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John F. Kennedy's 1962 Cabinet

John Fitzgerald Kennedy, the thirty-fifth President of the United States, encountered an array of both domestic and international issues during his presidency. However, the most pressing issue that the President faced was the Cold War struggle between two nuclear giants: the United States and the Soviet Union. Throughout the extent of the Cold War, the United States and the Soviet Union built up their power to such a magnitude that a single spark in either nation could have ignited a conflagration that would have brought doom upon the entire world. In Southeast Asia, American foreign policy faced questions regarding the extent of its intervention on behalf of anti-communism when it attempted to reinforce a minority Laotian government and struggled to assist the newly formed Vietnamese government. The United States and Soviet Union neared nuclear war as events during 1962 in Cuba threatened to end humanity.

Working closely with President Kennedy on these issues were:

Lyndon B. Johnson, Vice President, was, as Kennedy promised, an active partner. Johnson attended National Security Council meetings and was chairman of the National Aeronautics and Space Council that led Kennedy's space program.

Dean Rusk, Secretary of State, played the devil's advocate by emphasizing a slow, cautious approach. Often warned the NSC not to form hasty conclusions. However, he often sided with the more radical and forceful approaches on foreign policy.

Robert McNamara, Secretary of Defense, became a close, trusted advisor to President Kennedy. President Kennedy relied on McNamara to control the military leadership. McNamara made up in logical analysis what he lacked in political skills. He contributed reasoning ability to the NSC.

Robert F. Kennedy, Attorney General, was the brother and closest advisor of President John of Kennedy. Robert Kennedy unlike other Attorneys General attended National Security Council meetings. He became the Attorney General at 35 and always harbored higher aspirations.

John A McCone, CIA Director, restored the CIA's relationship with President Kennedy. However, his personal relationship with the president was unstable because of McCone's public references to President Kennedy's erroneous judgments in Cuba. Also, McCone was the dissenter on US policy in Vietnam.

General Lyman L. Lemnitzer, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, was more aggressive than most civilian members of the NSC. General Lemnitzer understood the military and nuclear superiority of the United States and advocated forceful approaches to foreign policy.

McGeorge Bundy, National Security Advisor, was a special advisor and friend of President Kennedy. Bundy also played the role of the devil's advocate in NSC meetings, and his changes in opinion frustrated the President. Yet, he was highly valued as an advisor by Kennedy.

J. William Fulbright, Chairman of Senate Foreign Relations Committee, was one of the dissenters to the Bay of Pigs invasion and integral to United States' participation in the UN. He was the only Senator to vote against an appropriation for the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, which was chaired by Senator Joseph R. McCarthy

Adlai Stevenson, US Delegate to the United Nations, ran for the Presidency in 1952 and 1956 as a liberal Democrat. Stevenson brought his diplomatic skills to the National Security Council as well as the views of other countries.

J. Edgar Hoover, Director of FBI, was one of the most powerful officials in the federal government of the United States for nearly 50 years. As head of the (FBI) from 1924 until his death in 1972, he was feared by elected officials because of his intimate knowledge about politicians and government operations.

The Space Race

The Cold War struggle can be seen from the space race between the US and USSR. On October 4, 1957, the Soviet Union launched Sputnik, a 184 pound aluminum ball, into orbit around the Earth. Despite its small size, Sputnik caused an explosion of international interest in space. Its effect on the United States was tremendous: the United States was nowhere near being able to launch a satellite. Over the next several years, the Soviet Union and the United States competed against each other in what has come to be known as the Space Race. The two most influential leaders during this period were President John F. Kennedy of the United States and Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev. Both men promoted the space programs of his country and inspired the programs to greater heights.

By 1961 the United States was still noticeably behind in the space race. The Soviet Union launched the first man into space on April 12, 1961. Cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin spent nearly two hours in orbit aboard Vostok 1 and instantly became an international hero. While the Soviets were celebrating another jump ahead in the space race, the United States was struggling to catch up.

United States President John F. Kennedy realized the importance of developing space technology at a rapid pace. During his campaign he made frequent mention of the “New Frontier” which demanded new thinking and new technology. Throughout his first year in office he made strides to ensure the future of the American space program. He stated after Gagarin’s flight that no one was more tired than he of seeing the United States second to the Soviet Union in the space race. He also said that he thought that “the news will be worse before it is better, and it will be some time before we catch up.”

Kennedy also worked on organizing NASA (the National Aeronautics and Space Administration) during his first few months in office. He appointed a new administrator of NASA in February and also appointed a consultant to the Senate Committee on Aeronautical and Space Sciences. Kennedy also ordered a review of all NASA activities in order to find out more about what was

going on and what needed funding.

The United States finally sent its first astronaut into orbit on May 5, 1961. Alan Shepard flew a suborbital flight for 15 minutes aboard the first of the Mercury mission spacecraft, Freedom 7. Although this helped to boost American morale, it did not provide the push needed to bring the Americans closer to the Soviets in the space race.

President Kennedy, impressed by the enthusiastic American response to Shepard’s flight, asked

Vice President Lyndon Johnson to collect information from NASA about how the United States could get ahead in the space race in May. NASA answered that a lunar landing would be the deciding victory. Kennedy presented a special message to Congress on urgent national needs at the beginning of his term, and he introduced a startling new national goal. "First, I believe that this nation should commit itself, before this decade is out, of landing a man on the moon and returning him safely to the earth." Kennedy requested an additional \$531 million to help accelerate the space program towards this goal. More than 400,000 people worked towards bringing a man to the moon. Kennedy's famous challenge to land a man on the moon was one of the most important actions in his presidency.

The American space program really began to take off after Kennedy's national challenge. The Mercury program was the series of launches that took place during Kennedy's presidency. The missions were designed to gather information about the ability of a human to survive and work in space. Virgil "Gus" Grissom became the second American to fly in space on the second Mercury mission aboard the Liberty Bell 7. He was launched on July 21, 1961 and remained in space for 15 minutes and 15 seconds.

Meanwhile, the Soviet Union continued to launch cosmonauts into orbit. Gherman Titov became the first man to spend a full day in space about Vostok 2 on August 6, 1961. Through this the Soviets proved not only that they had no trouble sending men into space, but that they were capable of keeping them there for extended periods of time.

The next two space missions were American. John Glenn became the first American to orbit the Earth on February 20, 1962 during the third Mercury mission aboard Friendship 7. He spent a total of five hours in space. Malcolm Scott Carpenter flew the fourth Mercury mission on Aurora 7 which was launched on May 24, 1962.

The Soviet Union launched two cosmonauts within a day of each other in August of 1961.

Andrian Nikolayev flew Vostok 3 on August 11 and remained in space for 94 and a half hours.

His “partner” Pavel Papovich was launched on Vostok 4 on August 12 and remained in space for 71 hours. They flew within three miles of each other.

President Kennedy continued promoting the American involvement in the space race during 1962. At a speech at Rice University he stated that “the exploration of space will go ahead, whether we join it or not, and it is one of the great adventures of all time, and no nation which expects to the leader of other nations can expect to stay behind in the race for space.” Kennedy believed that the United States was seen as a world leader and that in order to maintain that status it was necessary to lead the space race.

The last two missions of the Mercury program were basically extended time periods of the other missions. Mercury 5 was launched on October 3, 1962. Walter Schirra, Jr. orbited the Earth six times in 9 hours and 13 minutes aboard Sigma 7. Astronaut Gordon Cooper, Jr. was launched in Faith 7 on May 15, 1963 and stayed in orbit for 34 and a half hours. The next NASA program, Gemini, did not begin until a year later. The Mercury programs attained the necessary data about living in space that would eventually allow the United States to land Apollo 11 on the moon in 1969.

The final space mission during Kennedy’s administration was another double Soviet launch.

Lieutenant Colonel Bykovsky was launched aboard Vostok 5 on June 14, 1963 and performed the longest solo flight in space history by staying in space for 119 hours and six minutes.

Valentina Tereshkova became the first woman to fly in space on June 15 when she was launched on Vostok 6. She was also the first nonmilitary personnel or scientist to go into space. She remained in space for 71 hours.

Between 1961 and 1963 the United States competed against the Soviet Union for the lead in the space race. At the end of that period the Soviet Union was still significantly ahead of the United States. However, the United States would eventually pull ahead by landing on the moon in 1969. President John F. Kennedy played a major role in the development of the American space program by promoting the goal of landing on the moon by the end of the decade. In the end, it was that challenge which brought the United States ahead.

SOUTHEAST ASIA

On January 20, 1961, in his inaugural address, John F. Kennedy declared to America: “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, in order to assure the survival and the success of liberty.” These words strongly defined the feelings of the American people as President Kennedy stepped into office in 1961. In his speech Kennedy gave a very subtle promise to, not only the nation, but also the entire world. He summed up in his first few moments as president the American duty on an international level: to liberate any nation who wanted to be free, particularly those wishing to escape the growing dominance of communism. And so, determined to fulfill his inaugural promise, Kennedy spent his three years in office extremely involved in the foreign affairs of the United States. However, his actions in far-off lands like Vietnam, at a time when the country was not directly linked to a war, are often times forgotten. Instead, these major events are defined by people, like Presidents Johnson and Nixon, who were a part of the “direct military intervention stage” of the American – Vietnamese conflict. However, these events were greatly determined by actions that occurred long before the actual crisis. After all, Americans had worked to effect change in Vietnam since 1945, when Vietnam was a colony of the French and occupied by the Japanese. Therefore, the decisions Kennedy made regarding international

policy had profound impacts on the enormous conflict that arose during Johnson's presidency and beyond.

When Kennedy stepped into office, he brought with him a new and different stance on foreign affairs, changing much of Eisenhower's policy. Overall, Kennedy wanted to have the flexibility for a case-by-case analysis of foreign conflicts. At the very beginning of his term, Kennedy quickly narrowed the broad spectrum of foreign issues to the four he considered most prevalent: the crises in Laos, Cuba, the Congo, and Berlin. The first of these crises to arise was the Laotian conflict, which occurred within the first months of his presidency. With the Laos crisis, many questions about American policy in Southeast Asia arose regarding how exactly far the United States should intervene on behalf of anti-communism. The lack of answers to these essential questions would serve as an ominous threat, foreshadowing what was to come later in Vietnam.

In 1954, Laos gained full independence through the Geneva Agreements. However, this security quickly came to an end when civil war broke out between two factions, one led by Prince Souvanna Phouma and the other led by the Pathet Lao. The moderate group led by Phouma was the more recognized form of government and advocated a neutralist form of government. The left wing Pathet Lao, on the other hand, were led by Souvanna's brother, Souphanouvong and drew communist support from the Vietminh and China. In 1957, the Vientiane Agreement set up a coalition government that also soon collapsed. It was then, in 1960, that Gen Phoumi Nosavan established a pro-western, right wing government under the leadership of Prince Boun Gum. By this time, however, Laos had deteriorated into utter chaos and at the brink of a full-scale civil war. This concerned the United States because, with rise of the Pathet Lao, along with its North Vietnamese forces, could possibly mean the communization of Laos. The United States supported the Boun Oum, but was in the minority. This placed Kennedy and his administration

in a tough position, because, on one hand, it was the United States duty to protect little Laos from the vicious jaws of communism. However, the solutions were few. After all, there was no single alternative noncommunist government for Laos to turn to, because so many different parties and leaders existed. Therefore any replacement government most likely would not be very stable and the prospects of its success were not optimistic. Furthermore, on an international level, the United States did not want to offend its allies in the anti-communism strife like England and France who fully supported Souvanna Phouma.

Although he did not approve of it himself, Kennedy was under much pressure from most of his Joint Chiefs, along with his Deputy National Security Adviser Walt Rostow, whose general consensus was military intervention in Laos. Even the Laos Task Force, lead by Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs J. Graham Parsons, suggested increasing American forces and using various military tactics to restore the Boun Oum government. These views were even joined by Kennedy's Secretary of State, Dean Rusk, who thought America should use its South East Asian Treaty Organization (SEATO) forces against the expansion of communism. Yet, Kennedy was wary of "the unsatisfactory military situation, the geographic propinquity of Laos to the Communist bloc and the unsatisfactory internal and international situation." He believed that military intervention should be used as a final option. Kennedy made it clear that his only goal was to see that Laos becomes "a peaceful country – an independent country not dominated by either side but concerned with the life of the people within the country." Still, however, the majority American government saw that the best way to obtain this goal was through military action.

The United States ambassador to Laos, Winthrop Brown, however, saw matters differently. When he met with Kennedy for consultation on the issue, he made it clear that he doubted any

problems would be solved military action alone. Instead, he endorsed a plan for cease-fire, where, in a neutral atmosphere, the three Laotian factions could declare a national coalition and achieve Laotian neutrality. Kennedy, who even before his meeting with Brown was skeptical about any military intervention, was very much influenced by this idea. At a White House meeting on February 8th he denied requests to send American troops into Thailand, but instead pushed diplomatic correspondence with the Soviet Union in hopes of arranging an agreement where Souvanna could join forces with the Boun Oum government.

This method, however, appeared extremely doubtful when the Soviet Union responded by reiterating its belief in Souvanna as the rightful government of Laos and calling another Geneva conference. There, the fourteen members, Laos, Russia, Britain, France, Communist China, North Vietnam, Thailand, Burma, India, Canada, Poland, and the United States, would confirm or condemn the Soviet assumption. This posed a huge problem for the United States, who would be incredibly outnumbered in its fight for neutrality at the conference. Defense Secretary McNamara's military options were looking more and more likely possibilities for a solution.

However, President Kennedy's middle ground policy surprisingly impacted Nikita Khrushchev of the Soviet Union whose influence resulted in a peaceful meeting between both Phoumi and Souvanna. There, some progress was made when both were in favor of the neutrality of Laos. However, any immediate coalition was delayed. This made Kennedy's secretary of state, Dean Rusk, very suspicious of Souvanna's possible stalling for time to prepare a Pathet Lao attack. In the end, Kennedy was finally led to the United States decision in moving cautiously forward by sending SEATO troops to Thailand and reinforcing Phoumi's army.

Throughout this entire period, these decisions and actions affected the entire nation. As president, Kennedy played a large role in increasing public awareness of Southeast Asian issues.

At a televised press conference on March 23, 1961 he alerted the nation of the growing Laos conflict. Kennedy made it very clear that the United States would stand firm against communism by threatening SEATO military action including the stationing of the Seventh Fleet and 500 marines to Thailand in preparation. In his speech to the public, he made it clear that he sought neutrality, as defined in the 1954 Geneva accords, for Laos and demanded that this neutrality be protected and defended by the United States. He also evoked the support of the American people by reaffirming the danger of a communist domino effect, stating, “the security of all Southeast Asia will be endangered if Laos loses its neutral independence.” As tensions heightened, the military presence also increased. However, the United States could not obtain as much military support as it had hoped from countries like England and France, also present at the Geneva Conference. Thus fears among the American leaders about the conference continued to escalate. Even if they were successful in creating a coalition government, few believed that Souvanna would uphold a neutral coalition government or agree to be policed by the International Control Commission (ICC). They believed any neutrality led by Souvanna would really be communist. Ultimately, through the Laotian conflict, The United States learned the difficulty of forging diplomatic relations. This attitude would further enhance the push for military action when crises arose in Vietnam.

The Vietnamese conflict stems far back before American involvement began. As one of the most ancient nations on earth, Vietnam’s history extends back well before the Common Era. In 111 BC, the Chinese Han Dynasty conquered the Red River Delta, in what would become North Vietnam. Over a millennium later, in 939 CE, Vietnam succeeded in obtaining independence. During the next 900 years, Vietnam gradually expanded its borders southward, to include the fertile Mekong Delta. Except for this expansion, the nation was relatively uninvolved in foreign

affairs. Vietnam's isolation from the world ended in 1858, when France began its conquest of Vietnam. By 1885, the Colonial power had successfully annexed the entire kingdom. However, by the start of World War II a generation of French-educated Vietnamese, led by Ho Chi Minh, formed the anti-colonial coalition known as Viet Minh. Japan, assisted by the collaborative French Government, sapped the resources of Vietnam, leading to the starvation of 1.5 to two million civilians in the first months of 1945. As the Japanese were defeated in Asia, the Viet Minh started to hope that true independence would follow.

After 1961, Kennedy focused little on Vietnam until the summer of 1963, for the conflict there seemed to pale in comparison to conflicts elsewhere. Kennedy, along with his closest advisors, concluded that Vietnam was a military matter. Kennedy strongly approved of Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara and allowed the Defense Department to take control of the Vietnam issue with no protest. The decision to regard Vietnam as a primarily military concern was most likely a mistake, and affected how it was dealt with by the administration. McNamara and his contemporaries favored high-level involvement above small, counterinsurgent groups, and failed to realize that the guerrillas were village peasants, regarding them instead as Northern invaders. Thus, all American involvement in Vietnam failed to focus sufficiently on social and economic reforms, and counterinsurgency was hardly attempted. Kennedy also chose Frederick Nolting as ambassador to Saigon. Nolting had almost no knowledge of Asia or civil war, and regarded Vietnam with a European anti-Communist perspective.

Few involved in the early decision making process were willing to regard the problem as having to do with Diem's leadership, and the traditional containment doctrine was followed. This included financing twenty thousand additional troops in Diem's army, which with over two hundred fifty thousand regulars already far overshadowed the estimated twelve thousand Vietcong. Kennedy also failed to take the advice of Eisenhower's ambassador to Saigon, Elbridge Durbrow, which would require Diem to institute democratic reforms in exchange for

increased assistance. Kennedy instead attempted to increase Diem's confidence in the United States and willingly offered support.

The assistance did little to help Diem, who was grossly mismanaging his military forces, and by September 1962 Diem's power continued to erode, and the Northern forces essentially had control of the countryside. Kennedy sent military advisor General Maxwell Taylor and Walter Rostow to Vietnam in December, and they advised escalating American involvement, including instating eight to ten thousand American combat troops, as well as more advisors, money, technical assistance and helicopter units. Diem was wary of direct United States involvement, saying that "Vietnam did not want to be a protectorate", and Kennedy found himself increasingly involved and increasingly at odds with Saigon.

The most controversial aspect of Taylor and Rostow's recommendation was the involvement of American troops. McNamara felt that the number was insufficient, and forty thousand troops should be involved. On the other hand, others felt that no American troops should be involved in light of Diem's already staggering numerical advantage. Defense Undersecretary Roswell Gilpatric concluded, "if this is equality, the United States would hardly be safe against the Sioux." Kennedy went with his instinctive feeling that American troops should not be directly involved, and resisted instating troops at the time.

The increased level of American involvement seemed to turn the tide in Diem's favor by late 1961. Helicopters proved extremely effective, as they often frightened the Vietcong, who ran away. Kennedy approved the adoption of a strategic-hamlet plan, which was gain the support of the village population and keep them from Communist control. It attempted to arm the villagers, provide self government, and institute medical services, schools and land reforms. The strategic-hamlet plan may have been successful, but Diem placed his brother Ngo Dinh Nhu in charge. Nhu exaggerated statistics, and only twenty percent of the eighty six hundred hamlets claimed by Nhu met United States standards. The Northern forces overran most within a year, and captured thousands of American weapons. Nhu also failed to carry out the required social, political and economic reforms, and money allotted for these purposes never reached the peasants.

Militarily, the effort was also proving less successful. The Vietcong had learned how to shoot at the helicopters, and South Vietnamese commanders often failed to press an advantage such as in Ap Bac in January 1963 when commanders refused to attack a trapped Vietcong battalion despite a four to one advantage and significantly more firepower.

Opposition to Kennedy's Vietnam program arose despite glowing reports from McNamara and his contemporaries. A small but significant group of young reporters published criticism of Kennedy's plans in several influential papers across the country. Internal criticism also arose, questioning the wisdom of United States involvement because of Diem's already staggering numerical advantage, as well as the strategic importance of Vietnam, the validity of the struggle in the space age, the validity of the domino theory, and the possibility that the United States would simply replace France as the colonial force in Vietnam.

Despite criticism, Kennedy remained cautiously optimistic regarding Vietnam until the spring of 1963. By that time, tensions between Diem and the American government had grown, for Diem and Nhu wanted the number of American advisors in Vietnam drastically reduced. Diem was meeting with the NLF and Hanoi to seek a possible solution of a neutral South Vietnam with no American involvement. Kennedy, in light of these things, said the journalist Charles Bartlett that "we don't have a prayer of staying in Vietnam... These people hate us. They are going to throw our tails out... But I can't give up a piece of territory like that to the Communists and then get the American people to reelect me." Conflict with Diem only grew in the spring of 1963 when Diem placed a ban on the flying of Buddhist flags during Buddha's birthday celebration, prompting ten thousand Buddhists to gather in protest, which Diem put down with clubs and armed fire. This provoked charges that Diem was persecuting Buddhists, the largest religious group in Vietnam. Diem blamed the violence on the Vietcong and refused to make concessions. By mid-August, after continued missteps by Diem, the possibility of an American supported coup was very real.

Henry Cabot Lodge, the new American ambassador to Saigon, received feelers from a group of generals who sought to overthrow Diem. Several key officials in the Kennedy administration wrote a telegram to Lodge saying that Nhu must be removed, otherwise the United States must

“face the possibility that Diem himself cannot be preserved.” Kennedy approved the telegram over the phone, and it was sent, but many who should have been closely involved, including McNamara and CIA director John McCone, were never told of the telegram. Once it was learned that it had been sent, conflict arose within the administration over the Southern leader as well as the strategic-hamlet program, the mixed military results, the lack of clarity in long-term military goals, and the question of whether the conflict was chiefly political or military. It soon became very clear that Kennedy’s Vietnam policy was swiftly deteriorating.

The possibility of a coup ended on August 31 when General Duon Van Minh, the coup leader, called it off in light of United States reluctance and failure to gain several key generals. The Kennedy administration was forced to reevaluate the Vietnam policy, and Kennedy sent out several fact-finding missions to determine the exact nature of the situation in Vietnam. Even these missions were unsuccessful, for those that went had extremely different, often opposing views from one another, and the reports that Kennedy received often contradicted each other.

The Kennedy administration was again approached by General Minh with the possibility of a coup, and the White House made it clear that it did “not wish to stimulate a coup” but wouldn’t “thwart” one, either. It was also asserted that the United States would not deny military and economic assistance to any new regime that would cooperate with US forces. Even with these claims, the Kennedy administration still wavered on whether a coup was truly wise, and simply allowed events in Vietnam to take their course.

On November 1, 1963, a junta of senior military officers overthrew Diem and Nhu and they were executed three weeks prior to Kennedy’s death. When Kennedy heard this news, he was dismayed, as he clearly wished Diem’s life to be spared. Once Diem was removed, it was clear that the military effort was not succeeding, and Hanoi took the opportunity to increase forces in the South. The removal of Diem did very little, and the Kennedy administration had encouraged a coup without fully considering the consequences. Kennedy saw the only choice as to stick with Vietnam, and publicly professed to do so, tying the United States closer to Vietnam.

Kennedy may have only reaffirmed American commitment to Vietnam in order to keep opposition down in an election year. It is impossible to say what he would have done had he not been assassinated, but Kennedy's commitment led to commitment from his successors and increased American involvement in the Vietnam conflict which proved impossible to win. Incorrect assessment of the situation in Vietnam, misinformation, conflict within Kennedy's administration, the ineptitude of Ngo Dinh Diem, and the lack of support from the South Vietnamese people all helped assure that Vietnam was not a conflict which Kennedy could easily address, or one which he could solve. Overall, the presidency of John F. Kennedy was not responsible for the massive troop callups of the latter half of the decade. However, he did escalate the conflict, through his use of covert methods, as well as his implementation of largely useless advisory groups. His policies were shaped by NSAM 111, a document which led to a disastrous year in 1962. Although cheated partially by his intelligence and military advisors, Kennedy's actions indicate a clear lack of coherence on the Vietnam question.

CUBA

Cuba, called by Theodore Sorensen, President Kennedy's speech writer, the "Achilles heel" of the President, could not be ignored by the Kennedy Administration. It worried President Kennedy because of its proximity to the mainland United States, its ties with the Soviet Union, and the failure of the Eisenhower Administration to prevent Cuba from becoming a Communist nation. When John F. Kennedy became president on January 20, 1961, the United States government had already broken diplomatic relations with Fidel Castro's Communist government. Furthermore, Congress had authorized President Eisenhower to take retaliatory action against Cuba for the seizure of American companies and assets by the communist regime.

Bay of Pigs Invasion

The CIA-planned invasion of the island to be undertaken by exiled Cubans was the first Cuban crisis of the Kennedy Administration. The decision to approve the invasion was made by

President Kennedy in order to remove Fidel Castro from power and reestablish a Cuban government which would be friendly to the US. President Kennedy pledged that the Castro government would soon be overthrown. However, publicly President Kennedy denied that any invasion was being planned.

As part of his approval, President Kennedy requested a change in the landing site. The original landing site was Trinidad, a resort town where the population would be friendly to an invasion force and where the invaders could take refuge in the Escambray mountains if anything went wrong. President Kennedy disapproved of Trinidad because it was a popular resort, and an invasion there would be headline grabbing. Kennedy worried that if the invasion failed, then the whole world would see him personally as a failure.

The Bay of Pigs was then selected by the CIA. It was a disadvantageous landing site because it was surrounded by swamps, the water was underlain by coral, and a tall complex of apartments stood on the beach. However, it was obscure. At a press conference on April 12, 1961, Kennedy said "there will not be, under any circumstances, an intervention in Cuba by the United States armed forces." Having made this statement, President Kennedy decided to withhold air support when the invading force landed at the Bay of Pigs. Furthermore, Castro's agents were reporting all the preparations to Castro, who ordered floodlights to be installed on top of the apartment complex to illuminate the beach.

The invasion began two days after Cuban air bases were bombed on April 15, 1961 when 1500-2500 American-trained Cubans landed at the Bay of Pigs. The invaders were outnumbered by Castro's army, lacked air support, were unable to reinforce with new Cuban recruits, and were surprised by the lights in the middle of the night. Over 1400 of the invaders were captured and imprisoned.

The failure of the invasion has often been blamed on the suspension of air strikes by President Kennedy on April 16, 1961. This allowed the Cuban air force to remain intact and a force in the battle to come. Kennedy was also blamed for not providing air cover on the day of the invasion. Without the air cover and support the invaders on an exposed beach were left to be slaughtered by Cuban army helicopters.

When asked by former President Eisenhower why he withheld the needed air support, President Kennedy said that he wanted to keep the world from discovering the American support in this affair. Eisenhower answered, "How could you expect the world to believe we had nothing to do with it? Where did these people get the ships to go from Central America to Cuba? Where did they get the weapons?" However, the CIA concluded that the mistake was an assumption that the invasion would be met with strong support from the Cuban people, but the support never materialized.

The operation was a "perfect failure" in that almost everything went wrong. This fiasco caused the newly elected administration of President Kennedy to look weak, and President Kennedy took full responsibility for the failed mission. The captured prisoners (1,113) were released in December, 1962 by Fidel Castro in exchange for \$53 million in food and medicine raised by private donations in the United States.

Operation Mongoose

As a result of the failure of the Bay of Pigs invasion, the Kennedy Administration began Operation Mongoose that had a target date of October 1962 to overthrow Castro by undermining him and by encouraging insurrection. The goal of the operation, as stated by Brig. Gen. Edward Lansdale, the chief of the operation, was to "help the people of Cuba overthrow the Communist regime from within Cuba and institute a new government with which the United States can live

in peace." Lansdale also secured top-level recognition that any successful overthrow of Castro would require overt US military aid.

Operation Mongoose immediately fell behind schedule and faced many questions about the likelihood of its success. Brigadier General Lansdale had wanted to receive a guarantee of US military intervention if it was needed, but he was unable to solicit such a guarantee. Lansdale believed that if the insurrection that the operation was attempting to inspire would occur and request US military support, then this support should be granted. President Kennedy answered that planning should continue on the basis that overt US military forces may be needed to complete the overthrow of Fidel Castro, but did not guarantee military intervention. Operation Mongoose seemed to be floundering in its planning stages and losing time while the Soviet Union poured more and more resources into Cuba, allowing the Cuban defense forces to strengthen daily.

Agents, as part of Operation Mongoose, contaminated Cuban sugar exports, sabotaged Cuban production and industry, increased espionage, began guerrilla warfare and raiding campaigns, and even attempted a failed plot to poison Castro. This plot failed when the poisonous pill did not dissolve properly. As part of the guerrilla warfare plans, exiled Cuban student groups, residing in the US, launched raids from the US with the help of the CIA in August, 1962.

However, these raids were soon overshadowed by the discovery that Soviet missile technicians were in Cuba, that Soviets had begun shipping missile parts to Cuba, and that the Soviet Union was constructing missile sites and launchers which were to be in control of Soviet military personnel just 90 miles from the coast of Florida.

Cuban Missile Crisis

The shipping of the missile parts and construction of the missile launchers were also precipitated by the failure of the Bay of Pigs invasion. The invasion strengthened the position of Cuba in requesting military aid from the Soviet Union. Premier Khrushchev concluded that if President Kennedy had approved a covert invasion when Kennedy had denied invasion plans numerous times in public, then the US was now busy preparing for an all-out, overt, military invasion of Cuba because President Kennedy was no longer denying such plans. Khrushchev hypothesized that such an attack would occur before the end of 1962 but probably after the November congressional elections.

In May 1962, Khrushchev discussed the benefits of placing nuclear missiles in Cuba with other Soviet diplomats. After more discussions in late May, the Soviet government introduced a plan to send 24 medium-range ballistic missile (MRBM) launchers as well as 16 intermediate-range ballistic missile (IRBM) launchers. Premier Nikita Khrushchev had promised in 1960 to defend Cuba with Soviet arms and now had ordered the installation of medium- and intermediate-range ballistic missiles in Cuba. Khrushchev also saw the missiles in Cuba as a way to reduce the strategic nuclear superiority of the United States and enhance Soviet prestige. These missiles would allow Khrushchev to narrow the gap in US and Soviet nuclear capabilities.

The gap in nuclear capabilities between the USSR and US to hit the opponent's mainland was significant. The US military had the ability to use 129 ICBM (Inter-Continental) launchers to 44 ICBM launchers for the Soviets, 1300 strategic heavy bombers to 155 nuclear-capable bombers for the Soviet Union, and 105 MRBM/IRBM (medium/intermediate-range) launchers in Turkey, Britain, and Italy to none for the Soviets. The Soviets were attempting to install 40 such MRBM/IRBM launchers in Cuba to narrow this nuclear capability gap between the superpowers.

In late May, a delegation of Soviet diplomats and several military experts met with Fidel Castro with regard to an increase of nuclear missiles in Cuba. The delegation expressed its fears of a potential American strike on Cuba and declared its intent to ship additional military supplies to Cuba. Fidel, along with his brother Raul, the Cuban Secretary of Defense, gladly accepted the Russian delegation's offer. Both sides agreed that the shipment should be accomplished covertly. A Cuban delegation headed by Raul Castro arrived in Russia on July 2 to discuss the details of sending more arms to Cuba. Under a formal agreement, the two sides decided that the servicing of the missiles would be completely controlled by the Soviet military command. Upon Raul's return to Cuba on July 17, he informed the Cuban people that there would be no more internal uprisings and that there was no fear of an American attack. Raul concluded, "We can now repel." The American government first learned of the presence of Soviet missiles in Cuba in late August. Reports indicated that Soviet SA-2 surface-to-air missile (SAM) sites and Soviet aircraft had been identified. On August 10, John McCone, Director of the CIA, informed the President that MRBM's were headed towards Cuba. At a meeting on August 10, McCone stated that he believed that the Soviet Union sent nuclear missiles to Cuba for the purpose of constructing offensive missile installations. Secretary of State Dean Rusk and Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara disagreed with McCone and said that they believed that the build up of military weapons was completely defensive.

On August 23, President Kennedy called for a meeting of the National Security Council (NSC) to address McCone's concerns. Kennedy decided to handle the situation by planning another counter insurgency attack to deal with the build up of Soviet arms in Cuba. National Security Action Memorandum Number 181 formalized Kennedy's plans. In addition, Kennedy asked the

Defense department to consider removing American nuclear missiles from Turkey to influence the Soviet Union to halt the build up of military equipment in Cuba.

The American government received visual verification of Cuban missile bases on August 29 after obtaining pictures take by a U-2 surveillance plane. The photographs indicated the presence of SA-2 missile sites at 8 separate locations. President Kennedy and his advisors initially felt that these sites were of no concern to national security.

On September 4, Robert Kennedy met with Soviet diplomat Anatoly Dobrynin, who reassured the Attorney General that no surface-to-surface missiles or offensive weapons would be sent to Cuba. Robert relayed this information to President Kennedy and suggested that the United States make clear that it will not allow the shipment of offensive weapons to Cuba. At a news conference, President Kennedy warned that if Cuba “should ever attempt to export its aggressive purposes by force... 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.” Kennedy added, “There is no evidence of any organized combat force in Cuba from any Soviet Bloc country; of military bases provided to Russia; of a violation of the 1934 treaty relating to Guantanamo; of the presence of offensive ground-to-ground missiles; or of other significant offensive capability... Were it otherwise the gravest issues would arise.”

In fact, the presence of offensive weapons on Cuban soil would justify a US attack on Cuba said Secretary of Defense McNamara in a meeting with the Joint Chiefs on October 2, 1962. As part of this meeting Secretary of Defense McNamara reported six circumstances that would justify a US attack on Cuba:

1. Soviet action against Western rights in Berlin.
2. Evidence that the Castro regime has permitted the positioning of [Soviet] bloc offensive weapons on Cuban soil or in Cuban harbors.

3. An attack against the Guantanamo naval base or against US planes or vessels outside Cuban territorial space or waters.
4. A substantial popular uprising in Cuba, the leaders of which request assistance [Mongoose]
5. Cuban armed assistance to subversion in other parts of the Western Hemisphere.
6. A decision by the President that the affairs in Cuba have reached a point inconsistent with continuing US national security.

The first MRBM's were delivered to Cuba on September 15 by the Poltava, a Soviet cargo ship.

The United States Intelligence Board (USIB) confirmed that MRBM's had been sent to Cuba from Russia and that the first missile site, located in San Cristóbal, was being constructed. The USIB's assessment, Special National Intelligence Estimate (SNIE) 85-3-62, reported that two Soviet lumber ships, the Omsk and the Poltava, had been sighted carrying military cargo. Also, the SNIE reported evidence of the construction of SA-2 air defense systems. SNIE 85-3-62 additionally noted that the Soviet Union "could derive considerable military advantage from the establishment of Soviet medium and intermediate range ballistic missiles in Cuba" yet concluded that "the establishment on Cuban soil of Soviet nuclear striking forces which could be used against the U.S. would be incompatible with Soviet policy as we presently estimate it... [and the Soviets] would almost certainly estimate that this could not be done without provoking a dangerous U.S. reaction."

Secretary McNamara met with the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) on October 1 to discuss the military buildup in Cuba and to provide a plan to prevent more nuclear supplies from being shipped to Cuba. McNamara instructed Admiral Robert Dennison to place a blockade around Cuba. Military leaders of both the U.S. Navy and the U.S. Air Force set up military supplies in order to prepare for a possible strike against Cuba.

Republican Senator Kenneth Keating was another voice that warned the public of the threat of Soviet missiles in Cuba. Keating sensed that Cuba was a political gold mine that the Republicans could exploit because of the failure of President Kennedy and the Bay of Pigs

invasion. Keating began his first "Cuba campaign" in April, 1961, calling on President Kennedy to make more energetic efforts to overthrow Fidel Castro. However, Cuba quickly faded from the public view during the Berlin crisis.

Keating began his second "Cuba campaign" during the summer of 1962. In a senate speech, Keating asked, "How long will it be before the Soviet Union establishes military bases and missile launching sites in Cuba?" Keating claimed that he had five sources that informed him of a Soviet buildup in Cuba. The sources, most likely Cuban émigrés, naval officers at Guantanamo, and military/CIA intelligence officers, stated that Soviet troops and technicians were being deployed on the island and that the construction of missile bases was beginning. However, Keating did not specify whether surface-to-air missile launchers or the more dangerous surface-to-surface launch sites were being constructed, but he probably was referencing only surface-to-air launch sites, of which Kennedy was already aware. On October 10, Keating asserted that the Soviets were deploying surface-to-surface intermediate range tactical missiles in Cuba. A State Department investigation report released on January 1963 stated that Keating's information was accurate throughout the Cuban buildup and that the only technically incorrect statement made by Keating was the number of intermediate range missile sites in Cuba on October 10, 1962.

President Kennedy had to account for Senator Keating's political pressure as the November elections were approaching. Other critics were also questioning why the US was not doing anything to stop Soviet involvement in Cuba. Many critics were recalling the 1823 Monroe Doctrine, which stated that the United States would not allow European powers to acquire or seize territory or colonies in the Western Hemisphere. The US had vigilantly defended this aspect of the doctrine since its inception in 1823. Critics were questioning this lack of action by

President Kennedy, which they did not consider to be a proper response to the growing relationship between Cuba and the Soviet Union. Many saw the relationship as an acquisition of a Soviet sphere of influence, if not the acquisition of a colony, 90 miles of the Florida coast.

The United States completed its first reconnaissance mission on October 14 when a U-2 flew over the entire Cuban island and captured pictures showing strong evidence of MRBM sites in Cuba. This marked the first Strategic Air Command (SAC) mission performed by the United States. The National Photographic Interpretation Center (NPIC) in Washington confirmed the missile sites a day later.

McGeorge Bundy, Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, informed President Kennedy a day after the photographs had been analyzed that missile sites had been pinpointed in Cuba. The President immediately called for a meeting of several important political advisors, and the group became known as the "Executive Committee" or the "ExComm." The committee reviewed photographic evidence, decided to send more U-2 reconnaissance planes to survey the Cuban island, and discussed what actions should be taken against Cuba to prevent more supplies from being shipped and to handle a possible strike on America.

Furthermore, the IRBM sites were able to launch Soviet SS-5 missiles that could strike all of the Continental United States except for the extreme Northwest and most of South America, virtually the entire Western Hemisphere. These sites would be completed and ready for launch in early December. However, neither the photographic evidence, nor the reports from American intelligence sources in Cuba indicated that the nuclear warheads for these missiles were in Cuba. The Executive Committee (ExComm) of the National Security Council met throughout the next days to debate the American response to this offensive, nuclear threat in Cuba. The committee

discussed four possible responses. They debated which response or which combination of responses to select and carry out. The increase in U-2 photographing of the island allowed 98% of the island to be photographed, and the intelligence that was gathered by the U-2 photographing allowed for accurate planning of air strikes and for an invasion.

The responses included two types of air strikes, an invasion, and a blockade. On October 16, the ExComm members mostly debated the air strike and invasion options. The blockade option was not considered except for in combination with one of the other choices. A surgical air strike, which would be limited to striking the missile sites, was discussed along with a more general air strike against Cuban military installations, missile sites, naval stations, and air defense facilities. Most of the first day was spent discussing the air strike and invasion possibilities with the blockade as only an afterthought.

However, as the discussions continued over the next few days, the ExComm members began to fear a Soviet response. The Joint Chiefs believed that the Soviet Union would not go to a general war over Cuba, but in case of an attack on Cuba, the Soviets would likely respond with fresh pressure on Berlin, Iran, Turkey, or Korea. The ExComm members concluded that an attack on Cuba may cause Soviet deaths, and this would garner the largest Soviet response.

Robert Kennedy and other civilian members of ExComm began to fear the Soviet response to an invasion and a broad air strike, but the Joint Chiefs continued advocating these options. They had hoped to accomplish what the Bay of Pigs invasion and Operation Mongoose had not accomplished, the overthrow of Fidel Castro. The Joint Chiefs also believed that these responses would not lead to a war with the Soviet Union. However, intelligence alerted President Kennedy that construction speed had increased at the missile sites and that most of the MRBMs would be able to launch in case of an invasion. CIA Director Marshall Carter informed the committee that

the Cuban missiles could be fully operational within two weeks but added that an individual missile could be functional “much sooner.”

President Kennedy feared invading the island. The invading American force would have to attack the missile sites. An attack on the missile sites would mean a direct attack by American troops on Soviet troops which could lead to Soviet intervention in Berlin or Turkey. Also, President Kennedy feared that the local Soviet commanders out of fear and desperation would use the nuclear weapons to defend themselves against the invading American forces. However, President Kennedy feared even more that such a desperate commander may fire against the continental United States itself. For these reasons, the members of ExComm began looking for alternatives to the violent action.

Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara became the biggest advocate of blockading Cuba to prevent the entry of any new offensive weapons. Secretary McNamara outlined three possible options to handle the crisis: political negotiations, a blockade of weapons and surveillance, or a direct attack on Cuba and Cuban missile sites. The committee discussed the three options but was divided on which course of action to take and was unable to come to a conclusion.

Beginning a diplomatic dialogue with both Khrushchev and Castro was considered as an option but rejected even though Adlai Stevenson, US ambassador to the UN, strongly supported an attempt for a diplomatic resolution.

The ExComm met the following day, October 17, to further discuss the three options set forth by Secretary McNamara. McNamara became the strongest proponent for the blockade because he felt that an air attack on Cuba would force the American forces to cover all of the Cuban terrain. Political advisor Dean Acheson argued in opposition to McNamara that a blockade would have

no effect on the missile sites already in place in Cuba. In addition, he argued that a blockade would anger the Soviet Union and might cause retaliation by the Soviets.

The focal point of the ExComm's meeting the following day concerned the morality of an air strike on Cuba. Robert Kennedy commented that the committee exhausted "more time [deliberating] on this moral question during the first five days than on any other single matter."

On October 19, the ExComm resolved to place a blockade around Cuba because the committee decided at the first meeting that an attack seemed too aggressive as the first course of action. President Kennedy reviewed the plan and finally decided on the quarantine.

In his address to the nation on October 20, Kennedy proclaimed, "I must tell you that the United States is determined that this threat to the security of this hemisphere be removed." He added that the United States would "regard any nuclear missile launched from Cuba against any nation in the Western Hemisphere as an attack by the Soviet Union on the United States, requiring a full retaliatory response against the Soviet Union." Kennedy concluded, "Our goal is not the victory of might, but the vindication of right—not peace at the expense of freedom, but both peace and freedom, here in this hemisphere, and, we hope, around the world. God willing, that goal will be achieved."

The following day, Premier Khrushchev responded to Kennedy's speech in a letter stating, "I must say frankly that the measures indicated in your statement constitute a serious threat to peace and to the security of nations... We reaffirm 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.” President Kennedy considered Khrushchev's letter but still signed Proclamation 3504 later that day, officially calling for a full quarantine.

Of the first nineteen ships on course to Cuba from the Soviet Union, sixteen reversed their courses and only 1 tanker, the Bucharest, approached the quarantine line. Although the quarantine seemed to work, Khrushchev told a U.S. businessman that he considered giving Soviet ships an order to attack and possibly sink any American ship that prevented Soviet ships from entering Cuba.

On October 24, Under Secretary of State George Ball drafted a letter to the U.S. Ambassador to Turkey, Raymond Hare, and U.S. Ambassador to NATO, Thomas Finletter, proposing a possible Cuba-for-Turkey agreement. Ball asked both ambassadors to review the possible political consequences of such a deal. On October 25, Finletter replied that the Turkish government considered the Jupiter missiles in Turkey a sign of the American-Turkish alliance. Finletter concluded, “In my opinion we must be most careful in working out any horse trade of this type to be sure it does not set pattern for handling future Russian incursions in other parts of the world.” Similarly, Ambassador Hare responded on October 26 and warned that Turkish officials did not favor a Cuba-for-Turkey missile trade. Hare proposed that if the United States decided to remove Jupiter missiles from Turkey, the process should not be sudden, but rather should be accomplished over a long period of time.

In the following days, Premier Khrushchev repeatedly warned President Kennedy of the possible implications of continuing the quarantine, declaring the blockade “an act of war.” Kennedy replied, “I regret very much that you still do not appear to understand what it is that has moved us in this matter” and defended the actions of the United States.

Khrushchev sent a letter to President Kennedy asking for a negotiation. In the letter, he stated, “I propose: we, for our part, will declare that our ships bound for Cuba are not carrying any armaments. You will declare that the United States will not invade Cuba with its troops and will not support any other forces which might intend to invade Cuba. Then the necessity of the presence of our military specialists in Cuba will disappear.” The ExComm reviewed the letter and assigned Soviet specialists Helmut Sonnenfeldt and Joseph Neupert to analyze the letter. In a second message, Khrushchev wrote, “You are disturbed over Cuba. You say that this disturbs you because it is ninety miles by sea from the coast of the United States of America. But... you have placed destructive missile weapons, which you call offensive, in Turkey, literally next to us... I therefore make this proposal: We are willing to remove from Cuba the means which you regard as offensive... Your representatives will make a declaration to the effect that the United States... will remove its analogous means from Turkey... And after that, persons entrusted by the United Nations Security Council could inspect on the spot the fulfillment of the pledges made.” Members of ExComm debated the issue of a Cuba-for-Turkey missile trade, fearing a nuclear war with the Soviet Union.

President Kennedy ignored the second letter sent by Khrushchev sent on October 26 and responded to Khrushchev’s original letter, which made no reference to the American missiles in Turkey. Theodore Sorensen and Robert Kennedy prepared a draft of the response letter to Khrushchev, President Kennedy reviewed the letter, and signed his name. The letter was sent to Khrushchev on the evening of October 27.

President Kennedy, Secretary McNamara, Robert Kennedy, McGeorge Bundy, Dean Rusk, Llewellyn Thompson, and Theodore Sorensen met in the oval office to discuss the letter sent to Khrushchev. The group decided to inform the Soviets that the United States would indeed

remove all missiles from Turkey once the Soviet missiles were removed from Cuba. While the ExComm anxiously waited for a response from the Soviet government, Robert Kennedy recalled, “We had not abandoned hope, but what hope there was now rested with Khrushchev's revising his course within the next few hours. It was a hope, not an expectation. The expectation was a military confrontation by Tuesday [October 29] and possibly tomorrow.”

At 8:00 AM on October 28, Khrushchev gave his reply to President Kennedy's letter. In a public broadcast, Khrushchev declared, “The Soviet government, in addition to previously issued instructions on the cessation of further work at the building sites for the weapons, has issued a new order on the dismantling of the weapons which you describe as 'offensive,' and their crating and return to the Soviet Union.”

Arms Race and Nuclear Test Ban Treaty

With the resolution of the Cuban Missile Crisis, the nuclear arms race between the Soviet Union and United States had reached its peak, and the intensity had plummeted to an all-time low.

President John F. Kennedy was ready to form a nuclear test ban treaty with the Soviet Union and other nations wishing to comply. In a speech Kennedy gave at American University, prior to the signing of the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, he boldly stated, “Nuclear powers must avoid those confrontations which bring an adversary to a choice of either a humiliating retreat or a nuclear war.... In short, both the United States and its allies, and the Soviet Union and its allies, have a mutually deep interest in a just and genuine peace and in holding the arms race.” Kennedy made this speech for three purposes: it would build public support for the test ban treaty, it would mollify Khrushchev into easily signing the test ban treaty, and it would overcome any Soviet skepticism of Kennedy's policies. As the entire nation had hoped, Khrushchev responded to Kennedy after the speech had been made that it was the best speech he had heard by an

American president since Roosevelt, and, after some negotiations over the issue of on-site inspections, he finally agreed to the formation and signing of the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty. Thus on August 5, 1963, the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty was finally signed in the Kremlin by the United States, the Soviet Union, and also the United Kingdom. According to the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, each of the signatories of this treaty were bound “to prohibit, to prevent, and not to carry out any nuclear weapon test explosion, or any other nuclear explosion at any place under its jurisdiction or control (a) in the atmosphere, beyond its limits including outer space, or underwater including territorial waters or high seas, or (b) in any other environment if such explosion causes radioactive debris to be present outside territorial limits of the state under whose jurisdiction or control such explosion is conducted.” Two specifics that made this treaty acceptable to each of its signatories were that it allowed any signatory to pull out of the treaty by offering a three-month notice to the other signatories and that it ensured that nuclear progress in each of the nations could still be underway *via* underground testing, which was not outlawed by the treaty.

“According to the ancient Chinese proverb, ‘A journey of a thousand miles must begin with a single step.’ My fellow Americans, let us take that first step. Let us, if we can, step back from the shadows of war and seek out the way of peace. And if that journey is a thousand miles, or even more, let history record that we, in this land, at this time, took the first step.” Through his superior leadership abilities and perseverance, President John F. Kennedy led the United States of America to take this “first step” by signing the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty along with the Soviet Union and the United Kingdom on August 5, 1963, in Kremlin. He thus initiated the end of a conflict, which had carried on for years and would carry on for several more. By doing so,

Kennedy protected not only a nation, but also the world, from the immediate fear of nuclear proliferation and war.