, were equally concerned about the costs of a policy of unalloyed belligerence toward the Soviet Union. What could be gained by acting tough, if the end result was a war that few wanted and, in the nuclear age, nobody could control.

The failed Bay of Pigs invasion had far-reaching implications for Cuba-Soviet-U.S. relations, and specifically the developing Cuban Missile Crisis. The Cubans’ belief that the U.S. intended to invade the island and remove Castro was confirmed and allowed him to publicly embrace socialism and the Soviets as the only alternative to the aggression of the ‘imperialists.’ Furthermore, the counterrevolutionaries’ invasion illustrated the necessity for a crackdown on dissidents and the creation of a surveillance state that some members of the PSP had been encouraging for some time. The Soviets also concluded that their aid would perhaps be necessary to prevent the overthrow of the young Cuban government; the KGB assumed control of Cuban intelligence and Cuban requests for military aid were quickly approved and fulfilled. Additionally, the resolve and posture of Kennedy, Khrushchev, and Castro was solidified. The Castro regime was in fact, strengthened by the nationalism created by the attack of the U.S. colossus against the island of Cuba and the young revolution. Nikita Khrushchev - ever conscious of the Chinese criticism that the USSR was not doing enough for third world revolutions and of
his desire to remain the leader of the communist bloc - was further convinced of the need for the Soviets to protect and aid the Communist beachhead in the western hemisphere. The Kennedy Administration was determined to prove that despite the embarrassing operation, they still intended to do everything necessary to protect U.S. interests and avoid appearing weak in the eyes of their European allies, the Soviets, and the American public. Khrushchev and Kennedy, the leaders of the two nuclear powers, though determined to achieve their goals in the Caribbean and maintain their current standings in the Cold War world, also recognized the danger of nuclear confrontation.

Operation Mongoose

In November, 1961, following the Bay of Pigs invasion, Kennedy instituted a larger plan to harass and eventually replace Castro with a more American-friendly government. Operation Mongoose, headed by Edward Lansdale, was the Kennedy administration’s plan to weaken the Castro regime through covert sabotage, aid to Cuban exile forces, and an eventual U.S.-led military invasion. Robert Kennedy personally oversaw the operation and appointed General Edward Lansdale, who had become a prominent counterinsurgency figure in Vietnam, its lead planner. Recently declassified American documents outline various plots of sabotage, economic isolation, infiltration, and even assassination. Plots using poison cigars, Cuban waiters, and even prominent figures of organized crime in the United States, such as Sam Giancana, were planned and entertained. Though there is no direct evidence directly tying the Kennedy brothers to
the assassination plots, in 1975 the Senate Select Committee on Governmental Operations reported there was:

concrete evidence of at least eight plots involving the CIA to assassinate Fidel Castro from 1960 to 1965. Although some of the assassination plots did not advance beyond the stage of planning and preparation, one plot, involving the use of underworld figures reportedly twice progressed to the point of sending poison pills to Cuba and dispatching weapons to commit the deed. Another plot involved furnishing weapons and other assassination devices to a Cuban dissident. The proposed assassination devices ran the gamut from high-powered rifles to poison pills, poison pens, deadly bacterial powers, and other devices which strain the imagination.  

The more efficient and advanced Cuban intelligence that resulted from the Bay of Pigs invasion uncovered additional schemes of sabotage and assassination. The KGB-led intelligence agency in Cuba uncovered a CIA office and 8 tons of weaponry. The undercover office remained operational in Cuba following the break in diplomatic relations in January, 1961 when Cuban officials claimed that the U.S. had too many diplomats placed in Cuba whom they assumed to be CIA agents spying on and disrupting the young revolution. Additionally, a Guatemalan plot to assassinate Fidel and Raul Castro and Che Guevara was intercepted by Soviet intelligence and revealed to the Castro regime. Operation Condor had the support and aid of Costa Rica, Venezuela, and the CIA. Furthermore, Soviet and Cuban intelligence officials were aware of the existence of at least fourteen formidable counterrevolutionary groups and a growing movement to unify and organize these groups into a single opposition force.  

Though CIA agents working within Operation Mongoose have since described pressure from Robert Kennedy to eliminate the Castro problem as “white heat,” pressure
from the Kennedy brothers was equally great to maintain American invisibility as much as possible.\textsuperscript{liii} They hoped to disrupt the Castro regime through covert means, through aid to émigrés and sabotage and Lansdale was confident it could be done, or at the very least, knew that is what John and Robert Kennedy wanted to hear. Many CIA officials, including John McCone, were much less confident. Many were convinced that American military action would be required to remove Castro.

By 1961, the Cuban government and their Soviet allies had been preparing for a United States invasion, or at the very least, American support for an insurgency force, for almost two years. Following the Bay of Pigs invasion, the Cuban government arrested more than 20,000 suspected dissidents, the KGB took an active role in Cuban intelligence, and the Soviet Union became convinced of the imminent threat posed by the United States that the Cubans had been claiming existed for some time.\textsuperscript{liv}

\textit{Diplomatic and Economic Isolation}

President John Kennedy inherited a Cuban policy from the Eisenhower Administration that included diplomatic and economic isolation and sanctions, covert sabotage and harassment, infiltration and the support of insurgents, as well as plans for the invasion of Cuba and outright removal of the Castro regime. The young and idealistic Kennedy Administration continued with a very similar policy toward the island; focusing on all three means of weakening the Castro regime – continued economic sanctions, intensified covert action, as well as the further development of contingency plans for an American invasion of Cuba.
The Caracas resolution of the Organization of American States of 1954 that declared the organization committed to the prevention of and joint action against any communist governments in the Western hemisphere seemingly permitted American intervention in Cuba. Castro was certainly aware of the removal of Jacobo Arbenz in Guatemala and it was perhaps instrumental in his decision to delay his announcement of the socialist path of his revolution and his alliance with the Soviets.

The Eisenhower and later the Kennedy administration both encouraged other Latin American countries to contain and suppress Castro through both economic and diplomatic means. At a meeting of regional foreign ministers in San Jose, Costa Rica, the Eisenhower Administration tried to persuade the Latin American ministers to denounce the intervention of China and the Soviet Union in the Western Hemisphere so as to encourage the support of the entire region in their isolation of the Castro regime. The Declaration of San Jose, though signed by all delegations except Cuba stopped short of what the U.S. hoped for; the declaration denounced inter-hemispheric meddling, but did not explicitly mention the Soviet Union, China, or Cuba.\textsuperscript{lv}

In January, 1961, following another invasion scare, and a number of bombings in Havana, Castro demanded that the United States reduce its embassy and consulate staffs to eleven people within forty-eight hours.\textsuperscript{lvi} This resulted in the severing of diplomatic ties between the two nations only two weeks prior to the inauguration of John F. Kennedy.

Between the period of Castro’s public embrace of communism on December 1\textsuperscript{st}, 1961 and the New Year, thirteen Latin American governments halted all relations with
Cuba. In January, 1962, the Organization of American states expelled Cuba at a meeting in Punta del Este, Uruguay. Cubans continue to proclaim that the OAS did so in response to American pressure. In reality, many Latin American states feared Castro’s anti-American rhetoric, increasing Soviet influence in the hemisphere, and the revolutionary nature of Marxism-Leninism encouraged by Castro’s revolution. Castro in fact, did intend to aid revolutionary movements in other nations of Latin America.

While attempting to isolate Cuba diplomatically, both the Eisenhower and Kennedy administrations enacted increasingly damaging economic sanctions against Cuba. In 1957, Cuban profits from trade with the United States totaled $600 million dollars; this fell dramatically in July, 1960, when U.S. sugar purchases were significantly decreased, and again in October 1960 when an embargo was placed on all Cuban goods except medicine, cigars, and some foods other than sugar. In February, 1962, Kennedy eliminated all trade with Cuba, except for pharmaceuticals.

In 1960, the Soviet Union and Cuba signed an economic agreement in which the Soviets would purchase 450,000 tons of Cuban sugar, and a million tons per year for the following four years, in addition to a large monetary loan.

The Crisis

To get a full understanding of the tension and fast pace of the crisis, the evolution of the decisions made by the participants, the influence of different personalities on the crisis, and detailed accounts of the often indirect transmissions of the complicated and sometimes conflicting communications between the three governments, refer to the
attach chronology (Appendix A) and the outstanding books, *One Hell of a Gamble: The Secret History of the Cuban Missile Crisis* by Aleksandr Fursenko and Timothy Naftali and *The Kennedy Tapes: Inside the White House During the Cuban Missile Crisis*, edited by Ernest R. May and Philip D. Zelikow. These two pieces of work use recordings of the ExComm meetings, and Soviet, Cuban, and American documents to recount this moving and fascinating event.

On October 16\textsuperscript{th}, President Kennedy was informed that a recent U-2 flight had provided photographic evidence of the construction of Soviet Medium Range Ballistic Missile (MRBM) sites on the island of Cuba. Kennedy had made several public statements, as recently as September 4\textsuperscript{th} and September 13\textsuperscript{th}, warning the Soviet Union that offensive weapons in Cuba would be considered unacceptable by the United States and would result in American action. The Soviets had also declared that they did not intend to introduce surface-to-surface offensive weapons to the island, but in a speech to the U.N. General Assembly on October 8\textsuperscript{th}, Cuban president Osvaldo Dorticos had made a disconcerting statement, “If . . . we are attacked, we will defend ourselves. I repeat we have sufficient means with which to defend ourselves; we have indeed our inevitable weapons, the weapons which we would have preferred not to acquire and which we do not wish to employ.”

Upon detection of the missiles, JFK convened the Executive Committee of the National Security Council (ExComm) to discuss how to proceed. After much discussion and debate, President Kennedy decided that because an air strike could not guarantee the destruction of all Soviet missiles in Cuba, a defensive quarantine should be imposed.
Kennedy publicly announced the presence of offensive Soviet missiles in Cuba and the institution of the defensive quarantine in a speech on American television that he previously provided to Soviet ambassador Dobrynin and delivered to the Kremlin through American ambassador Foy Kohler.

On October 23rd, Kennedy received a letter from Nikita Khrushchev that declared, “I should frankly say that the measures outlined in your statement represent a serious threat to peace and security of peoples. The United States has openly taken the path of gross violation of international norms of freedom of navigation on the high seas, a path of aggressive actions both against Cuba and against the Soviet Union. . .We confirm that the armaments now in Cuba, regardless of the classification to which they belong, are destined exclusively for defensive purposes, in order to secure the Cuban republic from an aggressor’s attack.”

Despite their tough and uncompromising rhetoric, both Khrushchev and Kennedy took steps to avoid confrontation; Khrushchev recalled or slowed down ships headed toward Cuba, and Kennedy adjusted the quarantine boundaries and chose to allow some ships to pass through uncontested. Additionally, both leaders sought the guidance of high-level advisers and repeatedly made it clear to their military leaders that no action should be taken without their personally expressed consent. It soon became clear that both the Soviet Premiere and American President wished to avoid the “final failure” and were becoming increasingly concerned that they might lose control of the escalating crisis. By way of indirect private communication and letters, some of which made conflicting demands and were delivered by Western Union agents on bicycles, and on
one occasion, a transmission was stuck in an aging elevator, Khrushchev and Kennedy gradually moved away from the tense standoff.

On October 28th, Khrushchev announced, “The Soviet Government, in addition to earlier instructions on the discontinuance of further work on construction sites, has given a new order to dismantle the weapons, which you describe as offensive, and to crate them and return them to the Soviet Union.” JFK, conscious that it was crucial to publicly proclaim that victory was achieved by both sides and allow Khrushchev to save face, hailed his decision as “an important and constructive contribution to peace.”

Fidel Castro, however, was furious. Having learned about Khrushchev’s decision over the radio, rather than from the Soviet leader himself, Castro issued a “five point plan” as a solution to the underlying tensions in the Caribbean which led to the crisis. Castro’s requests that the U.S. halt covert sabotage and relinquish control of Guantanamo Bay to Cuba were ignored.

The agreement negotiated between Khrushchev and Kennedy stipulated that the Soviets would immediately begin removal of all “offensive” weapons in return for an American pledge not to invade the island of Cuba. Privately, the Kennedy brothers agreed to remove the missiles in Turkey, though they wished to avoid the appearance that they were willing to abandon NATO allies to secure American interests. Khrushchev recognized and conceded to the political situation that the Kennedy Administration was concerned about and agreed to keep the Turkey missile trade a secret.

Despite encouraging developments in negotiations, the crisis was not over; on October 27th, an American U-2 was shot down while flying over Cuba, heightening the
tension of an already dangerous situation. Additionally, the American demand that on-site inspections be allowed to verify the removal of the missiles and the list of allegedly offensive weapons submitted by Kennedy was dismissed by Castro as unacceptable. Castro felt that on-site inspections on the island of Cuba threatened the sovereignty and independence of his nation. Furthermore, he claimed that the IL-28 bombers included on Kennedy’s list of offensive weaponry were legal Cuban property, given to a sovereign nation by their Soviet allies.

After further negotiation between the Soviets and Cubans, Castro eventually agreed to the removal of the IL-28s along with the other weaponry. On November 20th, Kennedy publicly announced that Castro had agreed to the removal of all offensive weaponry, and terminated the quarantine the next day. Castro refused, however, to allow on-site inspections. The missiles were loaded onto the decks of Soviet ships, where they were photographed by American surveillance aircraft.

The dangerous confrontation led to a temporary thawing of Cold War tensions; a ‘hot line’ was established between the Kremlin and White House so as to facilitate future communication and a test ban treaty was negotiated. Some historians suggest however, that the nature of the Cuban Missile Crisis negotiations and resolution resulted in a more belligerent American foreign policy. Though Cuba and the Soviet Union remained allies, their relationship was greatly strained by the outcome of the Cuban Missile Crisis.

*Khrushchev, Castro and Kennedy: The Triangulation of a Crisis*
Any attempt at understanding the Cuban Missile Crisis must begin with an investigation of the men and policies that created it. It is undoubtedly true that the crisis would not have occurred were it not for the actions of Khrushchev, Castro, and Kennedy; it is also clear however, that the actions and personalities of these men were responsible for its resolution. The leaders of each of the three administrations involved played a significant role in the nature of the crisis and its peaceful outcome.

Nikita S. Khrushchev

According to his memoirs, Nikita Khrushchev first came up with the idea to place nuclear missiles in Cuba while vacationing in Bulgaria. He presented his idea to the Presidium upon his return to Moscow on May 20th, 1962 and achieved unanimous approval, though several key Soviet leaders voiced concern. The cautionary words of both Aleksandr Alekseev and Anastas Mikoyan were reportedly dismissed by Khrushchev.\textsuperscript{lxv} Soviet motivations for this crucial action have understandably been a key topic in the academic discourse on the Cuban Missile Crisis. Khrushchev claimed that protecting Cuba from an American invasion was the “sole purpose” of breaking precedent and deploying nuclear missiles beyond Soviet borders.\textsuperscript{lxvi} “We shipped our weapons to Cuba, precisely for the prevention of aggression against her! That is why the Soviet government reaffirmed its agreement to the removal of the ballistic rockets from Cuba.”\textsuperscript{lxvii} At the Moscow Conference in 1989, Sergei Khrushchev, Sergo Mikoyan, Andrei Gromyko, and Aleksandr Alekseev, all confirmed this official Soviet explanation, citing a “consistent and deliberate pattern of American activity designed to subvert and
overthrow the regime of Fidel Castro, leading up to and including the use of American military force if necessary” as precipitating the decision.\textsuperscript{lxviii}

This explanation has been dismissed by many because of its convenient justification of the outcome – the Soviets withdrew their missiles after receiving an American pledge to respect Cuban sovereignty. Much of Khrushchev’s rhetoric prior to American discovery of the missiles, however, supports his claim that the missiles were strategic weaponry with the sole intention of deterring U.S. aggression. In a speech to the delegation he sent to propose the idea to Castro, Khrushchev stated, “An attack on Cuba is being prepared. The correlation of forces is unfavorable to us, and the only way to save Cuba is to put missiles there.”\textsuperscript{lxix} Certainly, one could interpret this as merely an attempt to persuade the geographically convenient island to host nuclear missiles so as to quickly increase Soviet bargaining power in the Cold War era of atomic diplomacy, and many have.

To fully investigate the claim that Khrushchev and the Soviets deployed nuclear missiles in Cuba with the sole intention of protecting the island from an imminent invasion by the United States, it is necessary to examine American actions that may have encouraged such a belief in Moscow and Cuba. The American campaign of economic and diplomatic isolation, supported by covert sabotage was continued and intensified after the Bay of Pigs invasion of April 1961. The Cubans seemingly were agreed that a second American invasion was inevitable, and certainly many members of the Soviet Presidium agreed.
Operation Mongoose, the covert plan headed by Kennedy appointee Edward Lansdale, included economic and diplomatic sanctions, as well as outright harassment by way of sabotage of factories and agriculture, support and aid for counterrevolutionaries, and assassination attempts. The ultimate goal of Operation Mongoose was the eventual elimination of the Castro regime, which Lansdale scheduled for approximately October 1962.

Though all members of the Kennedy Administration continue to claim that the United States had no intention of invading the island of Cuba, many contingency plans were prepared and in place as the possible final move of Operation Mongoose. Following the Bay of Pigs invasion, most U.S. officials believed that direct American military intervention would be required to remove Castro. President Kennedy hoped to remove the Cuban government through covert means, yet he simultaneously planned for a full-scale invasion of the island. In February, 1962, the White House instructed the Joint Chiefs of Staff to revise the two contingency plans for the invasion of Cuba, Operational Plan (OPLAN) 314-61 and OPLAN 316-61; President Kennedy wished them to decrease time needed to initiate the plans to only four and two days, respectively. Both contingency plans included the use of all branches of the military in a fast and overwhelming attack on the small island at great cost in lives and money. Kennedy obviously wished to establish a quick and powerful strike against Cuba as a possible option for dealing with the communist beachhead and its threatening regime. Soviet documents reveal that the KGB was aware that “military specialists of the USA had revised an operational plan against Cuba, which according to this information, is
supported by President Kennedy. . . Concrete data about the start of the operation is as yet unavailable; though there is talk of its being in the next few months.”lxxi Though it is still unknown how the KGB received this information, it is clear that the Soviets were beginning to agree with their Cuban allies that an American invasion of Cuba would become a reality.

Furthermore, in April 1962, President Kennedy and the Shah of Iran publicly witnessed 10,000 soldiers land on Onslow Beach, North Carolina as part of Lantphibex-62, a massive amphibious invasion exercise, simulating the landing of 40,000 soldiers on an unnamed island. A less public, but even larger practice invasion was planned for Vieques Island, Puerto Rico, less than fifty miles from Cuba.lxxii Simultaneously, Khrushchev and the Presidium approved a six-month old request from the Castro regime for more Soviet weaponry. By October 1962 the Soviets had intelligence that the United States was dramatically increasing its presence in the Caribbean and that Robert McNamara had ordered senior military officials to remain ready to participate in invasion planning. Perhaps most unsettling was the amphibious military exercise to be undertaken on October 15th, 1962, and used as the pretext for the increased American military presence in the Caribbean, to remove the unmistakably named fictitious dictator, ORTSAC.

At both the Moscow and Havana conferences in 1989 and 1992 regarding the Cuban Missile Crisis, Robert McNamara admitted that this pattern of economic and diplomatic pressure, covert sabotage, and military planning and presence by the United
States certainly may have been interpreted as preparation for an American invasion of Cuba:

[I]f I had been a Cuban leader, I think I might have expected a U.S. invasion. Why? Because the U.S. had carried out what I have referred to publicly as a debacle – the Bay of Pigs invasion – we’d carried it out in the sense that we had supported it. Secondly, there were covert operations. The Cubans knew that. There were covert operations extending over a long period of time. [My] recollection is that they extended from the late 1950s into the period we’re discussing, the summer and fall of 1962. And thirdly, there were important voices in the United States – important leaders of our Senate, important leaders of our House – who were calling for the invasion of Cuba. [So I state quite frankly again that if I had been a Cuban leader at that time, I might well have concluded that there was a great risk of U.S. invasion. And I should say, as well, if I had been a Soviet leader at the time, I might have come to the same conclusion.

McNamara continued to say, however:

The second point I want to make – and I think it shows the degree of misperception that can exist and can influence both parties to a dispute [is that] I can state unequivocally we had absolutely no intention of invading Cuba. Now, I don’t want to suggest there weren’t contingency plans; all of you – certainly our Cuban friends and our Soviet friends – are familiar with contingency plans. All of our militaries – Soviet, Cuban, and U.S. – have contingency plans covering a wide range of contingencies. [But] I state again, we had absolutely no intention of invading Cuba, and therefore, the Soviet action to install missiles with that as its objective was, I think, based on a misconception – a clearly understandable one, and one that we, in part, were responsible for, I accept that.

It must be noted however, that McNamara opened with these statements to suggest that even though the Cubans and Soviets understandably expected a U.S. attack, American actions that resulted in such an expectation were caused by the Cubans themselves. Though members of the Kennedy Administration now recognize that American actions could understandably be interpreted as preparation for an invasion of Cuba, that was not what they considered to be Khrushchev’s top motive during the crisis.
McNamara’s admission however, illustrates that Khrushchev, in addition to Castro, may well have believed that U.S. military force would soon be employed against Cuba, supporting the official Soviet position that protecting the island was the primary objective of the missile deployment.

An additional theory concerning the evolution of Khrushchev’s decision to deploy nuclear missiles to Cuba presented by many students of the crisis—and one certainly considered by the Kennedy Administration as a significant factor—is that the Soviet premiere, while vacationing very near the ‘defensive’ American Jupiter missiles in Turkey, decided to place a similar threat near American soil so as to illustrate how unsettling such a threat could be and further, that the Soviet Union would continue to assume an active role in the Cold War world. The agreement to place fifteen Jupiter missiles in Turkey was concluded in 1959 under the Eisenhower administration. The missiles were, in fact, offered to all NATO nations to alleviate fears of a ‘missile gap’ favoring the Soviet Union. Though NATO unanimously approved the emplacement of American nuclear missiles onto European territory to protect against Soviet aggression, only Turkey and Italy volunteered to house them on their own soil. The Jupiters were obsolete – inaccurate and extremely vulnerable – thus making them only useful for a first strike, leading historian Barton Bernsteintein to conclude that the “Jupiters would draw, not deter, an attack.” In his memoirs, Khrushchev states, “The Americans had surrounded our country with military bases and threatened us with nuclear weapons, and now they would learn just what it feels like to have enemy missiles pointed at you. . .”

It is possible that Khrushchev’s decision to place nuclear missiles in Cuba was
influenced and, in Khrushchev’s view, justified by the Jupiter missiles in Turkey. Furthermore, the fact that the Kennedy administration privately agreed to remove the missiles in Turkey as part of the resolution of the crisis illustrates that they are significant to the crisis and its outcome, and perhaps were a key motivation behind Khrushchev’s decision.

The desire to retain leadership of the communist bloc in the Cold War of the 1960s also influenced Khrushchev’s decision to place nuclear missiles in Cuba. Following Stalin’s death, Sino-Soviet relations had rapidly deteriorated. The Chinese criticized Khrushchev for statements he made regarding the unnecessary brutality of the Stalin regime and the possibility of “peaceful coexistence” in which nations joined the socialist bloc without bloodshed and violent revolution. The Chinese view was that violent revolution was necessary to establish socialist governments and the Soviet Union, as the leader of the socialist world, was not doing enough to support and encourage such revolutions. China’s public criticisms of the Soviet Union and Khrushchev himself, resulted in the withdrawal of all Soviet advisers from China in 1960 and retaliatory hostile remarks by the Soviet premier. During a particularly hostile period in Sino-Soviet relations in July 1960, Khrushchev announced that his commitment to Cuban sovereignty included the use of nuclear weapons if necessary. In March 1962 Cuban Minister of Internal Affairs, Ramiro Valdes, while trying to convince the Soviets to join the Cubans in their support of other Latin American revolutionary movements, deliberately touched on this sensitive issue by stating, “At a time when the Chinese are striving to put a center of Chinese influence on every continent, the Russians must do this
as well.xi Though publicly dismissive of the Chinese (and Cuban) attacks, Khrushchev was undoubtedly conscious of such criticism as he continued to increase aid in the form of materiel and personnel to the young Cuban revolution.

In 1962, while Khrushchev was being criticized as weak, the Kennedy Administration began to act in ways that the Soviets interpreted as arrogant. Kennedy had decided to resume nuclear testing in April 1962, after Khrushchev had unilaterally broken the moratorium the previous year. Furthermore, the Soviets were becoming increasingly concerned over the growing evidence of American involvement in Southeast Asia.xii Perhaps most frustrating to Khrushchev was a lack of progress on the issue of Berlin.

In his historiography of the Cuban Missile Crisis, William J. Medland cites two opposing views on the topic of Berlin as a motive behind the missile deployment in Cuba. In The Cuban Crisis Revisited, Leslie Dewart argues that by placing nuclear missiles in Cuba, Khrushchev hoped to both prevent an American attack against the island, but also to force negotiations on the Berlin issue, and perhaps even use their removal as a bargaining chip in the settlement.xiii Ronald Steel, however, concludes that Kennedy falsely assumed that Khrushchev’s behavior was the result of his desire to push the west out of Berlin. Furthermore, because of this misperception, “[T]he Kennedy Administration failed to understand the real Soviet motives which were: 1) to redress the strategic imbalance, 2) to protect Castro’s communism, and 3) to strengthen the Soviet position in the Caribbean and in Latin America.” As Steel’s essay suggests, most students of the Cuban Missile Crisis seem to at least agree that there were numerous
factors and events within the larger context of the Cold War that resulted in Khrushchev’s decision to emplace nuclear missiles in Cuba.

An especially popular hypothesis regarding Khrushchev’s motives for initiating the missile deployment is that he wished to dramatically increase the number of nuclear missiles capable of reaching American soil, thereby quickly lessening the growing ‘missile gap.’ Roger Hilsman, a Kennedy appointee, and Arnold Horelick conclude that this was the primary objective of Khrushchev’s operation. On October 21st, 1961 Deputy Secretary of Defense Roswell Gilpatric publicly announced that the so-called missile gap, assumed to be in Soviet favor since 1957, was indeed to the advantage of the United States. “This nation has a nuclear retaliatory force of such lethal power, that an enemy move which brought it into play would be an act of self-destruction on his part.” Khrushchev answered the Gilpatric speech by testing a fifty-megaton hydrogen bomb - the largest ever created, illustrating his desire to reassert military strength.

Contemporary intelligence sources, in addition to post-crisis investigations suggest the strategic disparity was in fact more significant, and decisively to the American advantage, than many believed at the time. According to Max Frankel, “By August 1961, American satellites estimated from ninety miles up that the Russians possessed not 150 to 200 intercontinental missiles, as previously thought, but a mere two dozen clumsy models.” Despite Khrushchev’s belligerent rhetoric regarding Soviet nuclear capabilities, he was painfully aware of the remarkable Soviet disadvantage in a period of ‘atomic diplomacy’ and brinksmanship. Raymond Garthoff, a participant in the
crisis, claims, “We saw the principle Soviet objective as redressing a strategic inferiority, publicly revealed, and growing in diversity.” This belief is echoed in the statements of many members of the Kennedy Administration, including Robert Kennedy, Arthur Schlesinger, and Theodore Sorensen. Khrushchev himself recognized the dual purpose of the deployment, and made this clear in his attempt to convince the Soviet Defense Council to support “a decision to which he was already firmly committed.” In his memoirs, Khrushchev reports saying to his colleagues, “It would be foolish to expect the inevitable second [U.S.] invasion to be as badly planned as the first. In addition to protecting Cuba, our missiles would have equalized what the West likes to call ‘the balance of power.’” This admission that the missile deployment served any purpose other than the protection of Cuba was omitted from the second volume of Khrushchev’s memoirs, further emphasizing to many that Soviet insistence that Cuban protection was the only reason for deployment was a convenient way to save face after he withdrew the missiles.

Timothy Naftali and Aleksandr Fursenko suggest that the Soviet alliance with Fidel Castro was also in question in May 1962. Many pro-Moscow Partido Socialista Popular (PSP) members were removed from the Cuban government after leading Soviet ally and PSP member Aníbal Escalante attempted to marginalize Fidel and consolidate his own power. Naftali and Fursenko conclude:

For these specific reasons, in the late spring of 1962, Khrushchev felt he needed a bold move to remind Washington of Soviet power, to ensure that the Kremlin received the respect it deserved from Washington. At the same time he wanted to demonstrate to Castro personally and dramatically that the Soviet Union would defend his revolution. In Khrushchev’s mind – and he made this decision alone –
a Soviet nuclear base in Cuba was the only way to manage these two difficult problems at once. The perceived threat posed by the United States to Cuba, as well as American arrogance toward the Soviet Union, the possibility of eliminating or reducing the missile gap, Soviet anger at the presence of the Jupiter missiles in Turkey, cooling relations between the Soviets and the Cubans, the desire to aid and retain a communist beachhead in the western hemisphere and silence Chinese criticism, as well as the character of the Soviet premiere, all played a role in the decision that was the catalyst for the Cuban Missile Crisis. It was undoubtedly a combination of these different factors and events, perceived through the lens of Cold War ideology, that influenced Khrushchev’s crucial decision in 1962 to break with tradition and emplace nuclear missiles only ninety miles from the United States.

In a statement to the delegation that he sent to persuade Cuba to accept the missiles, Khrushchev noted that Kennedy was a reasonable man who “would not set off a thermonuclear war if there were our warheads there, just as they put their warheads on missiles in Turkey.” Khrushchev further alleviated the fears of the delegation by stating “Every idiot can start a war, but it is impossible to win this war. . . Therefore the missiles have one purpose – to scare them, to restrain them, so that they have appreciated this business.” Such admissions suggest that Khrushchev, despite many reports of his emotional and passionate character, respected the possible destruction caused by nuclear technology and had no intention of forcing such a confrontation. Fursenko and Naftali conclude: “In the heat of the crisis, Khrushchev backed away from threatening nuclear war. Time and again between 1956 and 1961, he had threatened nuclear retaliation as a
bargaining chip to further his political objectives. But Khrushchev did not have the
desire to threaten nuclear war when it might actually lead to one.\textsuperscript{xciv} Whatever his
motives, Khrushchev did not intend to start a nuclear war by placing missiles in Cuba,
and perhaps even failed to fully consider this as a possible result. While embroiled in the
crisis, Khrushchev recognized the possible consequences of such a dangerous standoff,
and fearing the crisis might escalate beyond his or Kennedy’s control, negotiated a
settlement. Oddly enough, the role of Cuba has been portrayed as that of a passive stage
for a conflict between two superpowers. In reality, Cuba was a very active player in this
dramatic event and certainly affected the development, nature, and outcome of the missile
crisis.

\textit{Fidel Castro}

The roles of Cuba and Fidel Castro have been largely ignored in many analyses of
the Cuban Missile Crisis. Declassified Soviet documents and Cuban participants in the
Moscow and Havana conferences, as well as the efforts of several qualified academics
are beginning to illustrate that Cuba played a very significant role in the international
crisis of October, 1962. The scholarship of James Blight, Bruce Allyn, David Welch, and
Philip Brenner has been especially successful in illustrating the importance of Cuba in the
cause, character, and outcome of the crisis.

In Cuba the missile crisis is referred to as the October Crisis, illustrating that the
event was actually only one in a series of potentially catastrophic crises faced by the
Castro regime.\textsuperscript{xcv} By October 1962 Operation Mongoose, the Kennedy Administration
campaign to harass and destabilize the Cuban government, was well underway. Immediately following Castro’s ascension to power, the United States enacted policies of economic and diplomatic isolation. John F. Kennedy inherited a Cuban policy from the Eisenhower administration that in addition to political pressure, included a plan to forcefully remove Fidel Castro by aiding a group of Cuban émigrés. Though Kennedy had criticized the Eisenhower administration as stagnant and unimaginative when it came to Cold War issues, he maintained a very similar policy toward the island of Cuba.

Eisenhower’s plan for an invasion of the island by Cuban exiles, supported by the United States, became a reality under the Kennedy Administration in April 1961. The Bay of Pigs debacle ended in embarrassment and defeat for the United States and had significant consequences for the missile crisis that materialized eighteen months later.

At the request of Raul Castro, the Soviet Union began to significantly increase its aid to Cuban intelligence within a week of the Bay of Pigs invasion. The KGB sent agents to head all departments of Cuban intelligence and train Cuban agents as well as supplying necessary technical equipment. Anibal Escalante, a PSP member who had been encouraging Fidel Castro to crack down on dissidents prior to the invasion, rose to a prominent position in the cooperative Cuban-Soviet intelligence organization that began to create the surveillance state that Castro had previously resisted as unnecessary. Following the failed invasion of counterrevolutionaries and their superpower ally, Castro began to see the need for the police state many in the PSP had been encouraging for quite some time – especially Anibal Escalante.
Further, the Bay of Pigs invasion presented Castro with an opportunity to reveal his plans for a socialist Cuba. Raul and Che had been members of the communist party since the 1950s and Fidel joined the PSP in November 1960. The American sponsored attack confirmed the image of the ever-threatening nearby superpower that Castro had projected in order to push forth radical reform policies. “The events at the Bay of Pigs served as the great unifying symbol of the movement. The choice of communism... could now be presented as the only possible response to the crime of the Yankees.”

Castro and other leading members of his administration consistently portrayed American aggression, ranging from assassination attempts to economic embargoes, as necessitating the Soviet alliance, the increased need for domestic surveillance, and buttressing the stability of the Castro regime. Peter H. Smith states: “At a cost of $45 million, [the Bay of Pigs invasion] represented a humiliating failure for U.S. strategy. It boosted Castro’s political stature in Cuba, Latin America, and the developing world. And it helped drive him and his revolution toward the Soviet Union; it was in December 1961, not before, that Castro declared his lifelong allegiance to Marxist-Leninism.”

Max Frankel, long time reporter for the *New York Times*, states that “Castro was no communist, but American policy would make him one.” Historians, politicians, and key figures in the relevant administrations have theorized that it was this pattern of U.S. aggression that not only encouraged Cuba to accept Soviet nuclear missiles, but even forced Castro to embrace communism and ally with the Soviet Union. Sheldon Stern seems to agree that Castro’s success in crushing the Bay of Pigs invasion allowed him to announce his commitment to communism, “in the wake of his stunning triumph,” but doesn’t go as far
as to say that U.S. actions actually drove him to embrace communism and the Soviet Union as Frankel and Smith suggest.\textsuperscript{xcix} Denunciation of ‘American imperialism’ and the embrace of socialism and the Soviet Union appeared to be the best way to save the revolution and maintain a sovereign Cuba.

By April 1961 the Cubans had already received huge amounts of military technology from the Soviet Union and its allies, including 125 tanks, more than 400 artillery pieces and thousands of machine guns and rifles and the appropriate ammunition. An additional 80 tanks and 40 jets and reconnaissance aircraft were marked for Cuba and scheduled for delivery.\textsuperscript{c} The invasion, which came at the end of a series of invasion scares in the space of a year, illustrated to both the Cubans and their Soviet allies that more must be done to protect the young revolution. The Cubans, and many Soviets seem to have assumed that the Kennedy Administration “had reacted to the 1961 Bay of Pigs debacle by preparing for a much larger invasion of Cuba, one that would have the full intent of overthrowing the Cuban government and would rely on U.S. military forces.”\textsuperscript{sci} Because of this, many have assumed that Castro welcomed the Soviet nuclear missiles to deter the American attack which he believed was imminent.

Following the botched Bay of Pigs invasion, the Kennedy Administration intensified its campaign of covert action against the Cuban government. Most within the administration, however, felt that American military force would be required to remove the Castro regime. General Edward Lansdale was recruited by the Kennedy brothers to design Operation Mongoose, the plan to weaken and eventually eliminate the communist government in Cuba by way of covert sabotage, economic embargoes, diplomatic
isolation, aid to counterrevolutionaries, and assassination attempts. Furthermore, Lansdale’s project was to include a schedule illustrating when the effectiveness of covert operations would be exhausted and the island would be ready for the outright removal of Fidel Castro and his administration by way of military force.

The Kennedy Administration also increased American military presence and undertook large, conspicuous military exercises in the Caribbean, including an amphibious island invasion in nearby Puerto Rico to remove an allegedly fictitious, but unmistakable dictator named ORTSAC.iii

Furthermore, the Kennedy Administration isolated the Castro regime through both economic and diplomatic means. In 1961 President Kennedy eliminated the quota of sugar that the U.S. would purchase from Cuba and in early 1962 put an embargo on all trade with the island, except in the case of necessary medical supplies. In January 1962 Cuba was expelled from the Organization of American States; the organization also instituted collective economic measures against the Castro regime and agreed to prohibit the sale of arms to the island.

As McNamara and others would later admit, Castro understandably expected an invasion by the United States. Furthermore, precedent also suggested that a threat of military force from the Soviet Union would deter the American ‘imperialists.’ In October 1960 and again in March 1962, the Soviet Union alleviated Cuban fears of an imminent attack by threatening the use of nuclear weapons. Following the Cubans’ insistence that the U.S. was preparing for an invasion in 1960, Khrushchev declared that his commitment to the Cuban revolution included the use of nuclear weapons if necessary.
“When no armada appeared over the horizon, Castro and his inner circle believed that the strategic power of the Soviet Union had deterred a U.S. attack. It was the second such reassurance in only four month.” Fidel Castro, Raul Castro and Che Guevara publicly recognized the Soviet nuclear deterrent as being largely responsibly for the continued safety of Cuba.

Many in the academic community believe that this pattern of U.S. aggression against the Cuban government resulted in Castro’s acceptance of Soviet nuclear missiles. This theory has been echoed by many Cuban, Soviet, and American participants in the crisis, including Castro himself. More often, however, Castro has declared that he accepted the missiles not as a means of protection - because in reality, the presence of the missiles made Cuba a target – but as a way of bolstering the strategic forces of the socialist bloc. “If we expected them [the Socialist camp] to take a chance for us, we had to be willing to do likewise for them.” At the Moscow conference in 1989, Emilio Aragones, a leading PSP member during the 1962 crisis, declared that the Cuban leadership accepted the Soviet missiles “first, because the missiles would have shifted the global correlation of forces in favor of socialism; and second, because Cuba should accept ‘it’s share of the risk.” Fidel Castro actually modified the wording of the document that outlined the deployment of Soviet nuclear missiles to Cuba; he changed the declared purpose of the deployment from “to save the Cuban revolution,” to that of “to provide mutual military assistance.” Obviously, Cuba’s pride is better served by the position that the missiles were deployed to improve the strategic posture of the socialist bloc within the larger context of the Cold War, rather than that the missiles were
introduced as a necessary means of protecting the sovereignty and independence of Cuba and the Castro regime.

The Cuban argument that they accepted the missiles as a sacrifice for the socialist world further strengthens the theory that Khrushchev’s decision to suggest the deployment was intended to equalize the ‘balance of power.’ It is likely that the defense of the Castro regime, as well as the enhanced position of the socialist bloc in Cold War atomic diplomacy, influenced the decision of both Castro and Khrushchev to deploy Soviet missiles to the island of Cuba.

Though historians have not reached a consensus about Castro’s reasons for accepting Soviet missiles, academics have become more convinced that Cuba, and Castro himself, played a much larger role in the Cuban Missile Crisis than previously portrayed through American historical accounts and memoirs. Certainly, there is evidence to support the circular argument that the character of the Cuban revolution resulted in American aggression, which in turn, resulted in Cuba’s alliance with the Soviet Union, which then resulted in intensified American aggression and the eventual acceptance of Soviet nuclear missiles. Though Soviet experts on Castro and the Cuban leadership such as Aleksandr Alekseev and Anastas Mikoyan doubted Castro would accept nuclear missiles, it is reported that he and the top five members of the Cuban leadership – Emilio Aragones, Osvaldo Dorticos, Blas Roca, Raul Castro, and Che Guevara, “were unanimously in favor of the idea.” Indeed, the Cuban decision to accept the nuclear missiles is as critical to the Cuban Missile Crisis as the Soviet decision to suggest
deployment, yet the significance of Cuba to the crisis is largely downplayed in historical analyses.

Philip Brenner argues that Cuba, particularly Castro, influenced the character of the crisis, as well as Khrushchev’s decision to resolve the situation by removing the missiles. According to several accounts, Castro remained admirably calm after Kennedy’s public announcement of October 22nd and “Cuban army units mobilized and assumed defensive positions quickly and with a minimum of confusion.” Cuba’s preparations “would have made the ensuing conflict different from the one anticipated by U.S. planners.” At the Moscow conference, members of the Cuban delegation claimed that the difficulty and the casualty rate of the invasion would be much greater than the Americans appreciated. “If that were the case, it is conceivable that the increasingly bloody and prolonged conventional war against Cuba might have escalated to a nuclear level in response to a range of pressures on both the Kennedy Administration and the Soviet leaders.”

The character and personality of Fidel Castro also affected the nature and outcome of the crisis. At the height of the crisis, he defiantly ordered that all aircraft in Cuban airspace be shot down. On October 27th, 1962, a U-2 plane was shot down over eastern Cuba, killing the pilot, Captain Rudolf Anderson. The Soviet commanders in Cuba believed the reconnaissance plane was taking photos as preparation for the imminent U.S. invasion; they liberally interpreted Khrushchev’s earlier order to defend against a U.S. air attack as orders to fire at an American U-2 plane at the peak of the international crisis. Khrushchev became concerned by Castro’s behavior and
recognized that the crisis had the potential of escaping his control and resulting in grave consequences. Thus, Castro’s letter to Khrushchev of October 26th, received by the Soviets on October 27th, was especially distressing to the Soviet Premiere.

As part of the Soviet policy of glasnost, previously withheld sections of Khrushchev’s memoirs were published in the West. In these sections, Khrushchev recalls Castro’s correspondence of October 26th, which he interpreted as Castro’s suggestion for a first strike attack against the United States. In the letter, Castro states:

> From an analysis of the situation and the reports in our possession, I consider that the aggression is almost imminent within the next 24 or 72 hours. . . . At this time I want to convey to you briefly my personal opinion. . . . If . . . the imperialists invade Cuba with the goal of occupying it, the danger that that aggressive policy poses for humanity is so great that following that event the Soviet Union must never allow the circumstances in which the imperialists could launch the first strike against it.

> I tell you this because I believe that the imperialists’ aggressiveness is extremely dangerous and if they actually carry out the brutal act of invading Cuba in violation of international law and morality, that would be the moment to eliminate such danger forever through an act of clear legitimate defense, however harsh and terrible the solution would be, for there is no other.\textsuperscript{cxii}

Khrushchev also concluded in his memoirs that Castro was a reckless and emotional person who did not understand the potential consequences of nuclear war. Castro reacted angrily to Khrushchev’s posthumous revelations. In a speech given after the release of the memoirs Castro, referring to Khrushchev’s claim that he had requested a nuclear strike against the U.S., said, “Perhaps Khrushchev even interpreted it this way, but in reality it did not happen like that.”\textsuperscript{cxiii} The letters themselves were released in November 1990; Castro maintains that the letter in question was intended to strengthen
Khrushchev’s resolve at a time when he was sensing Soviet weakness, and not to encourage a nuclear first strike against the United States.\textsuperscript{cxiv}

Regardless of Castro’s intentions, it is clear that Khrushchev interpreted his October 26\textsuperscript{th} correspondence as a dangerous and reckless suggestion to instigate a nuclear war and therefore chose to immediately negotiate an end to the crisis before it was too late. Thus, despite the fact that Khrushchev chose to exclude Cuba from the negotiations for the settlement of the dispute, Castro inadvertently played a large role in the resolution of the crisis.

Though Castro insists that he did not suggest that “the USSR should be the aggressor, because that would be more than incorrect, it would be immoral and insane,” he does admit that he felt nuclear war would be the result of an American invasion.\textsuperscript{cxv} At the Havana conference, Castro reported, “I would have agreed to the use of nuclear weapons. Because, in any case, we took it for granted that it would become a nuclear war anyway, and that we were going to disappear. Before having the country occupied – totally occupied – we were ready to die in the defense of our country.”\textsuperscript{cxvi} Castro has said that he equated a conventional attack against Cuba with a nuclear attack on the United States, because the very different forms of attack would have much the same effect on the respective nations.\textsuperscript{cxvii} Thus, it is possible that Castro would have been less concerned about the consequences of nuclear war and therefore more likely to advocate the use of the missiles. If this is the case, then Khrushchev was correct to fear the possible consequences of the rapidly deteriorating crisis, and to exclude Castro as he quickly maneuvered a resolution.
Though Castro was excluded from the American-Soviet discussions that resulted in the eventual resolution of the crisis, he did affect the way in which the agreement played out. The Americans insisted upon on-site inspections to verify that all offensive weapons were removed, in return for a secret American pledge not to invade the island of Cuba. Castro, having heard the agreement over the radio, was furious. He felt the Soviets had abandoned Cuba to pursue their own interests. Castro declared that the Soviets had no right to bargain away Cuba’s sovereignty by way of inspections and the return of all IL-28 bombers which, he insisted, were defensive weapons given to the Cubans by the Soviets and thus, Cuban property. Instead, Castro announced that negotiations would be considered only if his “five points” were recognized. Castro’s demands included an immediate end to the American economic embargo, all U.S.-sponsored insurgent activity and covert sabotage, “piratical attacks” originating in bases in the U.S. and Puerto Rico, and violation of Cuban airspace, as well as the return of the naval base at Guantanamo Bay. Castro maintained this position despite the appeals of UN General Secretary U Thant and Anastas Mikoyan. Fidel claimed that the Americans were not required to allow for the observation of a third party to verify that their pledge not to invade Cuba was being upheld, and thus it was insulting to Cuba that inspections should take place on Cuban soil to verify the Soviet pledge. In an attempt to placate Castro, the Soviets left 3,000 of the 40,000 Soviet troops on the island as a defensive force. Castro relentlessly refused inspection on Cuban soil so the Soviets were forced to reload the missiles and other weaponry onto Soviet ships where it would then be photographed by U.S. surveillance aircraft and verified by experts. Further, Castro’s
statements at the Havana conference suggest that he still has not forgiven the Soviet leaders for what he perceived as the abandonment of an ally so as to selfishly pursue Soviet interests.  

Obviously Cuba played a very significant and active role in the crisis. Fidel Castro was not a passive player, and his personality and actions influenced the causes of the crisis, as well as the character of the conflict and its eventual resolution. Recent scholarship of historians such as Blight, Allyn, Welch, Brenner, and others, has given students of the Cuban Missile Crisis a much more comprehensive understanding of the nature, causes, and consequences of a potentially catastrophic period of the Cold War.

John F. Kennedy

The nature and effectiveness of President Kennedy’s actions prior to and during the Cuban missile crisis have been a topic of much disagreement within the American academic community. Some suggest that Kennedy, an obsessed Cold Warrior, refused to negotiate or compromise with the Soviet Union and pushed the United States unnecessarily close to nuclear war over a situation that he had created with his aggressive policy toward Cuba. Others believe that Kennedy expertly resolved the crisis through his staunch refusal to accept the ‘outrageous’ actions of the Soviet Union, and proved himself a capable and powerful executive of a Cold War superpower that would have lost ground across the globe if the Soviet offensive went unchecked. James Blight describes this interpretation as one in which President Kennedy “stood strong; he stood tall; he did
not compromise; and in just 13 days, he secured an unequivocal victory for the U.S. over the Soviet Union.\textsuperscript{cxxi}

More recently, a more complicated, but better supported portrait of John F. Kennedy and his handling of the Cuban Missile Crisis has been introduced. This theory suggests that a pattern of hostility toward the Castro regime enacted by the Kennedy Administration did, most likely, initiate the crisis of October 1962, but that the U.S. was reacting to what it saw as threatening behavior from the Cubans and Soviets. Furthermore, this scholarship suggests that despite his certain status as a Cold Warrior, and his desire to appear strong to both his domestic and international critics, John Kennedy recognized the danger of the situation and, with Nikita Khrushchev, negotiated a peaceful settlement.

The ‘traditionalist’ view, generally proposed and supported by the American participants in the crisis such as Theodore Sorensen and Robert Kennedy, suggests that failures within the intelligence agencies of both the United States and the Soviet Union created misperceptions and misunderstandings that resulted in the crisis. Robert McNamara states that, “the decisions of all three nations, before and during the crisis, had been distorted by misinformation, misjudgment, and miscalculation.”\textsuperscript{cxxii}

The participants in the crisis also seem to have reached some consensus on Soviet motives for the deployment of nuclear missiles to Cuba. In his book, \textit{Robert Kennedy and his Times}, Arthur Schlesinger suggests that Khrushchev sought to “redress the strategic imbalance, humiliate the Americans, rescue the Cubans, silence the Stalinists and the generals, confound the Chinese and acquire a potent bargaining counter when he
chose to replay Berlin. The Kennedy recordings suggest that JFK himself believed the Soviet Union to be testing American resolve, perhaps so as to make gains around the world, especially in Berlin. He repeatedly made his belief clear that “the problem is part of this worldwide struggle where we face the Communists, particularly, as I say, over Berlin.” Whether such statements suggest Kennedy had a full understanding of the conflict within the larger context of the Cold War or that he was a typical Cold War politician continues to be a topic of debate.

Indeed, each of these motives was at least briefly considered by Kennedy or one or more members of the Executive Committee (ExComm) and each of these motives is put forth in later accounts. Until recently however, there has been little discussion among former members of the Kennedy Administration regarding the idea that the Soviet Union put missiles in Cuba to protect the island from an American invasion. According to contemporary statements he made, and his later published memoirs, Khrushchev’s primary goal was to protect the young revolution, and yet this possibility was hardly considered by ExComm. Though the U.S. had prepared contingency plans for the invasion of Cuba and readied the military for a possible invasion if deemed necessary in the midst of the crisis, McNamara and other members of the Kennedy Administration insist there were no plans to invade the island prior to the emplacement of Soviet nuclear missiles, strengthening his argument that “misjudgment and miscalculation” were largely to blame for the crisis.

Though the participants of the crisis (or anyone else for that matter) have been unable to reach a single conclusion on the motives for Soviet deployment, they do agree
that President Kennedy handled the crisis with skill, strength, and ingenuity. By participants’ reports:

President Kennedy responded magnificently to the crisis. . . . He was always in control of himself and events; as such he responsibly and objectively exercised the power at his command to terminate successfully the crisis via the removal of Soviet offensive nuclear missiles from Cuba. cx xv

In his book *Thirteen Days*, Robert Kennedy repeatedly credits his brother’s “wisdom and personal dignity” for resolution of the crisis. cx xvi  Arthur Schlesinger, who wrote two books proclaiming the adept leadership of both Robert and John Kennedy, declared that the Missile Crisis portrayed to the “whole world . . . the ripening of an American leadership unsurpassed in the responsible management of power. . . . [a] combination of toughness. . . nerve and wisdom, so brilliantly controlled, so matchlessly calibrated that [it] dazzled the world.” cx xvii  The belief that President Kennedy, by way of strength, intelligence, restraint, and compassion resolved the crisis, is echoed by McGeorge Bundy, Roger Hilsman, Arthur Schlesinger and General Maxwell Taylor. This was also the accepted view of most general American observers of the crisis, as participants were the only ones with access to information regarding the crisis for quite some time and so controlled the history of the crisis and its resolution. John F. Kennedy was certainly influential in bringing the crisis to an end, but his means of doing so are being further explored and he was certainly not the only administrator whose efforts were necessary to resolution.

A more critical theory, put forth by authors such as Robert Crane, David Lowenthal, and Richard Nixon, suggests that the Cuban Missile Crisis was the result of
weak and hesitant Cold War foreign policy blunders of the Kennedy Administration in
other parts of the world, specifically Berlin. Elie Abel summarizes the opinions of
John McCone:

[T]he United States led the Russians into that frame of mind by a whole series of
things it had done – or failed to do. Kennedy, for example, let them get away
with building the Berlin Wall. He allowed the Bay of Pigs landing to fail.
McCone blames not only the Kennedy Administration but also the Eisenhower
Administration before it for creating a “climate of inaction.”

Though the aforementioned authors are all proponents of a similar argument –
that the Kennedy Administration, and to a lesser degree the Eisenhower Administration,
had created a climate in which the Soviet Union felt it was possible to place nuclear
missiles in Cuba without considering the response of the United States – they vary on the
blame and criticism they assign to Kennedy himself.

The theory that Kennedy’s weak Cold War policies resulted in the missile crisis is
countered by the opposite argument that it was in fact, Kennedy’s aggressive Cold War
policies that created the environment that led to the crucial Soviet decision. Proponents
of what William J. Medland calls the left-wing perspective of the revisionist argument
(illustrating that this is a topic of much debate) suggest that “for the sake of personal
prestige and political success, Kennedy adopted a belligerent course so that he could
demonstrate his toughness, firmness, and manliness to the world.” Authors of this
theory, such as Roger Hagan and Leslie Dewart, feel that President Kennedy’s arrogant
policies resulted in an environment in which Khrushchev felt he had to place missiles in
Cuba to both equalize the balance of power and protect the Castro regime. Furthermore,
they suggest that Kennedy rejected a path of private negotiation for a public showdown.
Hagan claims that “Politics, toughness, a sense of nakedness and military peril, a sense of being tested, silly rage, all were probably mingled into an unanalyzed conviction of the necessity of our action.” Hagan and a number of other historians have proposed the argument that Kennedy’s decision to abandon private diplomacy and choose a more belligerent and dangerous path was due to a desire to appear tough and unyielding to quiet the increasing criticism from politicians of both parties that he was soft on communism.

Thomas G. Paterson and William J. Brophy reject the claim that Kennedy behaved recklessly due to concern over domestic politics and the upcoming November elections. “Kennedy did not engage Cuba and the Soviet Union in the missile crisis in October in order to silence his noisy Republican critics or to attract votes for Democrats in November. . . The Democrats had no political need to manufacture a war scare, and Kennedy did not welcome a new Cuban crisis.” Paterson and Brophy believe that the naval quarantine was not politically motivated, because many American politicians - both Democrat and Republican - called for harsher action. They do suggest, however, that the tactic of the public statement may have been, citing the need to keep the American public informed of military mobilization to avoid later fallout, as well as an attempt to rally support of American citizens and the world.

Most discussions of Kennedy’s handling of the crisis eventually evolve into the question of the actual threat posed by the missiles in Cuba. Participants in the crisis, as well as many historians refer to the Cuban Missile Crisis as the event that “brought the world to the abyss of nuclear destruction and the end of mankind.” Sheldon Stern
calls the Cuban Missile Crisis “one of the most dangerous moments in human history,” and “the most perilous moment of the Cold War.” If this is true, as participants conclude, then Kennedy’s tough stance and refusal to accept the missiles in Cuba was admirable and necessary.

Kennedy’s critics however, claim that in an attempt to improve his domestic political prestige, Kennedy concocted false reasons to justify the public military response - the first being that the missiles posed a grave and serious risk, and drastically altered the balance of power. They suggest that the outdated missiles were useless for a first strike and thus were ‘defensive’ weapons and did not pose a significant threat, citing the nearly identical missiles in Turkey as proof that the administration understood that these missiles were not of an offensive nature. Furthermore, they criticize Kennedy for escalating and extending the crisis by submitting a list of “offensive” weapons he demanded be removed in order to resolve the crisis that included the IL-28 bombers. By this argument, Kennedy, by choosing to view the missiles as an offensive threat and demanding their removal, unnecessarily brought the world to the brink of nuclear war.

This debate is further investigated by Sheldon Stern, who concludes that “JFK believed the missiles were a political rather than a military challenge.” He cites evidence in the Kennedy recordings when JFK said, “I don’t think that it adds particularly to our danger. . . The major argument is the political effect on the United States.” Though perhaps Kennedy recognized the missiles did not actually pose a dramatic military threat, the political consequences of inaction, both at home and abroad were dangerous enough to warrant his response. Many within the Kennedy
Administration felt that if the Cuban threat went unanswered, Soviet confidence to act elsewhere in the world might be bolstered, and European confidence in their American allies would be damaged, resulting in an extremely dangerous world in which Soviet actions went unchecked. In short, “failure to act in Cuba would diminish American power everywhere in the world.”43 Shortly after McNamara conceded that the strategic balance was “not at all” changed, Kennedy summarized the alleged political consequences of inaction:

Last month, I said we weren’t going to [accept offensive missiles in Cuba], and last month I should have said we don’t care. But when we said we’re not going to, and they go ahead and do it, and then we do nothing, then I would think that our risks increase. . . They’ve got enough to blow us up now anyway, . . After all, this is a political struggle as much as military.44

Whether the military balance was greatly affected by the introduction of Soviet nuclear missiles on Cuba, it is clear that the Kennedy Administration felt the international political consequences of the situation were great. Therefore, the argument that Kennedy acted in the manner he did solely for domestic political gains and the desire to appear strong, seems flawed; Kennedy reacted to what he considered to be a grave threat to the interests and safety of the United States and its allies.

In his book, The Week the World Stood Still: Inside the Secret Cuban Missile Crisis, Sheldon M. Stern recognizes what he refers to as “the Kennedy Paradox.” Using recordings of the secret meetings of the Executive Committee of the National Security Council (ExComm) as his primary source, Stern suggests that John F. Kennedy, a dedicated cold warrior, “rose above his own Cold War rhetoric and policies during these decisive meetings and audaciously steered the ship of state away from nuclear
Stern echoes traditional interpretation by stressing the importance of Kennedy himself in alleviating the crisis. He applauds Kennedy’s actions as commander in chief during this confrontation, but also concedes that previous actions of the Kennedy Administration, such as the failed invasion at the Bay of Pigs, were precipitous in the Soviet decision to move nuclear missiles to Cuba. Stern strays further from the conventional exposition of this event with his presentation and analysis of Kennedy’s posture in the face of possible nuclear war with the Soviets. Rather than appearing a staunch and unbending cold warrior, the selections of the recordings used by Stern portray Kennedy as a thoughtful and cautious leader, willing to compromise and agonizingly conscious of the stunning and tragic potential inherent in a confrontation between two nuclear superpowers rife with distrust and misunderstanding. Kennedy repeatedly expressed distrust of military operations and solutions as well as recognition of the danger of backing the Soviets into a corner and forcing escalation of the crisis.

The recordings of the Ex-Comm meetings are obviously somewhat limited in what they can reveal; criticism of Kennedy’s policies and his handling of the situation is, of course, almost entirely absent from the recordings – participants in the discussion were usually in the president’s company, or at least aware, that they were in his space. Additionally, the Cuban and Soviet perspective is entirely absent.

The collaborative college textbook entitled *The American People: Creating a Nation and a Society*, by Gary B. Nash and Julie Roy Jeffrey is not so approving of Kennedy’s role in resolving the Cuban missile crisis. Nash portrays Kennedy as an “aggressive cold warrior.” His discussion of the nuclear confrontation in Cuba is
preceded by a discussion of the Bay of Pigs “fiasco” in which he cites the failed invasion as an important precursor to the Soviet decision to place missiles in Cuba. Nash suggests that the Bay of Pigs experience simultaneously hardened Kennedy’s stance toward communism and reinforced the Soviet and Cuban belief that the United States wished to overthrow Castro and eliminate communism from the western hemisphere. Nash declares, “Understandably fearful of the American threat after the Bay of Pigs invasion, Castro sought and secured Soviet assistance.”

The language of the *American People* text regarding Kennedy’s response is clearly critical. Unlike Stern’s book which portrays President Kennedy as cautious and compromising when faced with a situation that he was painfully aware might cause the death of millions, Nash suggests that Kennedy “was determined to confront the Soviet Union in Cuba and this time to win.” There is no mention of Kennedy’s repeated comments regarding the tragic potential of further escalation, or his resistance to a military-dominated solution such as an air-assault and/or invasion as illustrated in the dialogue of the recordings chosen by Stern. Additionally, Nash’s breakdown of what constituted the crisis reads, “the USSR had begun to place what Kennedy considered offensive missiles on Cuban soil,” and obviously calls into question, if it doesn’t directly imply that the crisis was a creation of the Kennedy administration. Rather than hailing Kennedy as the hero that avoided all-out nuclear war, Nash suggests that his actions perhaps created the crisis and tensions eased and resolution was possible “only because Khrushchev called the Soviet ships back.”
The issue of John Kennedy’s role in heightening and/or alleviating the Cuban Missile Crisis will continue. Traditionally he has been portrayed as heroic and intelligent though firm, unbending and unwilling to compromise in the face of Soviet threats; during the 1970s, scholarship emerged in which he has been portrayed as a reckless and unimaginative Cold Warrior, who brought the world unnecessarily close to nuclear war. Recent scholarship on the Cuban Missile Crisis seems to put him somewhere in the middle; JFK was certainly a strong believer in Cold War ideology and rhetoric, yet he also seems to have exercised great restraint and caution when attempting to diffuse the crisis in Cuba.

In their analyses of the Cuban Missile Crisis, participants, conservatives, and liberals do seem to agree that Kennedy’s actions prior to the Cuban Missile Crisis did help to create it. Philip Brenner concludes: “If the United States had not been bent on liquidating the Cuban revolution there would not have been an October crisis. This was first demonstrated with economic aggression and then with the organization of subversive forces against Cuba, the Bay of Pigs invasion.” The Cold War policies of the Kennedy Administration included economic and diplomatic pressure, assassination attempts, covert sabotage and harassment, an increasingly hostile and conspicuous military presence in the Caribbean, and aid to counterrevolutionary groups. As noted above, McNamara himself admits that he would have believed a U.S. invasion imminent if he had been a leader of either the Soviet Union or Cuba. He emphasized however, that the aggressive American policies – such as Operation Mongoose – “did not occur in a vacuum.”
At the Havana Conference, Robert McNamara outlined four reasons for the hostile American actions that certainly encouraged the occurrence of the Cuban Missile Crisis. The primary problem, according to the Secretary of Defense, was the Cuban alliance with the Soviet Union; the Kennedy Administration believed a communist beachhead in the Caribbean to be unacceptable and extremely dangerous to American interests within the larger context of the Cold War. Second, American officials feared Castro’s support of socialist revolutions throughout Latin America, which he proclaimed in his Second Declaration of Havana, despite the belief of the Soviet Union and members of the PSP that this was a risky undertaking. The third reason for American aggression against Cuba lay in its “hostile rhetoric directed at the United States,” which made it difficult to ignore domestic calls for action against the hostile Soviet outpost. The final reason McNamara cites for the nature of American policy is “that the Cuban government betrayed its promises of a free election and began to establish a dictatorship that violated the civil and political liberties of the Cuban people.”

Newly declassified documents and the findings of the series of conferences regarding the crisis have served to provide more material for discussion and interpretation; they have not, however, clarified the absolute motives of the administrators nor the causes of the crisis itself. Len Scott and Steve Smith even go as far as saying “[I]n our view, the great availability of sources on the crisis frequently adds to the difficulty of determining ‘what happened.’” The continued debate regarding JFK’s role in this international conflict highlights the important fact that if the potentially catastrophic situation of October 1962 is to continue to be viewed as an example of
international crisis resolution, it is important that the strategy and posture of the negotiators be investigated, and if possible, understood.
Consequences and Legacy of the Cuban Missile Crisis

Indeed the consequences of the Cuban Missile Crisis remain as unclear as the motives or causes that created it. Kennedy’s critics suggest that belief in his uncompromising foreign policy led to further American initiatives in the Cold War, specifically in Vietnam. Participants such as Schlesinger and Hilsman cite the resulting test ban treaty and ‘hot line’ between the Kremlin and White House as evidence that détente and “a relaxation of Cold War tensions” resulted from the near nuclear holocaust. Most importantly though, Hilsman concludes: “...the lesson...was that the risk of an inadvertent escalation during a crisis was unavoidable and that in a nuclear age such risk was unacceptable...many of the participants on both sides were shocked and deeply troubled by the many missteps and unauthorized actions. Their faith in both deterrence and Churchill’s balance of terror was deeply shaken.”

Hilsman and others imply that the Cuban Missile Crisis actually served to alleviate Cold War tensions and encourage diplomacy to prevent international conflicts from attaining such dangerous potential. Robert McNamara has concluded that nuclear weapons are inexcusably dangerous and unless they are destroyed, represent the possible future destruction of mankind. Though the elimination of nuclear weaponry is unlikely, it suggests perhaps, an increased respect for the power of nuclear technology and for the dangers inherent in international conflict and escalating confrontation.

It is clear that the personalities and statesmanship of Castro, Kennedy, and Khrushchev were significant to the creation and outcome of this crisis. The recent
declassification of relevant documents and recordings, as well as the conferences organized to gain a better understanding of the events of 1962, have been especially helpful in illustrating the roles of Khrushchev and Castro in the crisis. Though Khrushchev’s exact motives for deploying the missiles are unclear, there is strong evidence to suggest that he misestimated the American reaction to the deployment. Furthermore, Khrushchev became increasingly concerned that the crisis would escalate out of his control, and thus was instrumental in its resolution. Castro’s historic ‘relationship’ with the Kennedy brothers, his acceptance of the Soviet missiles, and his behavior after their discovery and during their removal, all played a hugely influential role in the October Crisis.

The declassification of the recordings known as the Kennedy Tapes have been especially valuable in understanding the role and actions of President Kennedy in the Cuban Missile Crisis. Perhaps because of the numerous articles and books available on Kennedy, it is his role in the crisis that has undergone the greatest evolution. Participants in the crisis suggest that Kennedy stood strong against Soviet pressure and, by way of tough rhetoric and action, averted future Soviet aggression and nuclear holocaust. Critics have suggested that Kennedy’s obsession with removing Castro, and his determination not to show weakness in the face of the Cold War led the world unnecessarily close to a nuclear exchange, and aggressive foreign policy in future Cold War theaters. The Kennedy Tapes portray a moderate and capable statesman, different from many of the traditional and revisionist portraits painted by participants and scholars. Though John F. Kennedy and his brother Robert were publicly – and personally – humiliated by the Bay
of Pigs fiasco, John Kennedy was rational and capable when faced with the possibility of nuclear war posed by the Cuban Missile Crisis. He worked tirelessly to alleviate the crisis through diplomatic means and to avoid armed conflict and escalation, despite calls from his advisers and members of Congress for harsher action.

Though he was willing to risk his political reputation if it meant averting nuclear disaster, he can perhaps be criticized for his secret negotiations regarding the Jupiter missiles in Turkey and his political sacrifice of Adlai Stevenson. Kennedy did request that his agreement to the removal of the Jupiter missiles remain a secret so as to avoid political difficulty both within the United States and with NATO allies. He was also, however, one of the first in the administration to suggest the removal of the antiquated Jupiters in exchange for removal of the Soviet missiles in Cuba. Furthermore, Kennedy also made arrangements in which Columbia University professor, and former deputy U.N. Secretary General, Andrew Cordier, would encourage U.N. Secretary General U Thant to suggest a Turkey/Cuba missile trade so as to resolve the crisis. This contingency was not activated because Khrushchev agreed to the removal of the missiles in Cuba in return for a secret agreement to remove the American missiles in Turkey. Adlai Stevenson was undoubtedly sacrificed by the Kennedy brothers in their attempt to avoid political fallout. In an interview with Chattanooga Times reporter Charles Bartlett, McNamara’s assistant Michael Forrestal attempted to quiet ‘rumors’ about the trade of the missiles in Turkey: “It was all Adlai’s fault. . . The president opposed the idea and later prevented Khrushchev from getting it.” Kennedy made sure that he controlled the first published account on the handling of the crisis and willingly sacrificed Adlai
Stevenson leading Naftali and Fursenko to conclude: “The myth was designed to remove any doubt that the much tougher JFK, of course, would ever have condoned trading away the security of an ally to resolve the Cuban problem.” Despite his poor treatment of Stevenson, Kennedy did prove himself a competent and able statesman in the face of possible nuclear war and his actions were certainly influential in the peaceful resolution of the Cuban Missile Crisis.

Len Scott and Steve Smith suggest that the many different opinions and analyses of the event are unavoidable and despite continued investigation, the academic community will never derive the ‘truth’ of the Cuban Missile Crisis.

We believe that even if we knew every detail about the crisis that would not mean that we could write a definitive history, even if that history were to be written from the perspective of each participant in turn. The reason for this is that motivations and intentions are rarely revealed and are usually inconsistent across time if not at each specific moment. Policy-makers in the crisis acted for a variety of reasons, and spoke and wrote for different purposes and audiences at different times. In short, more and more evidence may simply make things less and less clear. Thus, getting at ‘the truth’ of the crisis may simply be impossible, not because we know too little but because there is no single truth to be ascertained. There were several different crises, with no neutral body of evidence existing to determine which account is ‘right’. The prevailing view of the crisis is in reality an American view, and one that needs to be re-read against other versions of events, and other definitions of ‘the’ crisis.

Though analysts may never fully understand all aspects and perspectives of the Cuban Missile Crisis, this event will undoubtedly continue to be analyzed and studied. It is clear that this was a pivotal event of the Cold War which represented great danger, whether real or imagined, and that the political maneuverings of the statesmen involved resulted in its resolution. In an era of an increasingly global society, future international conflicts are certain; perhaps the experience of the Cuban Missile Crisis, and its
subsequent analysis, will lend perspective and wisdom to negotiations that will allow
nations to again avoid nuclear war.
CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS LESSON PLAN

Introduction

The Cuban Missile Crisis is an exciting and interesting topic of study for eleventh grade United States History students. The goal of this lesson plan is to illustrate the tensions of the Cold War era and the nuclear age, the personalities and influence of each of the three administrators on the crisis and its resolution, and to explore the crisis itself. Through their investigation of this crisis, students should begin to recognize the danger inherent in international conflict and analyze ways in which we can prevent and mediate future conflicts. The lesson will address the following themes:

- Cold War hostilities between the Soviet Union and the United States often erupted into “hot wars” in the developing world.
- Misperception, misunderstanding, and false assumptions frequently fuel national foreign policy and international conflict.
- The Cuban role has been largely ignored in the Cuban Missile Crisis.
- The academic study of past international conflicts is helpful in preventing and/or alleviating future conflicts.
- The imperialist policies of the United States and the Soviet Union frequently clashed in developing nations.
Prior Content Knowledge and Skills

In order to fully benefit from this lesson, students should have a strong understanding of the deteriorating relationship of the Soviet Union and the United States following World War II, the rhetoric and posture of the Cold War superpowers, the nuclear arms race and possible consequences of nuclear war, the Cold War foreign policies of containment, brinksmanship and nuclear diplomacy, the Domino Theory, and the concept and motives of geopolitics.

Discussion of Content Hook

Provide students with the section of the chronology (Appendix A) from October 1st through October 16th, 1962. Read the section out loud, and show students the photographic evidence (this can easily be found online.) Mention to students, that Kennedy couldn’t decipher the photographs without the aid of experts, so they are not alone if the photographs are confusing. After each student understands the situation that President Kennedy was faced with on October 16th, present them with the following question: To fully understand this crisis, what do you need to know? Students will recognize the need to understand the motives and reasoning of the participants, specifically Khrushchev and Castro. Conclude the class session by asking students to write down their predictions about why Khrushchev chose to emplace Soviet nuclear missiles on Cuba, why Castro chose to accept them, and how Kennedy chose to react to their discovery, using their knowledge of these three characters and of the Cold War era. Their responses should be completed by the next class meeting. The purpose of this hook
is to encourage students to see the missile crisis as the horrifying and exciting event that it is. By allowing students to make predictions and/or suggestions as to how to handle historical situations, educators provide a more active form of education and empower students to act confidently when faced with decisions in their personal lives and as citizens.

Lesson Content

Day One: See Discussion of Content Hook above; this activity/discussion will take a full class period.

Day Two: Provide students with the section of the chronology (Appendix A) that includes January 1st, 1959 (Fidel Castro’s ascension to power) through October 16th. Also provide students with a map of the world. Ask students to review the two handouts and alone, or in pairs, write up the geopolitical significance of this event. What would Khrushchev’s geopolitical motivations be? Castro’s geopolitical motivations? Kennedy’s? As a second activity, ask students to read the chronology from the beginning through October 16th, marking which events and/or actions/statements were most influential in creating the Cuban Missile Crisis. Discuss their findings and ideas as a class.

Days Three through Six – In order for students to gain a full understanding of the Cuban Missile Crisis, they must understand the history of U.S.-Cuban relations and Cuba’s position within the larger context of the Cold War. Provide students with the
Background: Cuban-American relations lecture outline (Appendix F) to guide them through lecture. All lecture information is included in the preceding essay (pp. 8-35). Since students respond positively to visual aids, pair the lecture with relevant photographs which can be easily found on the internet.

**Day Seven:** Ask students to write up what they feel to be the main causes of the Cuban Missile Crisis, using their knowledge of the Cold War and of Cuban-American relations. They should refer to their notes and their chronology. As a second activity, ask students to write out how they believe Kennedy, Khrushchev, and Castro *will* respond to the crisis, and how they feel each leader *should* respond.

**Day Eight:** Distribute the remaining section of the chronology. Give students time to look it over. Begin a short lecture on the crisis itself. All lecture information is included in the preceding essay (pp. 33-35). To gain a better understanding of the tension, escalation, and eventual resolution of the crisis, go over the chronology as a group. Ask students to write down and then discuss their answers to the following question, Which moments of the crisis do you feel were the most dangerous and why?

**Day Nine:** Distribute the primary sources: Kennedy’s Inaugural Address, the letters between Castro and Khrushchev, and the letters between Khrushchev and Kennedy (Appendices A-D). Note to students that there is no documentary evidence - or evidence of any kind - of communication between Castro and Kennedy and ask them if/why this is
significant. Instruct students to write how each primary source either supports or refutes their beliefs of causation of the crisis and the role of each individual leader, using specific examples from the documents.

**Day Ten:** Begin with a journal question: Did Khrushchev, Kennedy, and Castro act the way you expected they would? Explain. Follow with a second writing activity in which students respond to the question, Why is the Cuban Missile Crisis significant today? Discuss. Follow up question: Why is a comprehensive understanding of the Cuban Missile Crisis important today? Distribute the BBC article, *Chavez gets Russian Helicopters*, (Appendix E) published April 4th, 2006. Ask students to write a one-page response to the article that discusses if/how these developments are significant.

**Days Eleven through Fifteen** – View either the 1974 film, *The Missiles of October* or the more recent film, *Thirteen Days*. Students should write a critique of the film, focusing on its portrayal of the causes of the crisis and the actions, behaviors, and character of the participants. In their film review, they should discuss the possible consequences of the historical inaccuracies within the film. Since time in class is limited, this is a good extra credit or homework assignment, if necessary.

**Extension Activity:** Instruct students to research the current U.S.-Cuban and/or U.S.-Venezuelan relationship, provide their opinion on these contemporary international relationships, and make predictions about future interactions.
Evaluation

Students will be asked to create a political cartoon regarding the Cuban Missile Crisis. (Appendix F)

As part of their Cold War exam, students will be asked to respond to the following essay questions. 1) What were the causes and consequences of the Cuban Missile Crisis? 2) Discuss the significance of the Cuban Missile Crisis to contemporary society.

Standards Alignment

California History/Social Science Standards:

11.4. Students trace the rise of the United States to its role as a world power in the twentieth century.
11.4.2 Describe the Spanish-American War and U.S. expansion in the South Pacific.

11.9. Students analyze U.S. foreign policy since World War II.
11.9.2 Understand the role of military alliances, including NATO and SEATO in deterring communist aggression and maintaining security during the Cold War.
11.9.3 Trace the origins and geopolitical consequences (foreign and domestic) of the Cold War and containment policy, including the following: The era of McCarthyism, instances of domestic Communism (e.g., Alger Hiss) and blacklisting; The Truman Doctrine; the Berlin Blockade; the Korean War; The Bay of Pigs invasion and the Cuban Missile Crisis; Atomic testing in the American West, "mutual assured destruction" doctrine, disarmament policies; The Vietnam War; Latin American policy.

National Social Science/United States History Standards:

Era 7: The Emergence of Modern America (1890-1930)
• Understands the changing role of the United States in world affairs through World War I

Era 9: Postwar United States (1945 to Early 1970s)

• Understands how the Cold War and conflicts in Korea and Vietnam influenced domestic and international politics
Appendix A
Cuban Missile Crisis Chronology
Chronology


(All times EDT unless otherwise noted)

1959

1 January
- The regime of Gen. Fulgencio Batista of Cuba falls; Fidel Castro assumes power.

17 May
- The revolutionary government of Cuba enacts an agrarian reform law. Shortly thereafter Cuba first expropriates U.S.-owned properties, promising compensation.

July
- President Manuel Urrutia of Cuba states on television that communism is not really concerned with the welfare of the people and that it constitutes a danger to the Cuban Revolution. On 17 July, Fidel Castro accuses President Urrutia of treason and resigns as prime minister. President Urrutia resigns, and is replaced by Osvaldo Dorticos. Castro resumes his post on 26 July.

19 October
- Major Huber Matos, military chief in Camagiiey province, resigns, charging Communist penetration of the government. He is arrested and on 15 December he is sentenced to twenty years in prison for conspiracy, sedition, and treason.

26 October
- Fidel Castro accuses the United States of tolerating air incursions against Cuba and of threatening Cuba with economic strangulation.
1960

6 February
- First Deputy Premier Anastas I. Mikoyan of the Soviet Union arrives in Havana with a Soviet trade exhibition. He meets with the Cuban leadership and signs various agreements including, inter alia, $100 million in trade credits to help lessen Cuban dependence on the United States.

4 March
- The French steamer La Coubre, carrying a shipment of Belgian small arms, explodes in Havana harbor, killing dozens of workers and soldiers. Castro publicly accuses the CIA of sabotaging the ship. The United States protests the accusation.

10 March
- Apparently concluding that Castro is determined not to have good relations with the United States, President Dwight D. Eisenhower signs a National Security Council (NSC) directive to explore U.S. options for destabilizing the Castro regime.

19 April
- The first shipment of Soviet crude oil arrives in Cuba.

8 May
- Cuba and the Soviet Union establish diplomatic relations.

29 June
- Esso and Texaco refuse to refine Soviet oil in Cuba. The Cuban government nationalizes their refineries.

6 July
- The Cuban government passes a nationalization law providing for the expropriation of foreign holdings in Cuba.

8 July
- President Eisenhower reduces the Cuban sugar quota for the remainder of the year by 95 percent, thereby cutting off 80 percent of Cuban exports to the United States. The following day, the Soviet Union announces that it is willing to buy the sugar that had been destined for the United States.
6 October
- The Cuban government, using the powers granted in the Nationalization Law, expropriates without compensation all U.S. holdings, valued at over $1 billion.

19 December
- Cuba openly aligns itself with Soviet foreign policy and claims solidarity with the Sino-Soviet bloc, issuing a joint communiqué with the USSR.

1961

3 January
- In response to Cuban demands that the United States limit its embassy personnel to eleven, the United States terminates diplomatic and consular ties with Cuba; Cuba reciprocates.

31 March
- President John F. Kennedy (JFK) reduces the Cuban sugar quota to zero.

April
- JFK pledges the United States will not intervene militarily to overthrow Castro.

16 April
- Describing his regime as “socialist,” Castro orders general mobilization and accuses the United States of scheming to invade Cuba.

17 April
- Backed by the United States, a group of Cuban exile invades Cuba at the Bay of Pigs in an attempt to trigger an anti-Castro rebellion. By 19 April, the invasion has failed; more than a thousand Cuban rebels are captured by Castro’s forces.

3-4 June
- Khrushchev and JFK meet in Vienna. Khrushchev announces a six-month deadline for a resolution of the Berlin situation.

12-13 August
- Soviet forces assist the East Germans in erecting the Berlin Wall.
7 September
• The U.S. Congress bars assistance to any country aiding Cuba, unless the president determines such aid to be in the American national interest.

11 September
• Former President Eisenhower announces that, during his presidency, no plan was ever made to invade Cuba.

21 October
• Deputy Secretary of Defense Roswell Gilpatric gives a speech in Hot Springs, Virginia, in which he publicly details the U.S.-Soviet strategic nuclear balance, revealing that the alleged “missile gap” in the Soviets’ favor is a deception. Gilpatric acknowledges that the United States enjoys considerable nuclear superiority over the Soviet Union.

1962

19 January
• The Special Group (Augmented) of the National Security Council meets in the office of Attorney General Robert Kennedy (RFK) to consider Castro’s ouster.

22-31 January
• The Organization of American States (OAS) meets in Punta del Este, Uruguay. U.S. Secretary of State Dean Rusk declares Cuba a threat to the Western Hemisphere and calls for its isolation. The OAS declares the Castro government incompatible with the inter-American system, and expels Cuba from the organization. The organization agrees to prohibit its members from selling arms to Cuba, and agrees on collective measures against Cuba.

3 February
• JFK declares an embargo on all trade with Cuba, except for critical medical supplies.

20 February
19 April – 11 May
- Exercise “Quick-Kick,” a large-scale U.S. military maneuver, begins off the East Coast of the United States. Seventy-nine ships, 300 aircraft, and over 40,000 troops participate. Cuba denounces the exercise as a provocation and as proof that the United States intends to invade.

Late April
- Khrushchev first discusses the idea of deploying nuclear missiles to Cuba with Soviet First Deputy Premier Anastas I. Mikoyan. On 25 April, the Soviet press representative in Havana, Aleksandr Alekseev, receives an urgent cable to return to Moscow.

7 May
- Khrushchev informs Alekseev that he will be the new ambassador to Havana, effective 31 May.

8 May
- Exercise “Whip Lash” begins, designed to test contingency planning for military operations against Cuba. Another military exercise in the Caribbean, “Jupiter Springs,” is planned for the spring or summer. The Cubans denounce these exercises as proof of hostile intentions.

14-20 May
- Khrushchev visits Bulgaria, where, according to his memoirs, “the idea of installing missiles with nuclear warheads in Cuba without letting the United States find out until it was too late to do anything about them” occurs to him for the first time. On the return flight to Moscow, Khrushchev first mentions the idea of the deployment to Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko.

29 May
- A high-level Soviet delegation, including the commander of the Strategic Rocket Forces, Marshal S. S. Biryuzov, travels secretly to Havana to propose to Castro the deployment of nuclear weapons to Cuba. The Cuban leadership unanimously and enthusiastically gives its approval in principle.

10 June
- Biryuzov reports the results of the Soviet-Cuban negotiations to the Presidium, which then orders the Ministry of Defense to prepare detailed operational plans for the deployment. The plan is given the code name Operation Anadyr.
2-17 July
• A Cuban delegation led by Defense Minister Raul Castro travels to Moscow to discuss Soviet military shipments to Cuba, including nuclear missiles. Khrushchev meets Raul Castro on 3 and 8 July. Castro and Soviet Defense Minister Rodion Ya. Malinovsky initial a draft treaty governing the deployment of Soviet forces to Cuba.

Late July
• The first surface-to-air missiles (SAMs) and supporting equipment for the construction of nuclear missile sites leave the Soviet Union.

27 July
• Fidel Castro announces that Cuba is taking measures that would make any direct U.S. attack on Cuba the equivalent of a world war. He claims that the USSR is committed to helping Cuba resist further imperialist attacks.

10 August
• CIA director John McCone dictates a memo to JFK expressing his belief that Soviet medium-rang ballistic missiles (MRBMs) will be deployed in Cuba.

23 August
• In National Security Action Memorandum (NSAM) 181, JFK calls for study and action “in light of the evidence of new [Soviet] bloc activity in Cuba.” Highlight include: action toward potential removal of U.S. Jupiter missiles from Turkey; study of the probably military, political, and psychological impact of the establishment in Cuba of missiles capable of reaching the United States; and study of military alternatives should the United States decide to eliminate such missiles.

27 August – 2 September
• A Cuban delegation led by Che Guevara and Emilio Aragones travels to Moscow with Fidel Castro’s revisions to the draft treaty. The Cubans propose that the deployment be made public to forestall an American overreaction; Khrushchev successfully argues for continued secrecy.

31 August
• Sen. Kenneth Keating (R-New York) tells the Senate that there is evidence of Soviet missile installations in Cuba. Keating urges JFK to take action and proposes that the OAS send an investigative team to Cuba.
4 September
- RFK meets with Soviet ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin and expresses JFK’s concern over military equipment reaching Cuba. Dobrynin conveys a message from Khrushchev that no ground-to-ground or offensive weapons would be placed in Cuba, which RFK relays to Dean Rusk and to Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara. RFK suggests that a statement be issued declaring that the United States will not tolerate the introduction of offensive weapons in Cuba.
- JFK releases a statement, drafted by RFK and Assistant Attorney General Nicholas Katzenbach, revealing that SAMs and substantially more military personnel have been detected in Cuba by reconnaissance flight on 29 August. The president reassures the American public that the Soviets have deployed no offensive weapons in Cuba and warns the Soviets against such a deployment.

6 September
- Theodore Sorensen, special counsel to the president, meets with Soviet Ambassador Dobrynin at the Soviet embassy. Dobrynin reiterates his assurances that Soviet military assistance to Cuba was strictly defensive in nature and did not represent a threat to American security. Dobrynin also delivers a message in which Khrushchev promises that the Soviets will refrain from any activities that “could complicate the international situation” before the American congressional elections in November. In a memorandum of conversation, Sorensen reports that Dobrynin repeatedly assured him that the Soviets “had done nothing new or extraordinary in Cuba – that the events causing all the excitement had been taking place somewhat gradually and quietly over a long period of time.”

7 September
- JFK requests congressional authority to call up 150,000 reservists.
- Dobrynin assures U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Adlai Stevenson that the USSR is supplying only defensive weapons to Cuba.
- The United States announces a major military exercise, PHIBRIGLEX-62, to begin in mid-October in the Caribbean. Cuba denounces this as a provocation, and proof of American plans to invade Cuba.

9 September
- Chinese communists shoot down a U-2 reconnaissance aircraft over mainland China.

11 September
- Soviet news agency TASS announces that the Soviet Union neither needs nor intends to introduce offensive nuclear weapons in Cuba.
13 September
• JFK announces that “if at any time the Communist buildup in Cuba were to endanger or interfere with our security in any way. . . or if Cuba should ever attempt to export its aggressive purposes by force or the threat of force against any nation of this hemisphere, or become an offensive military base of significant capacity for the Soviet Union, then this country will do whatever must be done to protect its own security and that of its allies.” At the same time, JFK notes that no information to date suggests that military action would be necessary or justified.

15 September
• The first SS-4 MRBMs arrive in Cuba.

18 September
• Former Vice President Richard M. Nixon calls for a quarantine to stem the flow of Soviet arms to Cuba.

19 September
• A Special National Intelligence Estimate (SNIE) by the U.S. Intelligence Board, “The Military Buildup in Cuba,” asserts that although the Soviets would gain considerable military advantage from establishing medium-and intermediate-rang ballistic missiles in Cuba, Soviet policy does not support the establishment of nuclear forces on foreign soil and the Soviets are aware of the risk of U.S. retaliation. It therefore concludes that such a deployment is unlikely.
• The Senate Foreign Relations Committee and Armed Services Committee approve the text of a joint resolution on Cuba (no. 230, introduced by Senator John Sparkman, D-Alabama) sanctioning the use of force if necessary to defend the Western Hemisphere against Cuban aggression or subversion.

20 September
• Resolution 230 passes the Senate by a vote of 86-1.

21 September
• In a speech to the U.N., Soviet foreign minister Andrei Gromyko warns that an American attack on Cuba would mean war with the Soviet Union.

26 September
• The House of Representatives passes the joint resolution on Cuba by a vote of 384-7.
28 September
- In Yugoslavia, Soviet president Leonid Brezhnev reiterates Gromyko’s warning that an American attack on Cuba would mean war with the Soviet Union.

1 October
- McNamara and the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) discuss contingency planning, ordering Adm. Robert L. Dennison, commander-in-chief of the Atlantic Fleet (CINCLANT), to make preparations for a blockade of Cuba if necessary.

4 October
- Congress passes a diluted version of the Joint Congressional Resolution on Cuba, introduced by Sen. Everett Dirksen (R-Illinois) and Rep. Charles Halleck (D-Indiana), sanctioning the use of American forces to defend the Western Hemisphere from aggression or subversion from Cuba, and pledging cooperation with the OAS and “freedom-loving Cubans” to achieve self-determination.

8 October
- In a speech to the U.N. General Assembly, Cuban president Osvaldo Dorticos declares: “If . . . we are attacked, we will defend ourselves. I repeat we have sufficient means with which to defend ourselves; we have indeed our inevitable weapons, the weapons which we would have preferred not to acquire and which we do not wish to employ.”

9 October
- JFK approves a U-2 reconnaissance flight over western Cuba, delayed by bad weather until 14 October.

10 October
- Senator Keating charges that six intermediate-range ballistic missile bases are being constructed in Cuba.
- The Joint Chiefs of Staff request the transfer of the Fifth Marine expeditionary Brigade from the Pacific to the Atlantic forces in order to support invasion plans of Cuba. The Chiefs justify their request “in view of the threat developing and the high level of national interest concerning Cuba.”

13 October
- Former Under Secretary of State Chester Bowles questions Soviet ambassador Dobrynin on whether the Soviets plan to put “offensive weapons’ in Cuba. Dobrynin denies any such intention.
14 October

15 October
- A readout team at the National Photographic Intelligence Center reviews photos taken during the 14 October U-2 flight, and identifies the objects similar to MRBM components observed in the USSR scattered about a meadow at San Cristobal.
- (8:30 P.M.) CIA Deputy Director of Intelligence Ray S. Cline calls Bundy and Roger Hilsman, State Department director of research and intelligence, on a none-secure phone and, in cryptic language, informs them of the discovery of MRBM in Cuba. Hilsman phones Dean Rusk, who in turn notifies Paul Nitze, assistant secretary of defense for international security affairs. Bundy decides to wait until morning to alert the president.
- (Midnight) McNamara is shown photographic evidence of the MRBM at San Cristobal.

16 October
- (8:45 A.M.) Bundy breaks the news to JFK, who calls an 11:45 A.M. meeting of his high-level advisers, a group later to become known as the Executive Committee (“ExComm”).
- (6:30 P.M.) JFK and his advisers discuss possible diplomatic and military courses of action.

17 October
- Georgy Bolshakov, an official in the Soviet embassy in Washington, brings RFK a “personal message” from Khrushchev to JFK, assuring that “under no circumstances would surface-to-surface missiles be sent to Cuba.”

18 October
- (Afternoon) Gromyko and JFK meet for two hours. Reading from notes, Gromyko assures JFK that the Soviet aid to Cuba “pursued solely the purpose of contributing to the defense capabilities of Cuba and to the development of its peaceful economy. . . .”

19 October
- JFK departs for scheduled campaign speeches in Cleveland and on the West Coast.
- Radio Moscow reports that U.S. naval maneuvers in the Caribbean are in preparation for an invasion of Cuba.
20 October

- (10:30 A.M.) White House Press Secretary Pierre Salinger announces in Chicago that the president is canceling the remainder of his campaign trip because of “a slight cold.”
- The chief legal officers of the Departments of State, Defense, and Justice draft the quarantine proclamation prohibiting the shipment of offensive weapons to Cuba.
- (2:30 P.M.) JFK meets with his advisers and orders a defensive quarantine instituted as soon as possible. The group reviews and approves the full operation, and schedules the president’s television address for Monday at 7:00 P.M. The group discusses and revises the president’s speech.

21 October

- (11:30 A.M.) JFK, RFK, Gen. Maxwell Taylor (chairman of the JCS), and McNamara meet with Gen. Walter Sweeney, Jr., commander-in-chief of Tactical Air Command. Informed that an air strike could not guarantee the destruction of all Soviet missiles in Cuba, JFK confirms that the United States will impose a quarantine, rather than execute an air strike.
- JFK calls Orville Dryfoos of the New York Times, who cooperates in suppressing a story on the pending crisis. The morning edition of the Washington Post, however, runs a story speculating about recent White House activity and surmising its focus might be Cuba, but mentions the possibility of Berlin.

22 October

- JFK signs NSAM 196, formally establishing the Executive Committee of the National Security Council (ExComm).
- (Noon) Salinger announces that JFK will make an important statement at 7:00 P.M. and requests air time from radio and television networks.
- (4:00 P.M.) Reacting to the announcement of the president’s speech and to large-scale military movements in the Caribbean, Fidel Castro decrees a state of general mobilization and war alert throughout Cuba.
- (5:00 P.M.) Congressional leaders assemble at the White House for a meeting with JFK, who discloses the photographic evidence of missile sites and announces his quarantine plans. The congressional leaders express support, but many advocate stronger action. JFK resists.
• (6:00 P.M.) Rusk meets Dobrynin at the State Department and hands him an advance copy of JFK’s forthcoming address, with a covering memo. According to reporters, Dobrynin is “ashen” when he leaves Dean Rusk’s office. Virtually simultaneously, American ambassador Foy Kohler delivers a letter from JFK and the text of his speech to the Kremlin, but he does not meet with any high-ranking officials, and there is no immediate response. At the same time, American U.N. ambassador Adlai Stevenson informs Acting Secretary General U. Thant of the president’s speech, and announces that the United States will request a meeting of the Security Council.

• (7:00 P.M.) the president addresses the nation in a televised speech, announcing the presence of nuclear missile sites in Cuba.

• The alert level of American forces worldwide rises from Defense Condition (DefCon) 5 to DefCon 3, coincident with JFK’s speech.

• The U.S. base at Guantanamo in southeastern Cuba is reinforced by three Marine battalions. Dependents are evacuated by the time JFK goes on the air.

• (10:40-11:25 P.M.) McNamara meets with Chief of Naval Operations Adm. George Anderson to discuss quarantine and surveillance procedures.

• The U.S. Air Force hands over the first of fifteen Jupiter intermediate-range ballistic missile launchers to the Turkish air force for maintenance and operation, signaling that they have become fully operational.

• Col. Oleg Penkovsky, a senior officer in Soviet Military Intelligence and a Western spy since 1961, is arrested in the Soviet Union.

• (Late evening) British philosopher and pacifist Bertrand Russel sends telegrams to Kennedy and Khrushchev calling on them to halt the courses of action they have undertaken which threaten to plunge the world into nuclear war.

23 October

• (2:41 A.M.) The State Department receives a telegram from Adlai Stevenson reporting Cuba’s request for a U.N. Security Council meeting to discuss the unfolding crisis.

• (8:00 A.M.) TASS begins transmitting a Soviet government statement accusing the United States of piracy, violation of international law, and acts of provocation that might lead to nuclear war.

• (10:00 A.M.) The ExComm holds its first official meeting.

• The OAS Council meets to consider the proposed U.S. quarantine proclamation. The final vote is 20-0 in favor of condemning the Soviet missile deployment and endorsing the quarantine.

• The USSR requests a meeting of the Security Council to examine the “violation of the Charter of the United Nations and threat to the peace on the part of the U.S.”
(11:56 A.M.) JFK receives a letter in which Khrushchev declares: “I should frankly say that the measures outlined in your statement represent a serious threat to peace and security of people. The United States has openly taken the path of gross violation of international norms of freedom of navigation on the high seas, a path of aggressive actions both against Cuba and against the Soviet Union.” He adds: “We confirm that the armaments now in Cuba, regardless of the classification to which they belong, are destined exclusively for defensive purposes, in order to secure the Cuban republic from an aggressor’s attack.”

(4:00 P.M.) Adlai Stevenson delivers his opening statement to the specially convened meeting of the Security Council, saying that Castro’s regime “has aided and abetted an invasion of this hemisphere,” making itself “an accomplice in the communist enterprise of world domination. . . . If the United States and other nations of the Western Hemisphere accept this new phase of aggression, we would be delinquent in our obligations to world peace.”

Soviet ambassador to the U.N. Valerian Zorin declares that Stevenson’s charges are “completely false” and “a clumsy attempt to cover up aggressive actions” in Cuba.

(6:00 P.M.) The ExComm meets. JFK reviews and signs the Proclamation of Interdiction.

(7:30 P.M.) McNamara announces that he has taken the necessary steps to deploy American forces so that the quarantine may take effect at 10:00 the next morning.

JFK agrees to preliminary talks with U Thant to explore the possibility of “satisfactory arrangements” for negotiations. Khrushchev agrees to U Thant’s appeal for a moratorium on further action, and agrees that if the United States ends the quarantine, the USSR will suspend arms shipments to Cuba.

24 October

(Early morning) Soviet ships en route to Cuba with questionable cargo either slow down or reverse their course; one tanker continues on.

(10:00 A.M.) The ExComm meets. JFK’s quarantine proclamation goes into effect.

(2:00 P.M.) U Thant sends private appeals to Kennedy and Khrushchev to avoid any confrontation that will risk general war. He calls for voluntary suspensions of arms shipments to Cuba and for voluntary suspension of the quarantine for two to three weeks, so that a settlement may be negotiated. Khrushchev accepts U Thant’s appeal; JFK rejects it.
• Bertrand Russell appeals to Khrushchev for caution and urges JFK to stop “the madness”; Khrushchev respond, stating that the USSR will make no “reckless decisions” and warning that if the United States carries out its planned “pirate action,” the USSR will have no choice but to “make use of the means of defense against the aggressor.”

• Gen. Thomas Power, commander-in-chief of the Strategic Air Command (CINCSAC), raises the alert level of the Strategic Air Command to DefCon2, indicating full readiness for war. Unbeknownst to JFK, Power send his alert message in the clear, rather than in code (as would have been standard procedure), to demonstrate to the Soviet Union his confidence in American nuclear superiority.

• The State Department cables Ankara, urgently requesting U.S. ambassador Raymond Hare’s assessment of the political consequences of removing Turkish Jupiter missiles outright, in conjunction with the deployment of a Polaris submarine in the area, or with some other significant military offset, such as a NATO seaborne multilateral nuclear force.

• Khrushchev summons American businessman William Knox to meet with him, rails against the quarantine, and threatens to order the sinking of quarantine vessels if Soviet ships are stopped. Khrushchev states that the United States will have to learn to live with Soviet missiles in Cuba, just as the USSR has learned to live with American missiles in Turkey. Khrushchev also claims that the SAMs and ballistic missiles in Cuba are under “strict Soviet control,” and vaguely proposes a summit.

25 October

• (1:45 A.M.) JFK sends a letter to Khrushchev laying responsibility for the crisis on the Soviet Union. JFK draws Khrushchev’s attention to his repeated warnings against the deployment of offensive weapons to Cuba, and to the Soviets repeated statements that they had no need or intention to undertake such a deployment.

• After receiving various reports suggesting an imminent U.S. invasion of Cuba, and reacting to the U.S. DefCon2 nuclear alert and President Kennedy’s letter of 25 October, Khrushchev instructs his advisers to draft a letter containing the basis for a solution to the crisis. Initially the letter contains demands for a non-invasion pledge and for the withdrawal of U.S. missiles from Turkey and Italy. Later in the day, Khrushchev receives new reports suggesting that the invasion will begin shortly. Khrushchev re-dictates the letter, eliminating mention of the missiles in Turkey and Italy. The re-dictated letter is sent the next day.

• (10:00 A.M.) The ExComm meets.

• Foreign Minister Bruno Kreisky of Austria suggests that the Soviet Union withdraw its bases from Cuban in exchange for the withdrawal of American Jupiter bases from Turkey.
• Walter Lippmann advocates a Cuba-Turkey missiles trade in his syndicated column.

• (11:45 A.M.) At a Defense Department news conference, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs Arthur Sylvester states that at least a dozen Soviet vessels have turned back. He also announces that the tanker Bucharest has been intercepted and permitted to proceed without boarding.

• (5:00 P.M.) The ExComm meets and considers several political options for resolving the crisis, among them a proposal to withdraw U.S. missiles from Turkey in exchange for the withdrawal of Soviet missiles from Cuba; a proposal to send U.N. teams to Cuba and Turkey to take control of missiles there pending the outcome of negotiations; and a proposal for having a Latin American representative in Cuba approach Castro to convince him that the Soviets are merely exploiting Cuba.

• The State Department receives a cable from U.S. ambassador to NATO Thomas Finletter clarifying Turkey’s position on the Jupiter missile: the Turks deem the Jupiter missiles to be of great value, serving “as a symbol of the alliance’s determination to use atomic weapons against Russian attack on Turkey whether by large conventional or nuclear forces; although the Turks have been most reluctant to admit the presence of IRBMs [intermediate-range ballistic missiles] publicly.”

26 October

• (7:50 A.M.) A party from the USS Pierce and the USS Kennedy boards and inspects the Lebanese freighter Marucla, under charter to the Soviet Union. Finding no prohibited material, the U.S. Navy permits the Marucla to proceed.

• (9:45 A.M.; 4:45 P.M. Moscow time) Khrushchev’s letter agreeing to withdraw Soviet missiles from Cuba in return for an American pledge not to invade Cuba is delivered to the U.S. embassy in Moscow. A couple of hours earlier Georgy Kornienko, Dobrynin’s deputy in Washington, reports that the information indicating an imminent invasion is faulty. Dobrynin and Kornienko choose not to report the information to Khrushchev, so as not to delay the delivery of the letter.

• (10:00 A.M.) The ExComm meets.

• (1:00 P.M.) ABC’s State Department correspondent John Scali has lunch with Aleksandr Fomin, senior Soviet intelligence officer in Washington, at Fomin’s request. Fomin asks Scali to determine from his “high-level friends in the State Department” whether the United States would be interested in resolving the crisis on the following terms: (1) the USSR would agree to dismantle and remove all offensive missiles from Cuba; (2) the United States would be allowed to verify the removal of these weapons; (3) the Soviets would promise never to introduce offensive weapons into Cuba again; (4) the United States would promise never to invade Cuba. Fomin suggests that if Stevenson were to propose this in the U.S., Zorin would be interested.
• (1:00 P.M.; 8:00 P.M. Moscow time) Khrushchev learns that Soviet intelligence reports of an imminent American invasion of Cuba are false and that the United States has not yet settled on that course of action. Khrushchev decides to reassert his demands on the Turkish missiles. Khrushchev inadvertently omits any mention of Jupiter missiles in Italy in the drafting of his next letter to Kennedy.

• (6:00 P.M.; 1:00 A.M., 27 October, Moscow time) Owing to delays in translation and transmission, Khrushchev’s 26 October letter finally arrives in Washington. The letter proposes a solution along the lines suggested more explicitly by Fomin. ExComm mistakenly assumes Fomin’s message to Scali was a precursor to Khrushchev’s letter; Fomin, however, had no prior knowledge of Khrushchev’s letter and had been acting on his own initiative.

• (Afternoon) Fidel Castro meets with the Soviet commander in Cuba, Gen. Issa Pliyev, who informs him that all units are “ready for combat.” Fidel Castro then meets with the rest of the Cuban leadership to discuss the next course of action.

• Castro authorizes his air-defense forces, none of them equipped with SAMs, to fire on all American aircraft within range.

• Dean Rusk authorizes Scali to tell Fomin “that the highest levels in the government of the U.S.” see real potential in his terms and that the U.S. and Soviet representatives “could work this matter out with U Thant and with each other.”

• (7:35 P.M.) Scale meets Fomin to relay Rusk’s message. Fomin assures him that the information will be relayed to the highest levels of the Kremlin and to Zorin at the U.S.

• U.S. ambassadors are directed to avoid public comments suggesting any symmetry between the presence of American Jupiter missiles in Turkey and Soviet missiles in Cuba.

• Khrushchev sends a letter to U Thant indicating that Soviet ships will stay away from the quarantine area temporarily.

• JFK sends a statement to the U.N. Security Council reporting that construction at the ballistic missile sites in Cuba is continuing at a rapid pace and that the sites will soon achieve full operational capability. JFK concludes that “there is no evidence to date indicating that there is any intention to dismantle or discontinue work on these missile sites. On the contrary, the Soviets are rapidly continuing their construction of missile support and launch facilities and serious attempts are underway to camouflage their efforts.”
27 October

- (2:00 A.M.) At the conclusion of his meeting with the Cuba leadership, Fidel Castro visits Alekseev at the Soviet embassy, where he stays until 7:00 A.M. Convinced that they have done all they can to prepare for a U.S. invasion, Castro dictates a letter to Khrushchev. Dated 26 October, the letter itself is sent at 6:40 A.M. (1:40 P.M. Moscow time) on 27 October. Alekseev sends a brief cable to Moscow summarizing his discussions with Castro and Castro’s letter; it arrives in Moscow at 2:40 P.M. Moscow time.
- (10:00 A.M.) The ExComm meets.
- (10:17 A.M.) A new letter from Khrushchev arrives in Washington, proposing a public trade of Soviet missiles in Cuba for Jupiter missiles in Turkey. Moscow Radio carries Khrushchev’s proposal, as well as his statement that Soviet missiles in Cuba are under strict Soviet control.
- A U-2 from SAC’s Strategic Reconnaissance Wing at Eielson Air Force Base in Alaska, reported on a “routine air sampling mission,” strays into Soviet airspace over the Chukhotts Peninsula. Although Soviet fighters scramble to intercept it, the plane returns safely to base without drawing fire.
- The Soviet ambassador to Ankara attempts to persuade the Turks to agree to the missile-exchange deal proposed in Khrushchev’s latest letter.
- U.S. and Canadian naval forces establish an anti-submarine barrier southeast of Newfoundland.
- The Fifth Marine Expeditionary Brigade sails from the West Coast.
- (4:00 P.M.) The ExComm meets.
- (4:15 P.M.) Scali and Fomin meet again. Scali has instructions from Rusk to determine what has happened to the previous proposal and why Khrushchev raised the idea of swapping Turkish for Cuban missiles. Fomin tells Scali he does not know and will attempt to find out.
- (6:10 P.M.; 1:10 A.M., 28 October, Moscow time) Gromyko orally related to Khrushchev the contents of the Alekseev cable summarizing Castro’s full letter of the previous day. Khrushchev interprets this as an appeal from Castro to launch a preemptive nuclear attack on the United States.
- (7:15 P.M.) RFK telephones Ambassador Dobrynin, requesting a meeting.
• (7:45 P.M.) Dobrynin and RFK meet. In his memoir, RFK recalls telling Dobrynin that the U.S. knew work on the missile bases in Cuba was continuing; that the shoot-down of the U-2 was a serious turn of events; that JFK did not want a military conflict but that his hand was being forced; that the U.S. needed a commitment “by tomorrow” that the Cuban missile bases would be removed by the Soviets, or the U.S. “would remove them”; and that the U.S. would not publicly trade missiles in Turkey for Soviet missiles in Cuba, though the Jupiters were scheduled to be removed in any case.

• (8:05 P.M.; 3:05 A.M., 28 October, Moscow time) Kennedy sends Khrushchev a carefully worded letter, potentially part of the contractual basis for a settlement. He writes: “(1) You would agree to remove these weapons systems from Cuba under appropriate United Nations observation and supervision; and undertake, with suitable safeguards, to halt the further introduction of such weapons systems into Cuba. (2) We, on our part, would agree, upon the establishment of adequate arrangements through the United Nations, to ensure the carrying out and continuation of these commitments (a) to remove promptly the quarantine measures now in effect and (b) to give assurances against the invasion of Cuba.

• (9:00 P.M.) The ExComm meets. JFK reads a message from NATO commander-in-chief Gen. Lauris Norstad which presents the difficulty for NATO of any Cuban-Turkey missiles trade. Also, JFK tells Stevenson to tell U Thant that a Soviet tanker is approaching the quarantine zone and to remind U Thant of the Soviet statement that their ships would not challenge the quarantine.

• (Late evening) JFK meets with Rusk, whom he asks to send a letter to president Andrew Cordier of Columbia University. Cordier is instructed, upon further signal from the White House, to give U Thant the letter, requesting him to propose the removal of both the Jupiters in Turkey and the Soviet missiles in Cuba. The contingency is never activated.

28 October

• (10:00 A.M. EST; 6:00 P.M. Moscow time) Radio Moscow announces that it will have the text of a new Khrushchev message when the ExComm convenes at 11:00. In part, it reads: “The Soviet Government, in addition to earlier instructions on the discontinuance of further work on construction sites, has given a new order to dismantle the weapons, which you describe as offensive, and to crate them and return them to the Soviet Union.”

• JFK hails Khrushchev’s decision as “an important and constructive contribution to peace.”

• Khrushchev sends Fidel Castro a letter explaining his decision.

• Zorin informs U Thant that instructions to dismantle the missiles in Cuba arrived between 1:00 and 3:00 P.M. on 28 October, and that dismantling started at 5:00 P.M.
American intelligence notices that troops in Cuban uniforms have taken up positions around the Soviet nuclear missile sites.

In response to Khrushchev’s message, Castro issues a five-point plan for the solution to the problems underlying tensions in the Caribbean, including an end to the U.S. economic embargo, an end to U.S. support for Cuban counterrevolutionary activities, and the return of the U.S. naval base at Guantanamo to Cuba. He steadfastly refuses to allow U.N. on-site inspections in Cuba.

29 October
- Adlai Stevenson and John McCloy meet with Vasily Kuznetsov in New York to work out details of the settlement.

30 October
- Khrushchev sends Fidel Castro a letter counseling patience and attempting to justify his lack of consultation prior to the decision to withdraw the missiles.
- U Thant travels to Cuba to secure Castro’s cooperation in the settlement of the crisis.

31 October
- Castro replies to Khrushchev’s letter of the day before and severely criticizes Khrushchev’s handling of the crisis.

2 November
- Mikoyan travels to Cuba to smooth over relations with Castro. Mikoyan’s instructions are to discuss verification procedures for the removal of the Soviet missiles, and to enlist Castro’s cooperation in complying with the terms of the agreement, which include withdrawal of IL-28 bombers.

3 November
- Troops in Cuban uniform withdraw from the area of the Soviet nuclear missiles.

19 November
- Castro finally agrees to allow the withdrawal of the IL-28s.

20 November
- JFK announces at a press conference that Castro has agreed to permit the withdrawal of the IL-28 bombers within thirty days.
- U.S. forces return to their normal peacetime levels of alert.

21 November
- JFK issues a proclamation terminating the quarantine.
We observe today not a victory of party but a celebration of freedom--symbolizing an end as well as a beginning--signifying renewal as well as change. For I have sworn before you and Almighty God the same solemn oath our forebears prescribed nearly a century and three-quarters ago.

The world is very different now. For man holds in his mortal hands the power to abolish all forms of human poverty and all forms of human life. And yet the same revolutionary beliefs for which our forebears fought are still at issue around the globe--the belief that the rights of man come not from the generosity of the state but from the hand of God.

We dare not forget today that we are the heirs of that first revolution. Let the word go forth from this time and place, to friend and foe alike, that the torch has been passed to a new generation of Americans--born in this century, tempered by war, disciplined by a hard and bitter peace, proud of our ancient heritage--and unwilling to witness or permit the slow undoing of those human rights to which this nation has always been committed, and to which we are committed today at home and around the world.

Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe to assure the survival and the success of liberty.

This much we pledge--and more.

To those old allies whose cultural and spiritual origins we share, we pledge the loyalty of faithful friends. United there is little we cannot do in a host of cooperative ventures. Divided there is little we can do--for we dare not meet a powerful challenge at odds and split asunder.

To those new states whom we welcome to the ranks of the free, we pledge our word that one form of colonial control shall not have passed away merely to be replaced by a far more iron tyranny. We shall not always expect to find them supporting our view. But we shall always hope to find them strongly supporting their own freedom--and to remember that, in the past, those who foolishly sought power by riding the back of the tiger ended up inside.

To those people in the huts and villages of half the globe struggling to break the bonds of mass misery, we pledge our best efforts to help them help themselves, for whatever period is required--not because the communists may be doing it, not because we seek
their votes, but because it is right. If a free society cannot help the many who are poor, it cannot save the few who are rich.

To our sister republics south of our border, we offer a special pledge--to convert our good words into good deeds--in a new alliance for progress--to assist free men and free governments in casting off the chains of poverty. But this peaceful revolution of hope cannot become the prey of hostile powers. Let all our neighbors know that we shall join with them to oppose aggression or subversion anywhere in the Americas. And let every other power know that this Hemisphere intends to remain the master of its own house.

To that world assembly of sovereign states, the United Nations, our last best hope in an age where the instruments of war have far outpaced the instruments of peace, we renew our pledge of support--to prevent it from becoming merely a forum for invective--to strengthen its shield of the new and the weak--and to enlarge the area in which its writ may run.

Finally, to those nations who would make themselves our adversary, we offer not a pledge but a request: that both sides begin anew the quest for peace, before the dark powers of destruction unleashed by science engulf all humanity in planned or accidental self-destruction.

We dare not tempt them with weakness. For only when our arms are sufficient beyond doubt can we be certain beyond doubt that they will never be employed.

But neither can two great and powerful groups of nations take comfort from our present course--both sides overburdened by the cost of modern weapons, both rightly alarmed by the steady spread of the deadly atom, yet both racing to alter that uncertain balance of terror that stays the hand of mankind's final war.

So let us begin anew--remembering on both sides that civility is not a sign of weakness, and sincerity is always subject to proof. Let us never negotiate out of fear. But let us never fear to negotiate.

Let both sides explore what problems unite us instead of belaboring those problems which divide us.

Let both sides, for the first time, formulate serious and precise proposals for the inspection and control of arms--and bring the absolute power to destroy other nations under the absolute control of all nations.

Let both sides seek to invoke the wonders of science instead of its terrors. Together let us explore the stars, conquer the deserts, eradicate disease, tap the ocean depths and encourage the arts and commerce.
Let both sides unite to heed in all corners of the earth the command of Isaiah--to "undo the heavy burdens . . . (and) let the oppressed go free."

And if a beachhead of cooperation may push back the jungle of suspicion, let both sides join in creating a new endeavor, not a new balance of power, but a new world of law, where the strong are just and the weak secure and the peace preserved.

All this will not be finished in the first one hundred days. Nor will it be finished in the first one thousand days, nor in the life of this Administration, nor even perhaps in our lifetime on this planet. But let us begin.

In your hands, my fellow citizens, more than mine, will rest the final success or failure of our course. Since this country was founded, each generation of Americans has been summoned to give testimony to its national loyalty. The graves of young Americans who answered the call to service surround the globe.

Now the trumpet summons us again--not as a call to bear arms, though arms we need--not as a call to battle, though embattled we are-- but a call to bear the burden of a long twilight struggle, year in and year out, "rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation"--a struggle against the common enemies of man: tyranny, poverty, disease and war itself.

Can we forge against these enemies a grand and global alliance, North and South, East and West, that can assure a more fruitful life for all mankind? Will you join in that historic effort?

In the long history of the world, only a few generations have been granted the role of defending freedom in its hour of maximum danger. I do not shrink from this responsibility--I welcome it. I do not believe that any of us would exchange places with any other people or any other generation. The energy, the faith, the devotion which we bring to this endeavor will light our country and all who serve it--and the glow from that fire can truly light the world.

And so, my fellow Americans: ask not what your country can do for you--ask what you can do for your country.

My fellow citizens of the world: ask not what America will do for you, but what together we can do for the freedom of man.

Finally, whether you are citizens of America or citizens of the world, ask of us here the same high standards of strength and sacrifice which we ask of you. With a good conscience our only sure reward, with history the final judge of our deeds, let us go forth to lead the land we love, asking His blessing and His help, but knowing that here on earth God's work must truly be our own.
Appendix C
Nikita Khrushchev – Fidel Castro Correspondence
Dear Comrade Khrushchev:

From an analysis of the situation and the reports in our possession, I consider that the aggression is almost imminent within the next 24 or 72 hours.

There are two possible variants: the first and likeliest one is an air attack against certain targets with the limited objective of destroying them; the second, less probable although possible, is invasion. I understand that his variant would call for a large number of forces and it is, in addition, the most repulsive form of aggression, which might inhibit them.

You can rest assured that we will firmly and resolutely resist attack, whatever it may be.

The morale of the Cuban people is extremely high and the aggressor will be confronted heroically.

At this time I want to convey to you briefly my personal opinion. If the second variant is implemented and the imperialists invade Cuba with the goal of occupying it, the danger that that aggressive policy poses for humanity is so great that following that event the Soviet Union must never allow the circumstances in which the imperialists could launch the first nuclear strike against it.

I tell you this because I believe that the imperialists' aggressiveness is extremely dangerous and if they actually carry out the brutal act of invading Cuba in violation of international law and morality, that would be the moment to eliminate such danger forever through an act of clear legitimate defense, however harsh and terrible the solution would be, for there is no other.

It has influenced my opinion to see how this aggressive policy is developing, how the imperialists, disregarding world public opinion and ignoring principles and the law, are blockading the seas, violating our airspace and preparing an invasion, while at the same time frustrating every possibility for talks, even though they are aware of the seriousness of the problem.

You have been and continue to be a tireless defender of peace and I realize how bitter these hours must be, when the outcome of your superhuman efforts is so seriously threatened. However, up to the last moment we will maintain the hope that peace will be safeguarded and we are willing to contribute to this as much as we can. But at the same time, we are ready to calmly confront a situation that we view as quite real and quite close.

Once more I convey to you the infinite gratitude and recognition of our people to the Soviet people who have been so generous and fraternal with us, as well as our profound
gratitude and admiration for you, and wish you success in the huge task and serious responsibilities ahead of you.

Fraternally,
Fidel Castro
October 28, 1962

Dear Comrade Fidel Castro:

Our October 27 message to President Kennedy allows for the question to be settled in your favor, to defend Cuba from an invasion and prevent war from breaking out. Kennedy's reply, which you apparently also know, offers assurances that the United States will not invade Cuba with its own forces, nor will it permit its allies to carry out an invasion. In this way the president of the United States has positively answered my messages of October 26 and 27, 1962.

We have now finished drafting our reply to the president's message. I am not going to convey it here, for you surely know the text, which is now being broadcast, over the radio.

With this motive I would like to recommend to you now, at this moment of change in the crisis, not to be carried away by sentiment and to show firmness. I must say that I understand your feelings of indignation toward the aggressive actions and violations of elementary norms of international law on the part of the United States.

But now, rather than law, what prevails is the senselessness of the militarists at the Pentagon. Now that an agreement is within sight, the Pentagon is searching for a pretext to frustrate this agreement. This is why it is organizing the provocative flights. Yesterday you shot down one of these, while earlier you didn't shoot them down when they overflew your territory. The aggressors will take advantage of such a step for their own purposes.

Therefore, I would like to advise you in a friendly manner to show patience, firmness and even more firmness. Naturally, if there's an invitation it will be necessary to repulse it by every means. But we mustn't allow ourselves to be carried away by provocations, because the Pentagon's unbridled militarists, now that the solution to the conflict is in sight and apparently in your favor, creating a guarantee against the invasion of Cuba, are trying to frustrate the agreement and provoke you into actions that could be used against you. I ask you not to give them the pretext for doing that.

On our part, we will do everything possible to stabilize the situation in Cuba, defend Cuba against invasion and assure you the possibilities for peacefully building a socialist society.

I send you greetings, extensive to all your leadership group.

N. Khrushchev
October 28, 1962

Dear Comrade Khrushchev:

I have just received your letter. This position of our government concerning your communication to us is embodied in the statement formulated today, whose text you surely know.

I wish to clear up something concerning the antiaircraft measures we adopted. You say: "Yesterday you shot down one of these [planes], while earlier you didn't shoot them down when they overflew your territory."

Earlier isolated violations were committed without a determined military purpose or without a real danger stemming from those flights.

This time that wasn't the case. There was the danger of a surprise attack on certain military installations. We decided not to sit back and wait for a surprise attack, with our detection radar turned off, when the potentially aggressive planes flying with impunity over the targets could destroy them totally. We didn't think we should allow that after all the efforts and expenses incurred in and, in addition, because it would weaken us greatly, militarily and morally. For that reason, on October 24 the Cuban forces mobilized 50 antiaircraft batteries, our entire reserve then, to provide support to the Soviet forces' positions. If we sought to avoid the risks of a surprise attack, it was necessary for Cuban artillerymen to have orders to shoot. The Soviet command can furnish you with additional reports of what happened to the plane that was shot down.

Earlier, airspace violations were carried out de facto and furtively. Yesterday the American government tried to make official the privilege of violating our airspace at any hour of the day and night. We cannot accept that, as it would be tantamount to giving up a sovereign prerogative. However, we agree that we must avoid an incident at this precise moment that could seriously harm the negotiations, so we will instruct the Cuban batteries not to open fire, but only for as long as the negotiations last and without revoking the declaration published yesterday about the decision to defend our airspace. It should also be taken into account that under the current tense conditions incidents can take place accidentally.

I also wish to inform you that we are in principle opposed to an inspection of our territory.

I appreciate extraordinarily the efforts you have made to keep the peace and we are absolutely in agreement with the need for struggling for that goal. If this is accomplished in a just, solid and definitive manner, it will be an inestimable service to humanity.

Fraternally,
Fidel Castro
October 30, 1962

Dear Comrade Fidel Castro:

We have received your letter of October 28 and the reports on the talks that you as well as President Dorticós have had with our ambassador.

We understand your situation and take into account the difficulties you now have during the first transitional stage after the liquidation of maximum tension that arose due to the threat of attack on the part of the U.S. imperialists, which you expected would occur at any moment.

We understand that certain difficulties have been created for you as a result of our having promised the U.S. government to withdraw the missile base from Cuba, since it is viewed as an offensive weapon, in exchange for the U.S. commitment to abandon plans for an invasion of Cuba by U.S. troops or those of its allies in the western hemisphere, and lift the so-called "quarantine," that is, bring the blockade of Cuba to an end. This lead to the liquidation of the conflict in the Caribbean zone which, as you well realize, was characterized by the clash of two superpowers and the possibility of it being transformed into a thermonuclear world war using missiles.

As we learned from our ambassador, some Cubans have the opinion that the Cuban people want a declaration of another nature rather than the declaration of the withdrawal of the missiles. It's possible that this kind of feeling exists among the people. But we, political and government figures, are leaders of a people who doesn't know everything and can't readily comprehend all that we leaders must deal with. Therefore, we should march at the head of the people and then the people will follow us and respect us.

Had we, yielding to the sentiments prevailing among the people, allowed ourselves to be carried away by certain passionate sectors of the population and refused to come to a reasonable agreement with the U.S. government, then a war could have broken out, in the course of which millions of people would have died and the survivors would have pinned the blame on the leaders for not having taken all the necessary measures to prevent that war of annihilation.

Preventing the war and an attack on Cuba depended not just on the measures adopted by our governments but also on an estimate of the actions of the enemy forces deployed near you. Accordingly, the overall situation had to be considered.

In addition, there are opinions that you and we, as they say, failed to engage in consultations concerning these questions before adopting the decision known to you.
For this reason we believe that we consulted with you, dear Comrade Fidel Castro, receiving the cables, each one more alarming than the next, and finally your cable of October 27, saying you were nearly certain that an attack on Cuba would be launched. You believed it was merely a question of time, that the attack would take place within the next 24 or 72 hours. Upon receiving this alarming cable from you and aware of your courage, we viewed it as a very well-founded alarm.

Wasn't this consultation on your part with us? I have viewed this cable as a signal of extreme alarm. Under the conditions created, also bearing in mind the information that the unabated warmongering group of U.S. militarists wanted to take advantage of the situation that had been created and launch an attack on Cuba, if we had continued our consultations, we would have wasted time and this attack would have been carried out.

We came to the conclusion that our strategic missiles in Cuba became an ominous force for the imperialists: they were frightened and because of their fear that our rockets could be launched, they could have dared to liquidate them by bombing them or launching an invasion of Cuba. And it must be said that they could have knocked them all out. Therefore, I repeat, your alarm was absolutely well-founded.

In your cable of October 27 you proposed that we be the first to launch a nuclear strike against the territory of the enemy. You, of course, realize where that would have led. Rather than a simple strike, it would have been the start of a thermonuclear world war.

Dear Comrade Fidel Castro, I consider this proposal of yours incorrect, although I understand your motivation.

We have lived though the most serious moment when a nuclear world war could have broken out. Obviously, in that case, the United States would have sustained huge losses, but the Soviet Union and the whole socialist camp would have also suffered greatly. As far as Cuba is concerned, it would be difficult to say even in general terms what this would have meant for them. In the first place, Cuba would have been burned in the fire of war. There's no doubt that the Cuban people would have fought courageously or that they would have died heroically. But we are not struggling against imperialism in order to die, but to take advantage of all our possibilities, to lose less in the struggle and win more to overcome and achieve the victory of communism.

Now, as a result of the measures taken, we reached the goal sought when we agreed with you to send the missiles to Cuba. We have wrested from the United States the commitment not to invade Cuba and not to permit their Latin American allies to do so. We have we wrested all this from them without a nuclear strike.
We consider that we must take advantage of all the possibilities to defend Cuba, strengthen its independence and sovereignty, defeat military aggression and prevent a nuclear world war in our time.

And we have accomplished that.

Of course, we made concessions, accepted a commitment, action according to the principle that a concession on one side is answered by a concession on the other side. The United States also made a concession. It made the commitment before all the world not to attack Cuba.

That's why when we compare aggression on the part of the United States and thermonuclear war with the commitment of a concession in exchange for concession, the upholding of the inviolability of the Republic of Cuba and the prevention of a world war, I think that the total outcome of this reckoning, of this comparison, is perfectly clear.

Naturally, in defending Cuba as well as the other socialist countries, we can't rely on a U.S. government veto. We have adopted and will continue to adopt in the future all the measures necessary to strengthen our defense and build up our forces, so that we can strike back if needed. At present, as a result of our weapons supplies, Cuba is stronger than ever. Even after the dismantling of the missile installations you will have powerful weapons to throw back the enemy, on land, in the air and on the sea, in the approaches to the island. At the same time, as you will recall, we have said in our message to the president of the United States dated October 28, that at the same time we want to assure the Cuban people that we stand at their side and we will not forget our responsibility to help the Cuban people. It is clear to everyone that this is an extremely serious warning to the enemy on our part.

You also stated during the rallies that the United States can't be trusted. That, of course, is correct. We also view your statements on the conditions of the talks with the United States as correct. The shooting down of a plane over Cuba turned out to be a useful measure because this operation ended without complications. Let it be a lesson for the imperialists.

Needless to say, our enemies will interpret the events in their own way. The Cuban counterrevolution will also try to raise its head. But we think you will completely dominate your domestic enemies without our assistance. The main thing we have secured is preventing aggression on the part of your foreign enemy at present.

We feel that the aggressor came out the loser. HE made preparations to attack Cuba but we stopped him and forced him to recognize before world public opinion that he won't do it at the current stage. We view this as a great victory. The imperialists, of course, will not stop their struggle against communism. But we also have our plans and we are going
to adopt our measures. This process of struggle will continue as long as there are two political and social systems in the world, until one of these—and we know it will be our communist system-wins and triumphs throughout the world.

Comrade Fidel Castro, I have decided to send this reply to you as soon as possible. A more detailed analysis of everything that has happened will be made in the letter I'll send you shortly. In that letter I will make the broadest analysis of the situation and give you my evaluation of the outcome of the end of the conflict.

Now, as the talks to settle the conflict get underway, I ask you to send me your considerations. For our part, we will continue to report to you on the development of these talks and make all necessary consultations.

I wish you success, Comrade Fidel Castro. You will no doubt have success. There will still be machinations against you, but together with you, we will adopt all the measures necessary to paralyze them and contribute to the strengthening and development of the Cuban Revolution.

N. Khrushchev
Havana, October 31, 1962

Dear Comrade Khrushchev:

I received your letter of October 30. You understand that we indeed were consulted before you adopted the decision to withdraw the strategic missiles. You base yourself on the alarming news that you say reached you from Cuba and, finally, my cable of October 27. I don't know what news you received; I can respond for the message that I sent you the evening of October 26, which reached you the 27th.

What we did in the face of events, Comrade Khrushchev, was to prepare ourselves and get ready to fight. In Cuba there was only one kind of alarm, that of battle stations.

When in our opinion the imperialist attack became imminent I deemed it appropriate to so advise you and alert both the Soviet government and command-since there were Soviet forces committed to fight at our side to defend the Republic of Cuba from foreign aggression-about the possibility of an attack which we could not prevent but could resist.

I told you that the morale of our people was very high and that the aggression would be heroically resisted. At the end of the message I reiterated to you that we awaited the events calmly.

Danger couldn't impress us, for danger has been hanging over our country for a long time now and in a certain way we have grown used to it.

The Soviet troops which have been at our side know how admirable the stand of our people was throughout this crisis and the profound brotherhood that was created among the troops from both peoples during the decisive hours. Countless eyes of Cuban and Soviet men who were willing to die with supreme dignity shed tears upon learning about the surprising, sudden and practically unconditional decision to withdraw the weapons.

Perhaps you don't know the degree to which the Cuban people were ready to do its duty toward the nation and humanity.

I realized when I wrote them that the words contained in my letter could be misinterpreted by you and that was what happened, perhaps because you didn't read them carefully, perhaps because of the translation, perhaps because I meant to say so much in too few lines. However, I didn't hesitate to do it. Do you believe, Comrade Khrushchev, that we were selfishly thinking of ourselves, of our generous people willing to sacrifice themselves, and not at all in an unconscious manner but fully assured of the risk they ran?
No, Comrade Khrushchev. Few times in history, and it could even be said that never before, because no people had ever faced such a tremendous danger, was a people so willing to fight and die with such a universal sense of duty.

We knew, and do not presume that we ignored it, that we would have been annihilated, as you insinuate in your letter, in the event of nuclear war. However, that didn't prompt us to ask you to withdraw the missiles, that didn't prompt us to ask you to yield. Do you believe that we wanted that war? But how could we prevent it if the invasion finally took place? The fact is that this event was possible, that imperialism was obstructing every solution and that its demands were, from our point of view, impossible for the USSR and Cuba to accept.

And if war had broken out, what could we do with the insane people who unleashed the war? You yourself have said that under current conditions such a war would inevitably have escalated quickly into a nuclear war.

I understand that once aggression is unleashed, one shouldn't concede to the aggressor the privilege of deciding, moreover, when to use nuclear weapons. The destructive power of this weaponry is so great and the speed of its delivery so great that the aggressor would have a considerable initial advantage.

And I did not suggest to you, Comrade Khrushchev, that the USSR should be the aggressor, because that would be more than incorrect, it would be immoral and contemptible on my part. But from the instant the imperialists attack Cuba and while there are Soviet armed forces stationed in Cuba to help in our defense in case of an attack from abroad, the imperialists would by this act become aggressors against Cuba and against the USSR, and we would respond with a strike that would annihilate them.

Everyone has his own opinions and I maintain mine about the dangerousness of the aggressive circles in the Pentagon and their preference for a preventive strike. I did not suggest, Comrade Khrushchev, that in the midst of this crisis the Soviet Union should attack, which is what your letter seems to say; rather, that following an imperialist attack, the USSR should act without vacillation and should never make the mistake of allowing circumstances to develop in which the enemy makes the first nuclear strike against the USSR. And in this sense, Comrade Khrushchev, I maintain my point of view, because I understand it to be a true and just evaluation of a specific situation. You may be able to convince me that I am wrong, but you can't tell me that I am wrong without convincing me.

I know that this is a delicate issue that can only be broached in circumstances such as these and in a very personal message.
You may wonder what right I have to broach this topic. I do so without worrying about how thorny it is, following the dictates of my conscience as a revolutionary duty and inspired by the most unselfish sentiments of admiration and affection for the USSR, for what she represents for the future of humanity and by the concern that she should never again be the victim of the perfidy and betrayal of aggressors, as she was in 1941, and which cost so many lives and so much destruction. Moreover, I spoke not as the troublemaker but as a combatant from the most endangered trenches.

I do not see how you can state that we were consulted in the decision you took.

I would like nothing more than to be proved wrong at this moment. I only wish that you were right.

There not must a few Cubans, as has been reported to you, but in fact many Cubans who are experiencing at this moment unspeakable bitterness and sadness.

The imperialists are talking once again of invading our country, which is proof of how ephemeral and untrustworthy their promises are. Our people, however, maintain their indestructible will to resist the aggressors and perhaps more than ever need to trust in themselves and in that will to struggle.

We will struggle against adverse circumstances, we will overcome the current difficulties and we will come out ahead, and nothing can destroy the ties of friendship and the eternal gratitude we feel toward the USSR.

Fraternally,

Fidel Castro
Appendix D
Nikita Khrushchev – John Kennedy Correspondence
Letter From President Kennedy to Chairman Khrushchev, October 22, 1962

The White House

Sir:

A copy of the statement I am making tonight concerning developments in Cuba and the reaction of my Government thereto has been handed to your Ambassador in Washington. In view of the gravity of the developments to which I refer, I want you to know immediately and accurately the position of my Government in this matter.

In our discussions and exchanges on Berlin and other international questions, the one thing that has most concerned me has been the possibility that your Government would not correctly understand the will and determination of the United States in any given situation, since I have not assumed that you or any other sane man would, in this nuclear age, deliberately plunge the world into war which it is crystal clear no country could win and which could only result in catastrophic consequences to the whole world, including the aggressor.

At our meeting in Vienna and subsequently, I expressed our readiness and desire to find, through peaceful negotiation, a solution to any and all problems that divide us. At the same time, I made clear that in view of the objectives of the ideology to which you adhere, the United States could not tolerate any action on your part which in a major way disturbed the existing over-all balance of power in the world. I stated that an attempt to force abandonment of our responsibilities and commitments in Berlin would constitute such an action and that the United States would resist with all the power at its command.

It was in order to avoid any incorrect assessment on the part of your Government with respect to Cuba that I publicly stated that if certain developments in Cuba took place, the United States would do whatever must be done to protect its own security and that of its allies.

Moreover, the Congress adopted a resolution expressing its support of this declared policy. Despite this, the rapid development of long-range missile bases and other offensive weapons systems in Cuba has proceeded. I must tell you that the United States is determined that this threat to the security of this hemisphere be removed. At the same time, I wish to point out that the action we are taking is the minimum necessary to remove the threat to the security of the nations of this hemisphere. The fact of this minimum response should not be taken as a basis, however, for any misjudgment on your part.

I hope that your Government will refrain from any action which would widen or deepen this already grave crisis and that we can agree to resume the path of peaceful negotiations.

Sincerely,

President John F. Kennedy
Chairman Khrushchev's Letter to President Kennedy, October 23, 1962

Department of State
Division of Language Services
(Translation)

Embossed Seal of the USSR

Moscow, October 23, 1962

Mr. President.

I have just received your letter, and have also acquainted myself with the text of your speech of October 22 regarding Cuba.

I must say frankly that measures indicated in your statement constitute a serious threat to peace and to the security of nations. The United States has openly taken the path of grossly violating the United Nations Charter, path of violating international norms of freedom of navigation on the high seas, the path of aggressive actions both against Cuba and against the Soviet Union.

The statement by the Government of the United States of America can only be regarded as undisguised interference in the internal of the Republic of Cuba, the Soviet Union, and other states. The United Nations Charter and international norms give no right to any state to institute in international waters the inspection of vessels bound for the shores of the Republic of Cuba.

And naturally, neither can we recognize the right of the United States to establish control over armaments which are necessary for the Republic of Cuba to strengthen its defense capability.

We affirm that the armaments which are in Cuba, regardless of the classification to which they may belong, are intended solely for defensive purposes, in order to secure the Republic of Cuba against the attack of an aggressor.

I hope that the United States Government will display wisdom and renounce the actions pursued by you, which may lead to catastrophic consequences for world peace.

The viewpoint of the Soviet Government with regard to your statement of October 22 is set forth in statement of the Soviet Government, which is being transmitted to you through your Ambassador at Moscow.

[s] N. Khrushchev

N. Khrushchev
Draft of President Kennedy's Letter to Chairman Khrushchev, October 23, 1962

Dear Mr. Chairman:

I have received your letter of October twenty-third. I think you will recognize that the step which started the current chain of events was the action of your Government in secretly furnishing long-range missiles to Cuba. We will be discussing this matter in the Security Council. In the meantime, I am concerned that we both show prudence and do nothing to allow events to make the situation more difficult to control than it already is.

With this in mind I hope you will issue instructions to your ships bound for Cuba not to challenge the quarantine legally established by the Organization of American States this afternoon.

Sincerely,

The Final Version of President Kennedy's Letter of October 23 as Transmitted by State Department Telegram

Washington, October 23, 1962, 6:51 p.m.

985. You should deliver following letter addressed by the President to Chairman Khrushchev immediately. This replaces message contained Deptel 982.

"Dear Mr. Chairman:

I have received your letter of October twenty-third. I think you will recognize that the step which started the current chain of events was the action of your Government in secretly furnishing offensive weapons to Cuba. We will be discussing this matter in the Security Council. In the meantime, I am concerned that we both show prudence and do nothing to allow events to make the situation more difficult to control than it already is.

I hope that you will issue immediately the necessary instructions to your ships to observe the terms of the quarantine, the basis of which was established by the vote of the Organization of American States this afternoon, and which will go into effect at 1400 hours Greenwich time October twenty-four.

Sincerely, JFK."

Rusk
Letter From Chairman Khrushchev to President Kennedy, October 24, 1962

Moscow, October 24, 1962.

Dear Mr. President:

I have received your letter of October 23, have studied it, and am answering you.

Just imagine, Mr. President, that we had presented you with the conditions of an ultimatum which you have presented us by your action. How would you have reacted to this? I think that you would have been indignant at such a step on our part. And this would have been understandable to us.

In presenting us with these conditions, you, Mr. President, have flung a challenge at us. Who asked you to do this? By what right did you do this? Our ties with the Republic of Cuba, like our relations with other states, regardless of what kind of states they may be, concern only the two countries between which these relations exist. And if we now speak of the quarantine to which your letter refers, a quarantine may be established, according to accepted international practice, only by agreement of states between themselves, and not by some third party. Quarantines exist, for example, on agricultural goods and products. But in this case the question is in no way one of quarantine, but rather of far more serious things, and you yourself understand this.

You, Mr. President, are not declaring a quarantine, but rather are setting forth an ultimatum and threatening that if we do not give in to your demands you will use force. Consider what you are saying! And you want to persuade me to agree to this! What would it mean to agree to these demands? It would mean guiding oneself in one's relations with other countries not by reason, but by submitting to arbitrariness. You are no longer appealing to reason, but wish to intimidate us.

No, Mr. President, I cannot agree to this, and I think that in your own heart you recognize that I am correct. I am convinced that in my place you would act the same way.

Reference to the decision of the Organization of American States cannot in any way substantiate the demands now advanced by the United States. This Organization has absolutely no authority or basis for adopting decisions such as the one you speak of in your letter. Therefore, we do not recognize these decisions. International law exists and universally recognized norms of conduct exist. We firmly adhere to the principles of international law and observe strictly the norms which regulate navigation on the high seas, in international waters. We observe these norms and enjoy the rights recognized by all states.

You wish to compel us to renounce the rights that every sovereign state enjoys, you are trying to legislate in questions of international law, and you are violating the universally accepted norms of that law. And you are doing all this not only out of hatred for the Cuban people and its government, but also because of considerations of the election campaign in the United States. What morality, what law can justify such an approach by the American Government to international affairs? No such morality or law can be found, because the actions of the United States with regard to Cuba constitute outright banditry or, if you like, the folly of degenerate imperialism. Unfortunately, such folly can bring grave suffering to the peoples of all countries, and to no lesser degree to the American people themselves, since the United States has completely lost its former isolation with the advent of modern types of armament.
Therefore, Mr. President, if you coolly weigh the situation which has developed, not giving way to passions, you will understand that the Soviet Union cannot fail to reject the arbitrary demands of the United States. When you confront us with such conditions, try to put yourself in our place and consider how the United States would react to these conditions. I do not doubt that if someone attempted to dictate similar conditions to you—the United States—you would reject such an attempt. And we also say--no.

The Soviet Government considers that the violation of the freedom to use international waters and international air space is an act of aggression which pushes mankind toward the abyss of a world nuclear-missile war. Therefore, the Soviet Government cannot instruct the captains of Soviet vessels bound for Cuba to observe the orders of American naval forces blockading that Island. Our instructions to Soviet mariners are to observe strictly the universally accepted norms of navigation in international waters and not to retreat one step from them. And if the American side violates these rules, it must realize what responsibility will rest upon it in that case. Naturally we will not simply be bystanders with regard to piratical acts by American ships on the high seas. We will then be forced on our part to take the measures we consider necessary and adequate in order to protect our rights. We have everything necessary to do so.

Respectfully,

N. Khrushchev
Letter From President Kennedy to Chairman Khrushchev, October 25, 1962

October 25, 1962

Dear Mr. Chairman:

I have received your letter of October 24, and I regret very much that you still do not appear to understand what it is that has moved us in this matter.

The sequence of events is clear. In August there were reports of important shipments of military equipment and technicians from the Soviet Union to Cuba. In early September I indicated very plainly that the United States would regard any shipment of offensive weapons as presenting the gravest issues. After that time, this Government received the most explicit assurances from your Government and its representatives, both publicly and privately, that no offensive weapons were being sent to Cuba. If you will review the statement issued by Tass in September, you will see how clearly this assurance was given.

In reliance on these solemn assurances I urged restraint upon those in this country who were urging action in this matter at that time. And then I learned beyond doubt what you have not denied -- namely, that all these public assurances were false and that your military people had set out recently to establish a set of missile bases in Cuba. I ask you to recognize clearly, Mr. Chairman, that it was not I who issued the first challenge in this case, and that in the light of this record these activities in Cuba required the responses I have announced.

I repeat my regret that these events should cause a deterioration in our relations. I hope that your Government will take the necessary action to permit a restoration of the earlier situation.

Sincerely yours,
Department of State Telegram Transmitting Letter From Chairman
Khrushchev to President Kennedy, October 26, 1962

Moscow, October 26, 1962, 7 p.m.

1101. Policy. Embassy translation follows of letter from Khrushchev to President delivered to
Embassy by messenger 4:43 p.m. Moscow time October 26, under cover of letter from Gromyko
to me.

Begin Text.

Dear Mr. President:

I have received your letter of October 25. From your letter, I got the feeling that you have some
understanding of the situation which has developed and (some) sense of responsibility. I value
this.

Now we have already publicly exchanged our evaluations of the events around Cuba and each of
us has set forth his explanation and his understanding of these events. Consequently, I would
judge that, apparently, a continuation of an exchange of opinions at such a distance, even in the
form of secret letters, will hardly add anything to that which one side has already said to the other.

I think you will understand me correctly if you are really concerned about the welfare of the world.
Everyone needs peace: both capitalists, if they have not lost their reason, and, still more,
Communists, people who know how to value not only their own lives but, more than anything, the
lives of the peoples. We, Communists, are against all wars between states in general and have
been defending the cause of peace since we came into the world. We have always regarded war
as a calamity, and not as a game nor as a means for the attainment of definite goals, nor, all the
more, as a goal in itself. Our goals are clear, and the means to attain them is labor. War is our
calamity and a calamity for all the peoples.

It is thus that we, Soviet people, and, together with US, other peoples as well, understand the
questions of war and peace. I can, in any case, firmly say this for the peoples of the Socialist
countries, as well as for all progressive people who want peace, happiness, and friendship
among peoples.

I see, Mr. President, that you too are not devoid of a sense of anxiety for the fate of the world
understanding, and of what war entails. What would a war give you? You are threatening us with
war. But you well know that the very least which you would receive in reply would be that you
would experience the same consequences as those which you sent us. And that must be clear to
us, people invested with authority, trust, and responsibility. We must not succumb to intoxication
and petty passions, regardless of whether elections are impending in this or that country, or not
impending. These are all transient things, but if indeed war should break out, then it would not be
in our power to stop it, for such is the logic of war. I have participated in two wars and know that
war ends when it has rolled through cities and villages, everywhere sowing death and destruction.

In the name of the Soviet Government and the Soviet people, I assure you that your conclusions
regarding offensive weapons on Cuba are groundless. It is apparent from what you have written
me that our conceptions are different on this score, or rather, we have different estimates of these
or those military means. Indeed, in reality, the same forms of weapons can have different interpretations.

You are a military man and, I hope, will understand me. Let us take for example a simple cannon. What sort of means is this: offensive or defensive? A cannon is a defensive means if it is set up to defend boundaries or a fortified area. But if one concentrates artillery, and adds to it the necessary number of troops, then the same cannons do become an offensive means, because they prepare and clear the way for infantry to attack. The same happens with missile-nuclear weapons as well, with any type of this weapon.

You are mistaken if you think that any of our means on Cuba are offensive. However, let us not quarrel now. It is apparent that I will not be able to convince you of this. But I say to you: You, Mr. President, are a military man and should understand: Can one attack, if one has on one's territory even an enormous quantity of missiles of various effective radiuses and various power, but using only these means. These missiles are a means of extermination and destruction. But one cannot attack with these missiles, even nuclear missiles of a power of 100 megatons because only people, troops, can attack. Without people, any means however powerful cannot be offensive.

How can one, consequently, give such a completely incorrect interpretation as you are now giving, to the effect that some sort of means on Cuba are offensive. All the means located there, and I assure you of this, have a defensive character, are on Cuba solely for the purposes of defense, and we have sent them to Cuba at the request of the Cuban Government. You, however, say that these are offensive means.

But, Mr. President, do you really seriously think that Cuba can attack the United States and that even we together with Cuba can attack you from the territory of Cuba? Can you really think that way? How is it possible? We do not understand this. Has something so new appeared in military strategy that one can think that it is possible to attack thus. I say precisely attack, and not destroy, since barbarians, people who have lost their sense, destroy.

I believe that you have no basis to think this way. You can regard us with distrust, but, in any case, you can be calm in this regard, that we are of sound mind and understand perfectly well that if we attack you, you will respond the same way. But you too will receive the same that you hurl against us. And I think that you also understand this. My conversation with you in Vienna gives me the right to talk to you this way.

This indicates that we are normal people, that we correctly understand and correctly evaluate the situation. Consequently, how can we permit the incorrect actions which you ascribe to us? Only lunatics or suicides, who themselves want to perish and to destroy the whole world before they die, could do this. We, however, want to live and do not at all want to destroy your country. We want something quite different: To compete with your country on a peaceful basis. We quarrel with you, we have differences on ideological questions. But our view of the world consists in this, that ideological questions, as well as economic problems, should be solved not by military means, they must be solved on the basis of peaceful competition, i.e., as this is understood in capitalist society, on the basis of competition. We have proceeded and are proceeding from the fact that the peaceful co-existence of the two different social-political systems, now existing in the world, is necessary, that it is necessary to assure a stable peace. That is the sort of principle we hold.

You have now proclaimed piratical measures, which were employed in the Middle Ages, when ships proceeding in international waters were attacked, and you have called this "a quarantine" around Cuba. Our vessels, apparently, will soon enter the zone which your Navy is patrolling. I
assure you that these vessels, now bound for Cuba, are carrying the most innocent peaceful cargoes. Do you really think that we only occupy ourselves with the carriage of so-called offensive weapons, atomic and hydrogen bombs? Although perhaps your military people imagine that these (cargoes) are some sort of special type of weapon, I assure you that they are the most ordinary peaceful products.

Consequently, Mr. President, let us show good sense. I assure you that on those ships, which are bound for Cuba, there are no weapons at all. The weapons which were necessary for the defense of Cuba are already there. I do not want to say that there were not any shipments of weapons at all. No, there were such shipments. But now Cuba has already received the necessary means of defense.

I don't know whether you can understand me and believe me. But I should like to have you believe in yourself and to agree that one cannot give way to passions; it is necessary to control them. And in what direction are events now developing? If you stop the vessels, then, as you yourself know, that would be piracy. If we started to do that with regard to your ships, then you would also be as indignant as we and the whole world now are. One cannot give another interpretation to such actions, because one cannot legalize lawlessness. If this were permitted, then there would be no peace, there would also be no peaceful coexistence. We should then be forced to put into effect the necessary measures of a defensive character to protect our interests in accordance with international law. Why should this be done? To what would all this lead?

Let us normalize relations. We have received an appeal from the Acting Secretary General of the UN, U Thant, with his proposals. I have already answered him. His proposals come to this, that our side should not transport armaments of any kind to Cuba during a certain period of time, while negotiations are being conducted—and we are ready to enter such negotiations—and the other side should not undertake any sort of piratical actions against vessels engaged in navigation on the high seas. I consider these proposals reasonable. This would be a way out of the situation which has been created, which would give the peoples the possibility of breathing calmly. You have asked what happened, what evoked the delivery of weapons to Cuba? You have spoken about this to our Minister of Foreign Affairs. I will tell you frankly, Mr. President, what evoked it.

We were very grieved by the fact--I spoke about it in Vienna--that a landing took place, that an attack on Cuba was committed, as a result of which many Cubans perished. You yourself told me then that this had been a mistake. I respected that explanation. You repeated it to me several times, pointing out that not everybody occupying a high position would acknowledge his mistakes as you had done. I value such frankness. For my part, I told you that we too possess no less courage; we also acknowledged those mistakes which had been committed during the history of our state, and not only acknowledged, but sharply condemned them.

If you are really concerned about the peace and welfare of your people, and this is your responsibility as President, then I, as the Chairman of the Council of Ministers, am concerned for my people. Moreover, the preservation of world peace should be our joint concern, since if, under contemporary conditions, war should break out, it would be a war not only between the reciprocal claims, but a world wide cruel and destructive war.

Why have we proceeded to assist Cuba with military and economic aid? The answer is: We have proceeded to do so only for reasons of humanitarianism. At one time, our people itself had a revolution, when Russia was still a backward country. We were attacked then. We were the target of attack by many countries. The USA participated in that adventure. This has been recorded by participants in the aggression against our country. A whole book has been written about this by
General Graves, who, at that time, commanded the US Expeditionary Corps. Graves called it "The American Adventure in Siberia."

We know how difficult it is to accomplish a revolution and how difficult it is to reconstruct a country on new foundations. We sincerely sympathize with Cuba and the Cuban people, but we are not interfering in questions of domestic structure, we are not interfering in their affairs. The Soviet Union desires to help the Cubans build their life as they themselves wish and that others should not hinder them.

You once said that the United States was not preparing an invasion. But you also declared that you sympathized with the Cuban counter-revolutionary emigrants, that you support them and would help them to realize their plans against the present Government of Cuba. It is also not a secret to anyone that the threat of armed attack, aggression, has constantly hung, and continues to hang over Cuba. It was only this which impelled us to respond to the request of the Cuban Government to furnish it aid for the strengthening of the defensive capacity of this country.

If assurances were given by the President and the Government of the United States that the USA itself would not participate in an attack on Cuba and would restrain others from actions of this sort, if you would recall your fleet, this would immediately change everything. I am not speaking for Fidel Castro, but I think that he and the Government of Cuba, evidently, would declare demobilization and would appeal to the people to get down to peaceful labor. Then, too, the question of armaments would disappear, since, if there is no threat, then armaments are a burden for every people. Then too, the question of the destruction, not only of the armaments which you call offensive, but of all other armaments as well, would look different.

I spoke in the name of the Soviet Government in the United Nations and introduced a proposal for the disbandment of all armies and for the destruction of all armaments. How then can I now count on those armaments?

Armaments bring only disasters. When one accumulates them, this damages the economy, and if one puts them to use, then they destroy people on both sides. Consequently, only a madman can believe that armaments are the principal means in the life of society. No, they are an enforced loss of human energy, and what is more are for the destruction of man himself. If people do not show wisdom, then in the final analysis they will come to a clash, like blind moles, and then reciprocal extermination will begin.

Let us therefore show statesmanlike wisdom. I propose: We, for our part, will declare that our ships, bound for Cuba, will not carry any kind of armaments. You would declare that the United States will not invade Cuba with its forces and will not support any sort of forces which might intend to carry out an invasion of Cuba. Then the necessity for the presence of our military specialists in Cuba would disappear.

Mr. President, I appeal to you to weigh well what the aggressive, piratical actions, which you have declared the USA intends to carry out in international waters, would lead to. You yourself know that any sensible man simply cannot agree with this, cannot recognize your right to such actions.

If you did this as the first step towards the unleashing of war, well then, it is evident that nothing else is left to us but to accept this challenge of yours. If, however, you have not lost your self-control and sensibly conceive what this might lead to, then, Mr. President, we and you ought not now to pull on the ends of the rope in which you have tied the knot of war, because the more the
two of us pull, the tighter that knot will be tied. And a moment may come when that knot will be
tied so tight that even he who tied it will not have the strength to untie it, and then it will be
necessary to cut that knot, and what that would mean is not for me to explain to you, because you
yourself understand perfectly of what terrible forces our countries dispose.

Consequently, if there is no intention to tighten that knot and thereby to doom the world to the
catastrophe of thermonuclear war, then let us not only relax the forces pulling on the ends of the
rope, let us take measures to untie that knot. We are ready for this.

We welcome all forces which stand on positions of peace. Consequently, I expressed gratitude to
Mr. Bertrand Russell, too, who manifests alarm and concern for the fate of the world, and I readily
responded to the appeal of the Acting Secretary General of the UN, U Thant.

There, Mr. President, are my thoughts, which, if you agreed with them, could put an end to that
tense situation which is disturbing all peoples.

These thoughts are dictated by a sincere desire to relieve the situation, to remove the threat of
war.

Respectfully yours,

[s] N. Khrushchev


Original of letter being air pouchcd today under transmittal slip to Executive Secretariat.

Kohler
Telegram of President Kennedy's Reply to Chairman Khrushchev's Letter of October 26, 1962

Washington, October 27, 1962, 8:05 p.m.

1015. Following message from President to Khrushchev should be delivered as soon as possible to highest available Soviet official. Text has been handed Soviet Embassy in Washington and has been released to press:

"Dear Mr. Chairman:

I have read your letter of October 26th with great care and welcomed the statement of your desire to seek a prompt solution to the problem. The first thing that needs to be done, however, is for work to cease on offensive missile bases in Cuba and for all weapons systems in Cuba capable of offensive use to be rendered inoperable, under effective United Nations arrangements.

Assuming this is done promptly, I have given my representatives in New York instructions that will permit them to work out this weekend—in cooperation with the Acting Secretary General and your representative—an arrangement for a permanent solution to the Cuban problem along the lines suggested in your letter of October 26th. As I read your letter, the key elements of your proposals—which seem generally acceptable as I understand them—are as follows:

1) You would agree to remove these weapons systems from Cuba under appropriate United Nations observation and supervision; and undertake, with suitable safeguards, to halt the further introduction of such weapons systems into Cuba.

2) We, on our part, would agree—upon the establishment of adequate arrangements through the United Nations to ensure the carrying out and continuation of these commitments—(a) to remove promptly the quarantine measures now in effect and (b) to give assurances against an invasion of Cuba. I am confident that other nations of the Western Hemisphere would be prepared to do likewise.

If you will give your representative similar instructions, there is no reason why we should not be able to complete these arrangements and announce them to the world within a couple of days. The effect of such a settlement on easing world tensions would enable us to work toward a more general arrangement regarding 'other armaments', as proposed in your second letter which you made public. I would like to say again that the United States is very much interested in reducing tensions and halting the arms race; and if your letter signifies that you are prepared to discuss a détente affecting NATO and the Warsaw Pact, we are quite prepared to consider with our allies any useful proposals.

But the first ingredient, let me emphasize, is the cessation of work on missile sites in Cuba and measures to render such weapons inoperable, under effective international guarantees. The continuation of this threat, or a prolonging of this discussion concerning Cuba by linking these problems to the broader questions of European and world security, would surely lead to an intensification of the Cuban crisis and a grave risk to the peace of the world. For this reason I hope we can quickly agree along the lines in this letter and in your letter of October 26th.

/s/ John F. Kennedy"

Rusk
Dear Mr. President,

I have studied with great satisfaction your reply to Mr. Thant concerning measures that should be taken to avoid contact between our vessels and thereby avoid irreparable and fatal consequences. This reasonable step on your part strengthens my belief that you are showing concern for the preservation of peace, which I note with satisfaction.

I have already said that our people, our Government, and I personally, as Chairman of the Council of Ministers, are concerned solely with having our country develop and occupy a worthy place among all peoples of the world in economic competition, in the development of culture and the arts, and in raising the living standard of the people. This is the most noble and necessary field for competition, and both the victor and the vanquished will derive only benefit from it, because it means peace and an increase in the means by which man lives and finds enjoyment.

In your statement you expressed the opinion that the main aim was not simply to come to an agreement and take measures to prevent contact between our vessels and consequently a deepening of the crisis which could, as a result of such contacts spark a military conflict, after which all negotiations would be superfluous because other forces and other laws would then come into play—the laws of war. I agree with you that this is only the first step. The main thing that must be done is to normalize and stabilize the state of peace among states and among peoples.

I understand your concern for the security of the United States, Mr. President, because this is the primary duty of a President. But we too are disturbed about these same questions; I bear these same obligations as Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the U.S.S.R. You have been alarmed by the fact that we have aided Cuba with weapons, in order to strengthen its defense capability—precisely defense capability—because whatever weapons it may possess, Cuba cannot be equated with you since the difference in magnitude is so great, particularly in view of modern means of destruction. Our aim has been and is to help Cuba, and no one can dispute the humanity of our motives, which are oriented toward enabling Cuba to live peacefully and develop in the way its people desire.

You wish to ensure the security of your country, and this is understandable. But Cuba, too, wants the same thing; all countries want to maintain their security. But how are we, the Soviet Union, our Government, to assess your actions which are expressed in the fact that you have surrounded the Soviet Union with military bases; surrounded our allies with military bases; placed military bases literally around our country; and stationed your missile armaments there? This is
no secret. Responsible American personages openly declare that it is so. Your missiles are located in Britain, are located in Italy, and are aimed against us. Your missiles are located in Turkey.

You are disturbed over Cuba. You say that this disturbs you because it is 90 miles by sea from the coast of the United States of America. But Turkey adjoins us; our sentries patrol back and forth and see each other. Do you consider, then, that you have the right to demand security for your own country and the removal of the weapons you call offensive, but do not accord the same right to us? You have placed destructive missile weapons, which you call offensive, in Turkey, literally next to us. How then can recognition of our equal military capacities be reconciled with such unequal relations between our great states? This is irreconcilable.

It is good, Mr. President, that you have agreed to have our representatives meet and begin talks, apparently through the mediation of U Thant, Acting Secretary General of the United Nations. Consequently, he to some degree has assumed the role of a mediator and we consider that he will be able to cope with this responsible mission, provided, of course, that each party drawn into this controversy displays good will.

I think it would be possible to end the controversy quickly and normalize the situation, and then the people could breathe more easily, considering that statesmen charged with responsibility are of sober mind and have an awareness of their responsibility combined with the ability to solve complex questions and not bring things to a military catastrophe.

I therefore make this proposal: We are willing to remove from Cuba the means which you regard as offensive. We are willing to carry this out and to make this pledge in the United Nations. Your representatives will make a declaration to the effect that the United States, for its part, considering the uneasiness and anxiety of the Soviet State, will remove its analogous means from Turkey. Let us reach agreement as to the period of time needed by you and by us to bring this about. And, after that, persons entrusted by the United Nations Security Council could inspect on the spot the fulfillment of the pledges made. Of course, the permission of the Governments of Cuba and Turkey is necessary for the entry into those countries of these representatives and for the inspection of the fulfillment of the pledge made by each side. Of course it would be best if these representatives enjoyed the confidence of the Security Council as well as yours and mine--both the United States and the Soviet Union--and also that of Turkey and Cuba. I do not think it would be difficult to select people who would enjoy the trust and respect of all parties concerned.

We, in making this pledge, in order to give satisfaction and hope of the peoples of Cuba and Turkey and to strengthen their confidences in their security, will make a statement within the framework of the Security Council to the effect that the Soviet Government gives a solemn promise to respect the inviolability of the borders and sovereignty of Turkey, not to interfere in its internal affairs, not to invade Turkey, not to make available our territory as a bridgehead for such an invasion, and that it would also restrain those who contemplate committing aggression against Turkey, either from the territory of the Soviet Union or from the territory of Turkey's other neighboring states.

The United States Government will make a similar statement within the framework of the Security Council regarding Cuba. It will declare that the United States will respect the inviolability of Cuba's borders and its sovereignty, will pledge not to interfere in its internal affairs, not to invade Cuba itself or make its territory available as a bridgehead for such an invasion, and will also restrain those who might contemplate committing aggression against Cuba, either from the territory of the United States or from the territory of Cuba's other neighboring states.
Of course, for this we would have to come to an agreement with you and specify a certain time limit. Let us agree to some period of time, but without unnecessary delay--say within two or three weeks, not longer than a month.

The means situated in Cuba, of which you speak and which disturb you, as you have stated, are in the hands of Soviet officers. Therefore, any accidental use of them to the detriment of the United States is excluded. These means are situated in Cuba at the request of the Cuban Government and are only for defense purposes. Therefore, if there is no invasion of Cuba, or attack on the Soviet Union or any of our other allies, then of course these means are not and will not be a threat to anyone. For they are not for purposes of attack.

If you are agreeable to my proposal, Mr. President, then we would send our representatives to New York, to the United Nations, and would give them comprehensive instructions in order that an agreement may be reached more quickly. If you also select your people and give them the corresponding instructions, then this question can be quickly resolved.

Why would I like to do this? Because the whole world is now apprehensive and expects sensible actions of us. The greatest joy for all peoples would be the announcement of our agreement and of the eradication of the controversy that has arisen. I attach great importance to this agreement in so far as it could serve as a good beginning and could in particular make it easier to reach agreement on banning nuclear weapons tests. The question of the tests could be solved in parallel fashion, without connecting one with the other, because these are different issues. However, it is important that agreement be reached on both these issues so as to present humanity with a fine gift, and also to gladden it with the news that agreement has been reached on the cessation of nuclear tests and that consequently the atmosphere will no longer be poisoned. Our position and yours on this issue are very close together.

All of this could possibly serve as a good impetus toward the finding of mutually acceptable agreements on other controversial issues on which you and I have been exchanging views. These issues have so far not been resolved, but they are awaiting urgent solution, which would clear up the international atmosphere. We are prepared for this.

These are my proposals, Mr. President.

Respectfully yours,

[s] N. Khrushchev
N. Khrushchev

October 27, 1962
Letter From Chairman Khrushchev to President Kennedy, October 28, 1962

OFFICIAL ENGLISH TEXT OF KHRUSHCHEV MESSAGE

MOSCOW TASS IN ENGLISH TO EUROPE NO.11, 28 OCT 62

Dear Mr. President:

I have received your message of October 27. I express my satisfaction and thank you for the sense of proportion you have displayed and for realization of the responsibility which now devolves on you for the preservation of the peace of the world.

I regard with great understanding your concern and the concern of the United States people in connection with the fact that the weapons you describe as offensive are formidable weapons indeed. Both you and we understand what kind of weapons these are.

In order to eliminate as rapidly as possible the conflict which endangers the cause of peace, to give an assurance to all people who crave peace, and to reassure the American people, who, I am certain, also want peace, as do the people of the Soviet Union, the Soviet Government, in addition to earlier instructions on the discontinuation of further work on weapons construction sites, has given a new order to dismantle the arms which you described as offensive, and to crate and return them to the Soviet Union.

Mr. President, I should like to repeat what I had already written to you in my earlier messages—that the Soviet Government has given economic assistance to the Republic of Cuba, as well as arms, because Cuba and the Cuban people were constantly under the continuous threat of an invasion of Cuba.

A piratic vessel had shelled Havana. They say that this shelling was done by irresponsible Cuban émigrés. Perhaps so, however, the question is from where did they shoot. It is a fact that these Cubans have no territory, they are fugitives from their country, and they have no means to conduct military operations.

This means that someone put into their hands these weapons for shelling Havana and for piracy in the Caribbean in Cuban territorial waters. It is impossible in our time not to notice a piratic ship, considering the concentration in the Caribbean of American ships from which everything can be seen and observed.

In these conditions, pirate ships freely roam around and shell Cuba and make piratic attacks on peaceful cargo ships. It is known that they even shelled a British cargo ship. In a word, Cuba was under the continuous threat of aggressive forces, which did not conceal their intention to invade its territory.

The Cuban people want to build their life in their own interests without external interference. This is their right, and they cannot be blamed for wanting to be masters of their own country and disposing of the fruits of their own labor.
The threat of invasion of Cuba and all other schemes for creating tension over Cuba are designed to strike the Cuban people with a sense of insecurity, intimidate them, and prevent them from peacefully building their new life.

Mr. President, I should like to say clearly once more that we could not remain indifferent to this. The Soviet Government decided to render assistance to Cuba with the means of defense against aggression—only with means for defense purposes. We have supplied the defense means which you describe as offensive means. We have supplied them to prevent an attack on Cuba—to prevent rash acts.

I regard with respect and trust the statement you made in your message of October 27, 1962, that there would be no attack, no invasion of Cuba, and not only on the part of the United States, but also on the part of other nations of the Western Hemisphere, as you said in your same message. Then the motives which induced us to render assistance of such a kind to Cuba disappear.

It is for this reason that we instructed our officers—these means as I had already informed you earlier are in the hands of the Soviet officers—to take appropriate measures to discontinue construction of the aforementioned facilities, to dismantle them, and to return them to the Soviet Union. As I had informed you in the letter of October 27, we are prepared to reach agreement to enable United Nations Representatives to verify the dismantling of these means.

Thus in view of the assurance you have given and our instructions on dismantling, there is every condition for eliminating the present conflict.

I note with satisfaction that you have responded to the desire I expressed with regard to elimination of the aforementioned dangerous situation, as well as with regard to providing conditions for a more thoughtful appraisal of the internal situation, fraught as it is with great dangers in our age of thermonuclear weapons, rocketry, spaceships, global rockets, and other deadly weapons. All people are interested in insuring peace.

Therefore, vested with trust and great responsibility, we must not allow the situation to become aggravated and must stamp out the centers where a dangerous situation fraught with grave consequences to the cause of peace has arisen. If we, together with you, and with the assistance of other people of good will, succeed in eliminating this tense atmosphere, we should also make certain that no other dangerous conflicts which could lead to a world nuclear catastrophe would arise.

In conclusion, I should like to say something about a detente between NATO and the Warsaw Treaty countries that you have mentioned. We have spoken about this long since and are prepared to continue to exchange views on this question with you and to find a reasonable solution.

We should like to continue the exchange of views on the prohibition of atomic and thermonuclear weapons, general disarmament, and other problems relating to the relaxation of international tension.

Although I trust your statement, Mr. President, there are irresponsible people who would like to invade Cuba now and thus touch off a war. If we do take practical steps and proclaim the dismantling and evacuation of the means in question from Cuba, in so doing we, at the same
time, want the Cuban people to be certain that we are with them and are not absolving ourselves of responsibility for rendering assistance to the Cuban people.

We are confident that the people of all countries, like you, Mr. President, will understand me correctly. We are not threatening. We want nothing but peace. Our country is now on the upsurge.

Our people are enjoying the fruits of their peaceful labor. They have achieved tremendous successes since the October Revolution, and created the greatest material, spiritual, and cultural values. Our people are enjoying these values; they want to continue developing their achievements and insure their further development on the way of peace and social progress by their persistent labor.

I should like to remind you, Mr. President, that military reconnaissance planes have violated the borders of the Soviet Union. In connection with this there have been conflicts between us and notes exchanged. In 1960 we shot down your U-2 plane, whose reconnaissance flight over the USSR wrecked the summit meeting in Paris. At that time, you took a correct position and denounced that criminal act of the former U.S. Administration.

But during your term of office as President another violation of our border has occurred, by an American U-2 plane in the Sakhalin area. We wrote you about the violation on 30 August. At that time you replied that that violation had occurred as a result of poor weather, and gave assurances that this would not be repeated. We trusted your assurance, because the weather was indeed poor in that area at that time.

But had not your planes been ordered to fly about our territory, even poor weather could not have brought an American plane into our airspace. Hence, the conclusion that this is being done with the knowledge of the Pentagon, which tramples on international norms and violates the borders of other states.

A still more dangerous case occurred on 28 October, when one of your reconnaissance planes intruded over Soviet borders in the Chukotka Peninsula area in the north and flew over our territory. The question is, Mr. President: How should we regard this. What is this: A provocation? One of your planes violates our frontier during this anxious time we are both experiencing, when everything has been put into combat readiness. Is it not a fact that an intruding American plane could be easily taken for a nuclear bomber, which might push us to a fateful step? And all the more so since the U.S. Government and Pentagon long ago declared that you are maintaining a continuous nuclear bomber patrol.

Therefore, you can imagine the responsibility you are assuming especially now, when we are living through such anxious times.

I should like to express the following wish; it concerns the Cuban people. You do not have diplomatic relations. But through my officers in Cuba, I have reports that American planes are making flights over Cuba.

We are interested that there should be no war in the world, and that the Cuban people should live in peace. And besides, Mr. President, it is no secret that we have our people in Cuba. Under such a treaty with the Cuban Government we have sent there officers, instructors, mostly plain people:
specialists, agronomists, zoo technicians, irrigators, land reclamation specialists, plain workers, tractor drivers, and others. We are concerned about them.

I should like you to consider, Mr. President, that violation of Cuban airspace by American planes could also lead to dangerous consequences. And if you do not want this to happen, it would [be] better if no cause is given for a dangerous situation to arise.

We must be careful now and refrain from any steps which would not be useful to the defense of the states involved in the conflict, which could only cause irritation and even serve as a provocation for a fateful step. Therefore, we must display sanity, reason, and refrain from such steps.

We value peace perhaps even more than other peoples because we went through a terrible war with Hitler. But our people will not falter in the face of any test. Our people trust their Government, and we assure our people and world public opinion that the Soviet Government will not allow itself to be provoked. But if the provocateurs unleash a war, they will not evade responsibility and the grave consequences a war would bring upon them. But we are confident that reason will triumph that war will not be unleashed and peace and the security of the peoples will be insured.

In connection with the current negotiations between Acting Secretary General U Thant and representatives of the Soviet Union, the United States, and the Republic of Cuba, the Soviet Government has sent First Deputy Foreign Minister V. V. Kuznetsov to New York to help U Thant in his noble efforts aimed at eliminating the present dangerous situation.

Signed: Respectfully yours, N. Khrushchev

October 28, 1962
Department of State Telegram Conveying President Kennedy's Reply to Chairman Khrushchev, October 28, 1962

Washington, October 28, 1962, 5:03 p.m.
1020. Following is text President's reply to Khrushchev letter of October 28 for delivery to highest available Soviet official. Text has been handed to Soviet Embassy and released by White House at 4:35 PM.

Begin text.

Dear Mr. Chairman:

I am replying at once to your broadcast message of October twenty-eight even though the official text has not yet reached me because of the great importance I attach to moving forward promptly to the settlement of the Cuban crisis. I think that you and I, with our heavy responsibilities for the maintenance of peace, were aware that developments were approaching a point where events could have become unmanageable. So I welcome this message and consider it an important contribution to peace.

The distinguished efforts of Acting Secretary General U Thant have greatly facilitated both our tasks. I consider my letter to you of October twenty-seventh and your reply of today as firm undertakings on the part of both our governments which should be promptly carried out. I hope that the necessary measures can at once be taken through the United Nations as your message says, so that the United States in turn can remove the quarantine measures now in effect. I have already made arrangements to report all these matters to the Organization of American States, whose members share a deep interest in a genuine peace in the Caribbean area.

You referred in your letter to a violation of your frontier by an American aircraft in the area of the Chukotsk Peninsula. I have learned that this plane, without arms or photographic equipment, was engaged in an air sampling mission in connection with your nuclear tests. Its course was direct from Eielson Air Force Base in Alaska to the North Pole and return. In turning south, the pilot made a serious navigational error which carried him over Soviet territory. He immediately made an emergency call on open radio for navigational assistance and was guided back to his home base by the most direct route. I regret this incident and will see to it that every precaution is taken to prevent recurrence.

Mr. Chairman, both of our countries have great unfinished tasks and I know that your people as well as those of the United States can ask for nothing better than to pursue them free from the fear of war. Modern science and technology have given us the possibility of making labor fruitful beyond anything that could have been dreamed of a few decades ago.

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. But we should also work hard to see if wider measures of disarmament can be agreed and put into operation at an early date. The United States Government will be prepared to discuss these questions urgently, and in a constructive spirit, at Geneva or elsewhere.

[s] John F. Kennedy

End text. Rusk
Chavez gets Russian helicopters

Venezuela has taken delivery of three Russian-built military helicopters - the first of a total of 15 it has so far ordered from Moscow.

President Hugo Chavez said they would help to protect Venezuela if the US ever mounted an invasion.

Mr Chavez also repeated that he was ready to buy Russian fighter jets.

Washington has dismissed claims of a possible invasion as ridiculous and says Mr Chavez's military purchases pose a threat to regional stability.

A crowd of Russian and Venezuelan generals and diplomats was treated to an air show, displaying the strengths of the Russian-built helicopters.

A group of around 20 parachutists jumped in formation out of the olive green MI-17 helicopters during Monday's ceremony.

President Chavez said Venezuela's latest purchases could be used to transport parachute troops quickly into combat.

This would be ideal for a war of resistance, Mr Chavez said, a reference to his often repeated concerns that the US may want to invade Venezuela to seize its oil reserves.

Army Commander Gen Raul Baduel said Venezuela planned to buy a total of 33 helicopters from Russia.

Balance of power

Venezuela has also agreed to buy a total of 100,000 Kalashnikov assault rifles from Russia.

Mr Chavez also repeated his accusation that the US had blocked a deal to buy training aircraft from the Brazilian manufacturer, Embraer, because the Brazilian planes contained protected American technology.

"Nothing and nobody will stop us from making our country's armed forces stronger," he said, while stressing that Venezuela was not preparing to invade anybody.

The BBC's Greg Morsbach in Caracas says Mr Chavez's words may do little to dispel fears in Washington that Venezuela is stepping up its arms expenditure and is upsetting the balance of power in Latin America.

Story from BBC NEWS:
http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/americas/4875906.stm

Published: 2006/04/04 14:17:17 GMT

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Appendix F
Creating a Political Cartoon Assignment
Creating a Political Cartoon

Please draw a political cartoon commenting on the Cuban Missile Crisis.

Possible elements to consider when creating your cartoon:

Introducing the concept – Editorial cartoons are not just like other comics. They may be funny, but their main purpose is to offer an opinion or point of view about some issue or problem in the news.

Symbolism – A symbol is any object or design that stands for some other thing, person, or idea.

Exaggeration and Distortion – Changes in size or shape often add to the cartoon’s point. Distorting an object means changing it in some way to make it look funny, ugly, etc.

Stereotypes – A stereotype is a simplistic view of some group. It is often insulting, but it can also help the cartoon make its point quickly.

Caricature – Caricature is a portrayal of an individual’s features in an exaggerated or distorted way.

Humor and Irony – Humor is important in many editorial cartoons. Irony is one kind of humor. In it, a viewpoint is expressed in such an odd way as to make that view actually seem ridiculous.

Captions – Words are used to reinforce the cartoon’s nonverbal features. Words help the other parts of the cartoon make one overall point. Famous saying, slogans, song lyrics, and well-known phrases can be used as captions.

In a one-page write-up, please answer the following questions:

- What issue or event does your cartoon portray/depict?
- What is the message of your cartoon?
- Who would be the intended audience of this cartoon if it were published during the time-period it depicts?
- What groups or individuals would agree and disagree with the statement made in your cartoon?
- Does your cartoon reflect your personal feelings about the event depicted? Explain.
Background: Cuban-American Relations
Lecture Outline

I. Geopolitical Significance of Cuba and the Caribbean Sea

II. Monroe Doctrine
   a. Roosevelt Corollary

III. Manifest Destiny

IV. Spanish – American War

V. Fulgencio Batista

VI. Fidel Castro
   a. July 26th Movement

VII. The Cuban-Soviet Alliance
   a. Military/Economic Aid
   b. Castro’s Embrace of Communism

VIII. John F. Kennedy
   a. Domino Theory/Containment Policy
   b. Bay of Pigs Invasion
   c. Operation Mongoose
   d. Diplomatic/Economic Isolation of Cuba

IX. The Crisis
ENDNOTES


4 Stern, 6


8 Smith, 36.


10 Smith, 24.

11 Nash, 587.

12 Smith, 32.

13 Smith, 33.

14 Smith, 33.

15 Smith, 34.

16 Smith, 165.

17 Smith, 131.


21 Smith, 166


23 Smith, 166


xxxii John F. Kennedy, Inaugural Address, January 21, 1961


xli Stern, 16.


xliii Stern, 17.

xiv Stern, 56.


lx Smith, 168-169.


lii Frankel, 70.


lix Smith, 166.

lxii Brink, 493.


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