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The Cuban Missile Crisis - Armageddon Loomed

The confrontation is often considered the closest the Cold War came to escalating into a full-scale nuclear war.

In a televised address on Oct. 22, 1962, President John F. Kennedy revealed to the American public that U.S. surveillance aircraft had detected the presence of Soviet missile bases in Cuba, triggering the so-called Cuban missile crisis.

How Did Kennedy Learn of the Cuban Missile Sites?

Prior to October 14, 1962, there had been a lull of roughly six weeks during which the United States flew no aerial reconnaissance missions using high-flying U-2 jets over Cuba.

Responding to anecdotal reports of missile-like objects being moved along Cuban roads under cover of darkness, such reconnaissance flights resumed on Oct. 14.

When the photos taken during that flight were reviewed, CIA analysts detected the presence of what they believed were medium-range ballistic missiles capable of hitting multiple targets in the United States.

Early on the morning of Oct. 16, 1962, National Security Adviser McGeorge Bundy showed the aerial photographs to Kennedy, thus marking the beginning of the 13-day Cuban missile crisis.

What Response Did the Joint Chiefs of Staff Recommend?

In the wake of the missile discovery, Kennedy called together a meeting of the nine members of the National Security Council along with five other key advisers.

They mulled a wide array of responses that the United States might take.

The options ranged from doing nothing or taking a diplomatic approach on up to an aerial assault on the missile sites coupled with a land-based attack on Cuba.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff advocated the most

hawkish approach to the dilemma, unanimously recommending a full-scale attack and invasion as the only real solution to the problem.

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This monument at San Cristobal in Cuba marks the site of a medium-range ballistic missile base

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE . . .

Greetings to all

I hope this letter finds everybody is doing well and looking forward to the fall weather.



Frank DiBello

We have been struggling this year trying to find suitable-affordable accommodations for our reunion in Nashville.

Many thanks goes out to Pete Hart, Pete Dromms, Frank Embrey and Richard Dedcovick (USS Moale DD-693) for stepping up and helping us find a suitable reunion site.

I would like to ask everyone in the future before you suggest a reunion site, that you do some research into the reunion site that you would like to go to.

We are having a very hard time this year

because of many obstacles ,i.e. the cost of hotels in Nashville are very high. The majority of hotels that have conference rooms, hospitality rooms and restaurants are cost prohibitive for our group. The majority of them will not allow us to bring in our own food, snacks, etc. especially alcohol beverages.

In order to help us keep the costs down, I am asking you to please check on the criteria we require before you suggest a location.

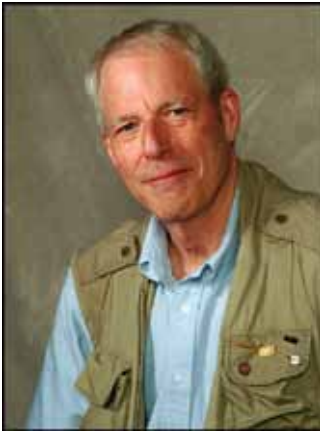
Some of the major criteria are:

1. Hotel location- do they have airport shuttles, shuttle service to local destinations, do they have handicap accessible rooms, do they have an in-house restaurant, do they have banquet facilities that can comfortably accommodate 100 people and a second room that can accommodate 80 people for the hospitality room and will they allow us to bring in our own food and drinks, do they have ample parking, and is there a charge for parking.

2. What sights and entertainment are available in the area.

3. Are there any military bases nearby, with a chapel for our memorial service - possibility of obtaining an honor guard for memorial service.

4. What transportation services are available for the memorial service and tours.



By Don Hayden TM3 (1961-62)

“This is not a drill, this is not a drill; General Quarters, General Quarters; All hands man your battle stations!”

After steaming around Cuba in what was to be later call the missile crisis by the same name, that phrase over the loud speaker got my adrenalin pumping.

I think I made it from my third division bunk beneath the mess deck to the torpedo deck and the mounts in record time.

The Sumner crew knew to be on the lookout for ships such as Russian trawlers, tankers and the like bound for Cuba with what could be nuclear missiles.

Fortunately none were found but the whole thing could have gone a different way.

In response to the failed Bay of Pigs Invasion of 1961 and the presence of American Jupiter ballistic missiles in Italy and Turkey, Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev agreed to Cuba’s request to place nuclear missiles on the island to deter a future invasion.

An agreement was reached during a secret meeting between Khrushchev and Fidel Castro in July 1962, and construction of a number of missile launch facilities started later that summer.

The 1962 United States elections were under

way, and the White House had for months denied charges that it was ignoring dangerous Soviet missiles 90 miles from Florida. The missile preparations were confirmed when an Air Force U-2 spy plane produced clear photographic evidence of medium-range (SS-4) and intermediate-range (R-14) ballistic missile facilities.

The US established a naval blockade on Oct. 22 to prevent further missiles from reaching Cuba; Oval Office tapes during the crisis revealed that Kennedy had also put the blockade in place as an attempt to provoke Soviet-backed forces in Berlin as well.

The US announced it would not permit offensive weapons to be delivered to Cuba and demanded that the weapons already in Cuba be dismantled and returned to the Soviet Union.

As late as the Oct. 21, the paramount concern being that once the blockade was put into effect, the Soviets would rush to complete some of the missiles.

Consequently, the US could find itself bombing operational missiles if blockade failed to force Khrushchev to remove the missiles already on the island.

On Oct. 25 at 1:45 am EDT, Kennedy responded to Khrushchev’s telegram by stating that the US was forced into action after receiving repeated assurances that no offensive missiles were being placed in Cuba, and when the assurances proved to be false, the deployment “required the responses I have announced. . . I hope that your government will take necessary action to permit a restoration of the earlier situation.”

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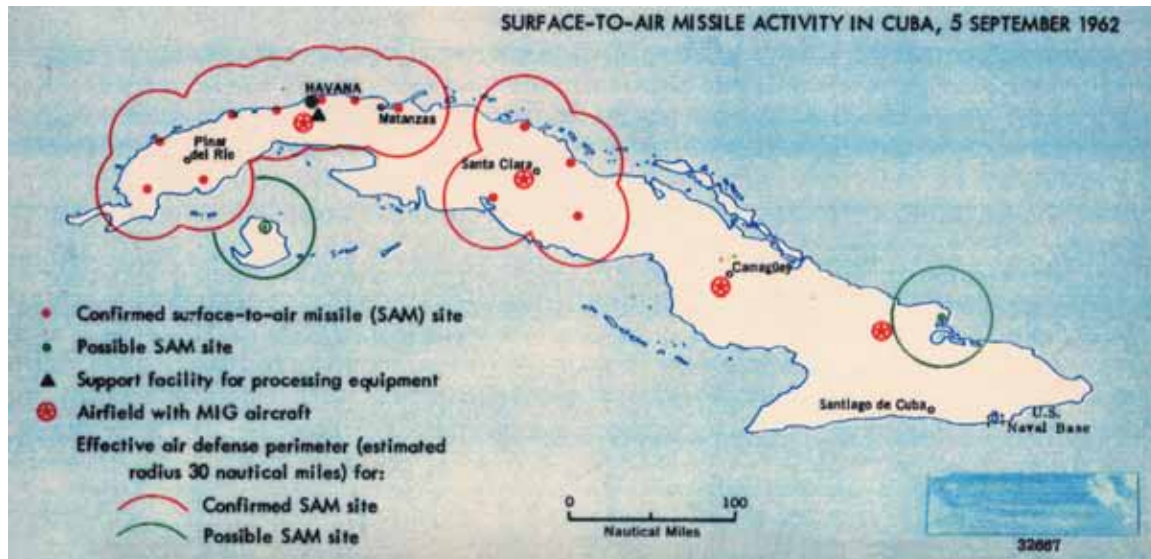
What Strategy Did JFK Decide to Follow?

Already burned by the disastrous Bay of Pigs invasion in April 1961, Kennedy was extremely wary of following the hawkish recommendations of his top military advisers.

He decided to adopt a more measured response to the Cuban missile threat, ordering a naval blockade of Cuba, designed to block and turn back any ship carrying offensive military equipment to

Confronted by two U.S. naval vessels (An Essex-Class Carrier and an Allen M. Sumner Class destroyer) on Oct. 25, the tanker continued to steam toward Cuba, and was allowed to do so by naval officers who in the end decided that it was unlikely the tanker contained offensive equipment.

Elsewhere, the situation continued to deteriorate. CIA surveillance indicated that work was continuing on the Cuban missile sites, and on October 27, a U-2 spy plane was shot down over Cuba.



the island nation.

In his Oct. 22 nationwide address, he announced the blockade and also stated that it would henceforth be U.S. policy “to regard any nuclear missile launched from Cuba against any nation in the Western Hemisphere as an attack by the Soviet Union on the United States. . . .”

How Was the Crisis Finally Resolved?

In the immediate wake of Kennedy’s announcements, some Soviet ships bound for Cuba appeared to turn around and head back to their home ports. Not so for one Soviet tanker named the Bucharest.

Kennedy authorized the U.S. military to prepare for a possible attack on Cuba. In the meantime, Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev said his country would remove the missiles from Cuba if the United States would remove its missiles from Turkey and Italy.

Just when it seemed that the crisis would end in conflict, the U.S. and Soviet Union struck an accord under which the latter would dismantle its missiles in Cuba in return for a U.S. pledge not to invade the island.

Continued on next page

Secretly, the United States also pledged to remove its offensive missiles in Turkey and southern Italy, but because this part of the deal remained secret, to the world at large it seemed as if the U.S. had bested the Soviets in striking this accord.

When all offensive missiles and Ilyushin Il-28 light bombers had been withdrawn from Cuba, the blockade was formally ended on Nov. 21, 1962.

The negotiations between the United States and the Soviet Union pointed out the necessity of a quick, clear, and direct communication line between Washington and Moscow.

As a result, the Moscow–Washington hotline was established.

A series of agreements reduced US–Soviet tensions for several years until both parties began to build their nuclear arsenal even further.

Edit Desk

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aerial reconnaissance proved that the Soviets were making progress in removing the missile systems. The 42 missiles and their support equipment were loaded onto eight Soviet ships.

On Nov. 2, 1962, Kennedy addressed the US via radio and television broadcasts regarding the dismantlement process of the Soviet R-12 missile bases located in the Caribbean region. The ships left Cuba on Nov. 5 to 9.

The US made a final visual check as each of the ships passed the blockade line. Further diplomatic efforts were required to remove the Soviet Il-28 bombers, and they were loaded on three Soviet ships on Dec. 5 and 6.

Concurrent with the Soviet commitment on the Il-28s, the US government announced the end of the blockade from 6:45 pm EST on Nov. 20, 1962.

At the time when the Kennedy administration thought that the Cuban Missile Crisis was

resolved, nuclear tactical rockets stayed in Cuba since they were not part of the Kennedy-Khrushchev understandings and the Americans did not know about them.

The Soviets changed their minds, fearing possible future Cuban militant steps, and on Nov. 22, 1962, Deputy Premier of the Soviet Union Anastas Mikoyan told Castro that the rockets with the nuclear warheads were being removed as well.

In his negotiations with the Soviet Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin, Robert Kennedy informally proposed that the Jupiter missiles in Turkey would be removed “within a short time after this crisis was over.”

The last US missiles were disassembled by April 24, 1963, and were flown out of Turkey soon afterward.

The practical effect of the Kennedy-Khrushchev Pact was that the US would remove their rockets from Italy and Turkey and that the Soviets had no intention of resorting to nuclear war if they were out-gunned by the US.

Because the withdrawal of the Jupiter missiles from NATO bases in Italy and Turkey was not made public at the time, Khrushchev appeared to have lost the conflict and become weakened

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*By
Pete
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