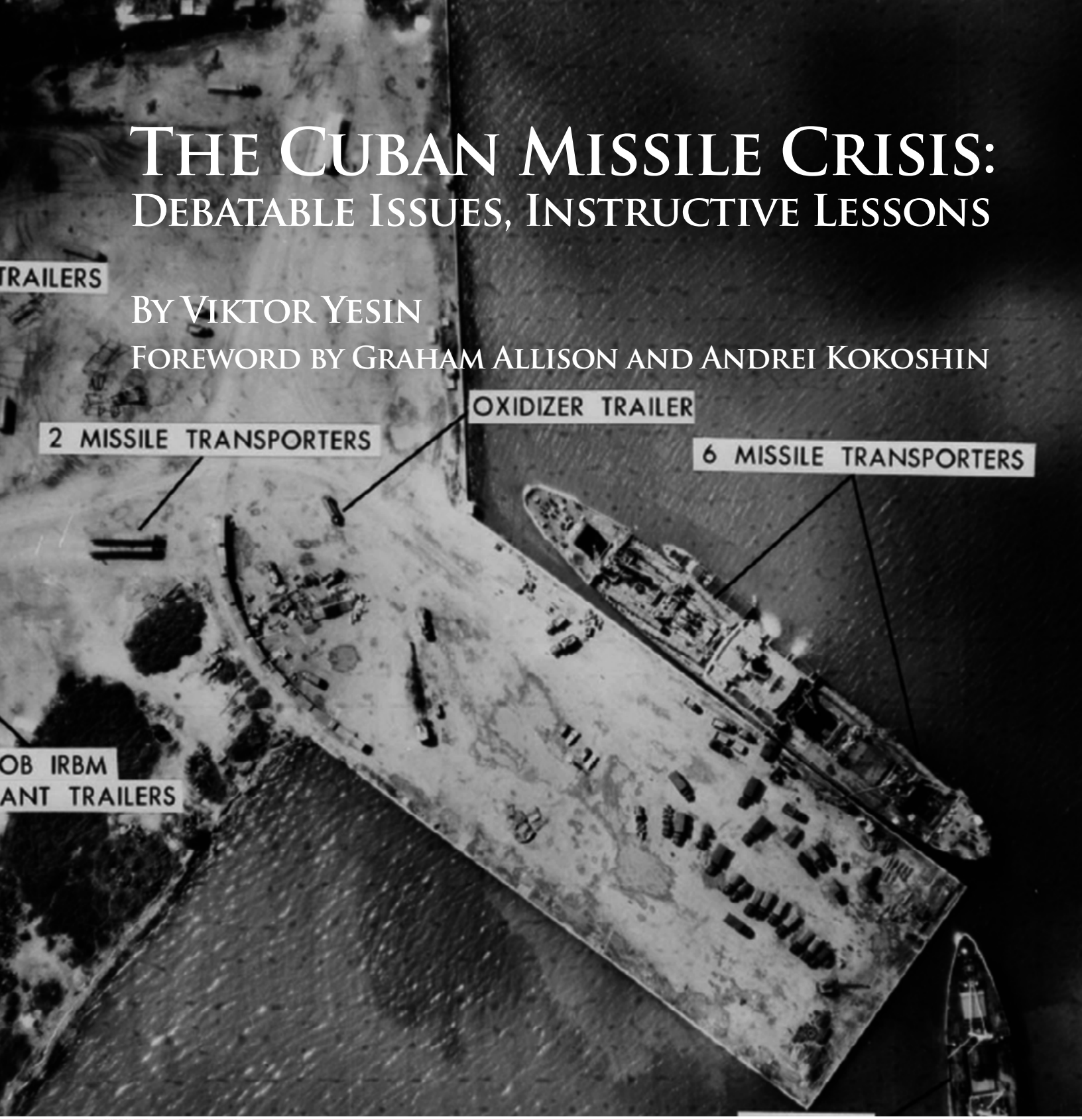
# The Cuban Missile Crisis:
## Debatable Issues, Instructive Lessons

By Viktor Yesin
Foreword by Graham Allison and Andrei Kokoshin

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John F. Kennedy School of Government
Harvard University
79 JFK Street
Cambridge, MA 02138
Fax: (617) 495-8963
Email: belfer_center@hks.harvard.edu
Website: http://belfercenter.org



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Cover photo: Aerial photo of the port of Mariel, Cuba showing Soviet missile equipment by the docks and on-board freighters, October 1962. NHHC photo USN 711212.

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# About the author:

Colonel-General (retired) **Viktor Ivanovich Yesin** is a professor on the Faculty of World Politics at the Moscow State University and advisor to commander of the Strategic Missile Forces of Russia. General Yesin has previously served as chief of staff of the Strategic Missile Forces, department head in the staff of the Defense Council, and in the Security Council of the Russian Federation. Mr. Yesin participated in 1962 Operation Anadyr carried out by the Soviet Armed Forces in the Republic of Cuba.

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# Foreword by Graham Allison and Andrei Kokoshin

The Cuban Missile Crisis unfolded more than fifty years ago, yet it remains one of the most studied and important topics for political scientists and historians of the twentieth century. The lessons of the crisis are still of great practical value and interest to government officials who make decisions on political-military and military-strategic issues. One such lesson is that the outcome of a crisis is often determined by nuances in the way each side makes and executes decisions, and that these nuances are often hidden from view until long after the crisis is resolved.

A half century later, scholars of the Cuban Missile Crisis are still asking questions about why each side behaved the way it did. For example: why did the Soviet political leadership and military command develop and execute a meticulous plan to conceal nuclear weapons while en route to Cuba, but make what seemed to be only half-hearted attempts to camouflage adequately the missile launch positions on the island?

Indeed, it was this failure of concealment that foiled Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev's plan to deploy the missiles in secret and, once installed, to present a nuclear Cuba to the United States and the international community as a *fait accompli*. As soon as U.S. intelligence officials obtained and analyzed photographic evidence of the missile positions, they notified President John F. Kennedy, who swung into action.

Scholars discussed the Soviet concealment failure at length during two roundtables commemorating the 50th anniversary of the missile crisis, one hosted by Harvard University's Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs and the other by Lomonosov Moscow State University's Faculty of World Politics. Viktor Ivanovich Yesin, a retired colonel-general and professor in the Faculty of World Politics at Moscow State University, continues this discussion in the paper below.

As a scholar of the Cuban Missile Crisis, Yesin is in a league of his own. Not only is he one of contemporary Russia's most thoughtful military strategists, but he was also a direct participant in the crisis as a young lieutenant serving in the Soviet Strategic Missile Forces. In June 1962, he was stationed in the Baltics when his unit received a directive from the General Staff to pack up for an exercise at an undisclosed "distant location." It was more than a month later, on board a Soviet dry-cargo freighter plowing through the Atlantic, that Yesin and his comrades-in-arms learned that they were being shipped to Cuba along with their R-12 missiles as part of Operation "Anadyr."

Yesin's regiment ended up in Cuba's Santa Clara Province, where the young officer performed so well as his unit's chief engineer that he was promoted to senior lieutenant. He went on to become chief of staff of the Strategic Missile Forces before retiring to pursue an academic career.

General Yesin takes advantage of his unique position as both participant and skilled scholar in drawing lessons from the crisis that are both informative and instructive.

The author attributes the Soviet Union's failure to conceal the missile launch positions in Cuba to two factors.

The first factor was that "only a very narrow circle" of General Staff officers were involved in the top-secret planning process for Operation Anadyr, and none were missile specialists. Therefore, no steps were taken to adapt standard concealment procedures to the Cuban landscape, and missiles were deployed with camouflage nets designed to provide cover in the coniferous forests of Russia, not in the palm groves of Cuba.

The second factor was that "the Soviet missile units were forced to deploy with haste, increasing the chance they would violate proper concealment procedures," according to Yesin. He argues that this haste stemmed from the unrealistic deployment deadlines that Soviet political leaders placed on the military. Moreover, because Soviet commanders in Cuba did not have enough engineering equipment to build the launch positions, their units were forced to do so with manual labor, which was easier to see from above. As a result, U.S. spy planes were able to detect five of the six launch positions before the nuclear-tipped medium-range missiles were emplaced.

It is important to note that one of the six launch positions was not detected by the United States, a potentially significant intelligence failure. If Kennedy followed the advice of his advisors and bombed the Cuban missile positions, the Soviets would have been free to launch a retaliatory strike against the United States from this sixth, undetected site.

For their part, Soviet political leaders should have paid more attention to the planning and implementation of Operation Anadyr, particularly since Khrushchev had some, albeit limited, military experience. (He served on the Military Council of several Soviet army groups during World War II, essentially as a political officer.) At the same time, Khrushchev had no mechanisms through either the Communist Party Central Committee or the Soviet government to monitor how the military implemented directives from the leadership.

Meanwhile, the Soviet Defense Ministry and its General Staff were led by officers who did not have experience executing operations involving strategic nuclear weapons, and they did not ask for advice from those who understood the intricacies of transporting and installing missiles covertly. They did not do so in part because widening the circle of participants in Operation Anadyr could have compromised its secrecy, which was the highest priority of the Soviet political leadership.

General Yesin points out how the United States was able to confirm the presence of Soviet missiles in Cuba using aerial photography: the U.S. military and CIA had previously used U-2 spy planes to photograph missile sites on Soviet territory. The Soviet Defense Ministry, the Air Defense Force, and the Air Force were all aware of the routes flown by American

U-2s over the Soviet Union and Warsaw Pact countries even before CIA pilot Gary Powers was shot down over Sverdlovsk on May 1, 1960. There is no information available about how Soviet military leaders—to say nothing of the political leaders—assessed the damage done to Soviet national security by these overflights. However, by failing to better conceal its missile launch sites in Cuba missile, it appears that Soviet leaders underestimated this damage.

This is yet another example of how important nuances in the behavior and thinking of parties in a crisis situation—particularly a nuclear standoff—can remain hidden from political leaders at the time, and yet have an important impact on the outcome of the crisis. Professor Yesin's paper is an important contribution to the study of the lessons of the Cuban Missile Crisis, greatly advancing our understanding of Soviet decision-making during this iconic event of the Cold War.

**Graham Allison**

Douglas Dillon Professor of Government and
Director of the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, Harvard University
Former U.S. Assistant Secretary of Defense

**Andrei Kokoshin**

Dean of the Faculty of the World Politics, Lomonosov Moscow State University
6th Secretary of the Security Council of Russia

# The Cuban Missile Crisis: Debatable Issues and Instructive Lessons

American political scientists Graham Allison and Philip Zelikow rightly note in their book *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis* that the Cuban Missile Crisis (CMC) is a defining event of the nuclear century and the most dangerous moment in recorded history.[1]

This Russian-language edition of the book was published under the title *The Essence of Decision as Exemplified by Cuban Missile Crisis of October 1962.* Member of the Russian Academy of Sciences and 6th Secretary of Russia's Security Council Dr. Andrei Kokoshin wrote a preface to this Russian edition.[2] In this preface, Kokoshin similarly argued that the crisis was the "most dangerous in the history of the Cold War when the two superpowers, the Soviet Union and the United States, came very close to a full-scale war involving nuclear weapons."[3]

This crisis has been evaluated multiple times. Some of the most recent evaluations were given in 2012 in commemoration of the crisis's 50th anniversary. However, experts on the CMC have yet to reach consensus on a number of questions related to the crisis. Furthermore, academics and commentators have missed some of the key lessons from the crisis. These issues were raised at a seminar on the 50th anniversary of the Cuban Missile Crisis that was organized by the Belfer Center for Science of International Affairs at the Harvard Kennedy School and chaired by director of this center, Professor Graham Allison, on September 26, 2012. They were also debated at the "Long Echo of the Missile Crisis" roundtable sponsored by Moscow State University's Faculty of World Politics and the Russian Academy of Sciences' Institute for International Security Studies on November 14, 2012. Member of the Russian Academy of Sciences Andrei Kokoshin chaired that roundtable. Dr. Kokoshin also attended the Harvard Cuban Missile Crisis conference in September 2012.

With these discussions in mind, the author would like to offer his interpretation of the answers to the most important of the CMC-related questions that remain open. He would also like to outline a number of instructive lessons of the 1962 crisis.

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1 Graham Allison and Philip Zelikow, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis* (New York: Longman, 1999), 1.

2 Graham Allison and Philip Zelikow, *Kvintessentsiya resheniya: Na primere Karibskogo krizisa 1962 goda* [Essence of decision as exemplified by the Cuban missile crisis of 1962], trans. and ed. by Simon Saradzhyan and Nabi Abdullaev (Moscow: Book House "Librokom", 2012), 528.

3 Foreword by Andrei Kokoshin in Allison and Zelikow, *Kvintessentsiya resheniya* [Essence of decision], 9.

# 1. Why Soviet Leaders Sent Nuclear Missiles to Cuba

Many experts believe that the most important unanswered questions are those regarding the political considerations that prompted Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev to deploy nuclear missiles in Cuba.

Four factors informed the decision by the Soviet Union's political leadership to send a missile division armed with medium-range nuclear ballistic missiles[4] to Cuba.

**Factor 1.** Soviet leaders believed that the United States was preparing to overthrow the revolutionary government of Fidel Castro, an ally of the Soviet Union. Any doubts in the Kremlin about U.S. intentions vis-à-vis Cuba disappeared when U.S. armed forces staged exercises in the Caribbean Sea in April and May 1962. These exercises were code-named Lantphibex and Prompt Strike, respectively. Khrushchev would not allow any aggression against Cuba: it could lead many in the Communist bloc to question Moscow's willingness to protect its allies and could cause a crisis of confidence within the U.S.S.R. about its own military capabilities. Khrushchev also believed that the overwhelming American military superiority in the Caribbean made it impossible to defend Cuba with conventional arms. To Khrushchev, only Soviet nuclear missiles deployed in Cuba could serve as a credible deterrent against U.S. military aggression.

**Factor 2.** Soviet leaders believed that they could place nuclear missiles outside the territory of the USSR. The Soviet leadership reached this conclusion after the United States placed Thor and Jupiter medium-range ballistic nuclear missiles in Great Britain, Italy and Turkey. Furthermore, the Soviet Union's actions had precedent: Moscow had previously deployed nuclear missiles outside its territory. In 1959, two missile batteries of the 72nd Engineer Brigade of the Supreme High Command Reserve were covertly deployed in the German Democratic Republic. The batteries, which operated R-5 medium-range nuclear missiles (NATO reporting name: SS-3) with 12 launchers assigned to them, remained on combat duty in East Germany for six months until tensions cooled over access to Berlin.

**Factor 3.** The politico-military leadership of the Soviet Union understood that deploying nuclear missiles in Cuba would not drastically change the imbalance between Soviet and U.S. nuclear forces. Instead, the deployment would create another kind of parity—"parity of fear."[5] Placing nuclear missiles near the U.S. would force Washington to feel the same fear that Moscow had over U.S. missiles near its border. As Khrushchev memorably put it, "Why not throw a hedgehog at Uncle Sam's pants?"[6]

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4 R-12 (NATO reporting name: SS-4) and R-14 (NATO reporting name: SS-5).

5 Anatoly Dobrynin, *Sugubo doveritelno. Posol v Washingtone pri shesti prezidentakh SShA. 1962-1986* [Fully confidential. Ambassador to Washington during service of six presidents in 1962-1968] (Moscow: Avtor, 1997), 60.

6 Andrei Kokoshin, *Razmyshleniya o Karibskom krizise v kontekste strategicheskoy stabil'nosti* [Reflections on the Cuban missile crisis in the context of strategic stability] (Moscow: Lenand, 2012), 9; and Sergo Mikoyan, *Anatomiya Karibskogo krizisa (Anatomy of the Cuban missile crisis.)*, Russian Academy of Sciences. Institute of World Economy and International Relations (Moscow: Academia, 2006), 126.

**Factor 4.** The Soviet leadership hoped to win political concessions from the United States by placing the missiles in Cuba. Khrushchev believed that placing nuclear weapons in Cuba, despite the risk, would yield significant dividends by allowing the U.S.S.R. to pressure the United States and NATO over Berlin. At that time, Khrushchev intended to squeeze the United States, Britain and France out of West Berlin. By placing nuclear weapons in Cuba, the United States could be forced to trade the removal of those weapons for concessions to the Soviets regarding West Berlin. The Soviet leaders also hoped to use the expected political windfall to strengthen their country's positions in the Communist world vis-à-vis their emerging rival, the People's Republic of China.

Above all, the Soviet leadership's primary reason for deploying Soviet nuclear missile units in Cuba was to prevent U.S. military aggression against the Cuban government. Despite the risks, Moscow believed that it was the only measure that could prevent an American attack. The American installation of Thor and Jupiter missiles in Europe further justified to Moscow a symmetrical Soviet deployment of nuclear missiles in Cuba.

It should be noted that as of mid-1962 the geostrategic situation was so tense that the Soviets had to transport nuclear missiles to Cuba in secret. Otherwise, Soviet transport ships with R-12 and R-14 missiles on board would have been blocked by the U.S. Navy in the Atlantic while still en route to Cuba. But the Soviet Union did not intend to keep the deployments a secret for long: Chairman Khrushchev wanted to announce the deployment during an official visit to Cuba in November 1962. During that visit, Khrushchev and Cuban leader Fidel Castro were to sign an intergovernmental agreement on military cooperation between the U.S.S.R. and the Republic of Cuba. Soviet and Cuban officials initialed that agreement in Moscow at the end of August 1962. Once the agreement was signed, the signatories were to reveal Soviet nuclear forces in Cuba in order to present the United States with a *fait accompli*.[7]

Unfortunately for Moscow, this plan was never implemented. On October 14, 1962 an American U-2 spy plane took aerial photographs of the San Cristobal area when overflying western Cuba.[8] After developing the film, CIA analysts concluded that a unit of R-12 medium-range ballistic missiles was being deployed in that area. CIA reported this conclusion to American President John F. Kennedy. Washington subsequently increased its efforts to identify other areas in Cuba where missile units might be deployed.

The U.S. mostly succeeded: several more missile bases were detected. These findings prompted a decision by the U.S. leadership to introduce what the White House described euphemistically as a "quarantine" of Cuba. In practice, though, the U.S. established a 500-mile blockade zone around Cuba to prevent the further shipment of offensive weapons to

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7 Kokoshin, *Razmyshleniya o Karibskom krizise v kontekste strategicheskoy stabil'nosti*, 11.

8 Robert S. McNamara, *Vglyadyvayas' v proshloye: tragediya i uroki V'yetnama* [In Retrospect: the tragedy and lessons of Vietnam] trans. from English (Moscow: Ladomir, 2004), 355.

the island. President Kennedy announced this decision in an address broadcast on radio and television in the evening of October 22, 1962.

## 2. Why Americans Succeeded in Detecting Soviet Nuclear Missiles in Cuba

Why did Americans manage to "bust" locations of the nuclear missiles (albeit, not all of them) in spite of the strict measures the Soviet side adopted to ensure stealth deployment of the missiles? There is no one simple answer to this question, but two factors facilitated detection of the missile positions.

**Factor 1.** The terrain in Cuba was not favorable for concealment, but Soviet commanders did not consider this during preparation for deploying missiles on the island. The units should have been equipped with specialized means of concealment that would most naturally fit into the Cuban landscape. This was not done. Only a very narrow circle of generals and officers of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the U.S.S.R. knew about the pending deployment of missile units in Cuba. None of the officers were missile specialists and none possessed sufficient knowledge of how to camouflage missile hardware, which required specific skills. They mistakenly assumed that the standard means of concealment available in missile units would be sufficient to camouflage assets deployed Cuba.

Indeed, the camouflage nets that were brought to Cuba did not blend into the local landscape. These nets were designed to disguise missile hardware in the coniferous forests. Unfortunately for them, the Soviet missile crews had to deploy their missiles in Cuba's palm groves. Moreover, palm trees in these groves were separated from each other at distances of 10-20 meters, making concealment of such large assets (e.g., launch pads, missile installers and transport carts) extremely difficult. Moreover, this hardware had to be positioned in a strictly linear fashion in order to erect missiles in the vertical position on the launch pads.

It was this characteristic line-up that enabled CIA analysts to identify the activities in the San Cristobal area as deployment of a Soviet missile unit. The analysts compared the Cuban photographs to those taken during reconnaissance overflights of missile units armed with the R-12 medium-range ballistic missiles in the Soviet Union. These flights stopped only after one U-2 piloted by Francis Gary Powers was shot down in the skies above the city of Sverdlovsk (now Yekaterinburg) on May 1, 1960.[9]

**Factor 2.** The Soviet missile units were forced to deploy with haste, increasing the chance they would violate proper concealment procedures. The Soviet leadership set an unrealistic deadline of November 1, 1962 to complete deployment of the missile units. The late arrival of missile units to Cuba and lack of engineering equipment—needed to perform excavation

[9] Powers was captured, tried, and convicted by a Soviet court. He was eventually exchanged in a pprisoner swap on February 10, 1962.

work at the launch positions—also had a negative impact.

Exacerbating the hurried work, increased seasonal rainfall drenched the missile sites in October 1962. Soldiers and officers worked for about 16-18 hours per day getting the launching pads and missile hardware ready. This increased workload, coupled with the torrential rain, led to heightened fatigue and decreased the missile crews' focus on ensuring proper concealment measures for the hardware.

These two factors allowed the United States to detect five out of the six missile units deployed in Cuba by October 27, 1962. Each of those units consisted of four launch batteries.

I believe that if missile specialists had been involved in planning preparations for deployment of the missile division to Cuba, the missile units would have had a far better chance of concealing their missiles from American reconnaissance overflights.

## 3. Why Khrushchev Decided to Withdraw Missiles from Cuba

Khrushchev did not see the deployment of Soviet nuclear missiles in Cuba as an end in itself. His ultimate goal was to deter the United States from attacking Cuba by deploying nuclear missiles on this Caribbean island, but he did not want to go as far as going to war with the Americans.[10]

The Soviet leader thus decided to remove the missiles when President Kennedy assured Chairman Khrushchev that, in return for withdrawing Soviet nuclear missiles from Cuba, the U.S. would not invade Cuba. Moreover, the U.S. also made a confidential pledge to eliminate its missile bases in Turkey and Europe a few months later. Indeed, as soon the Soviet missile divisions began dismantling their launch sites in Cuba, U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara issued a secret directive to render the U.S. Jupiter missiles in Turkey unusable. McNamara also ordered this process be photographed to personally verify the execution of his October 29, 1962 order.

Later, Khrushchev made another concession to Kennedy: the Soviet leader agreed to withdraw IL-28 bombers from Cuba. Along with the ballistic missiles, Washington considered these aircraft to be offensive weapons that could launch nuclear strikes against the American homeland.

Kennedy and Khrushchev's agreement about American nonaggression toward Cuba were formalized in the form of an inter-governmental agreement when, in 1970, the U.S. State Department and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the U.S.S.R. exchanged appropriate notes. Then-President Richard Nixon officially confirmed that the U.S. committed as a state to refrain from aggression against Cuba as long as the U.S.S.R. did not deploy offensive weapons on that island.[11]

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[10] Kokoshin, *Razmyshleniya o Karibskom krizise v kontekste strategicheskoy stabil'nosti*, 15.

[11] Sergo Mikoyan. "Anatomiya Karibskogo krizisa (Anatomy of the Cuban missile crisis.)" *Russian Academy of*

## 4. Lessons of the Cuban Missile Crisis

**Lesson 1: No one can "win" a nuclear war.**

The first lesson is the most important one. Prior to the Cuban Missile Crisis, the politico-military leadership of the Soviet Union and the United States had believed it would be possible to use nuclear weapons to win in a war against each other. Indeed, that belief was even articulated in their respective military doctrines.[12] Having found themselves on the edge of nuclear abyss during the CMC, Soviet and American leaders realized that there could be no winners in a nuclear war. They realized that after the opponent is defeated, a war cannot be considered victorious if it involves the death of an estimated total of 80–100 million people of your own people.[13] Moreover, no one could guarantee against the deaths of millions more as a result of the subsequent environmental catastrophe caused by nuclear war.

This realization led to the creation in 1963 of a direct communications link between the Kremlin and the White House so that the leaders of the U.S.S.R. and the United States could quickly resolve any crisis before it could escalate to a military confrontation. Further on, the countries signed the Agreement on Measures to Reduce the Risk of Outbreak of Nuclear War between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialists Republics in 1971 and the Agreement between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialists Republics on Prevention of Nuclear War in 1973. These agreements are open-ended and they continue to contribute to maintenance of strategic stability and international security to date.

**Lesson 2: In a nuclear confrontation, both sides must compromise in order to find a mutually acceptable solution. There is no other rational way out of the crisis.**

The U.S. and U.S.S.R. only found a way out of the CMC when both sides expressed a willingness to compromise and make mutual concessions. This created a window of opportunity to find mutually acceptable solutions rather than corner the opposing party with ultimatums.

There is simply no other rational way out of situations like the Cuban Missile Crisis. Nuclear missile confrontations and ultimatums are not compatible.

Both countries benefited from learning this lesson. The two countries have not encountered such crisis situations in the course of the 50 years since the CMC. The bilateral relationship has had its ups and downs: one need only look at the tense situation around Able Archer in Fall 1983. Yet the superpowers never again came so perilously close to the danger of full-scale nuclear war as they did during the Cuban Missile Crisis. Both sides gradually formed views on how to ensure strategic stability and that was reflected in a number of official

*Sciences. Institute of World Economy and International Relations* (Moscow: Academia, 2006), 398.

[12] Kokoshin, *Razmyshleniya o Karibskom krizise v kontekste strategicheskoy stabil'nosti*, 6.

[13] Kokoshin, *Razmyshleniya o Karibskom krizise v kontekste strategicheskoy stabil'nosti*, 3.

Soviet-U.S. and then Russian-U.S. documents. [14]

**Lesson 3: Prepare to make decisions thoroughly. Make sure there is clear and timely communication between you and your adversary during a crisis.**

The Cuban Missile Crisis illustrated the need to prepare thoroughly and professionally to make any and all decisions in a crisis. It also illustrated the need for timely communication of those decisions to an opposing side. A number of setbacks occurred in decision-making process of the U.S. and U.S.S.R. that made resolution of the CMC far much more difficult. Those failures brought both sides to the edge of a nuclear abyss.

For example, Kennedy received through the U.S. embassy in Moscow a private letter from Khrushchev on the evening of October 26, 1962, in which the Soviet leader stated that the U.S.S.R agreed to withdraw nuclear missiles from Cuba if the United States would guarantee that it would not invade Cuba. The American president and his entourage began to draft a reply to Khrushchev, in which they agreed to offer a guarantee of non-aggression to Cuba in exchange for withdrawal of Soviet nuclear missiles.[15] However, Kennedy then received another letter from Khrushchev on the morning of October 27. In that letter the Soviet leader put forward another condition for resolution of the crisis: withdrawal of America's Jupiter nuclear missiles from Turkey. This message, which Americans believed to be a follow-on to the letter he received on October 26, changed the whole atmosphere of the negotiations. The Americans began to think that either there had been a coup in the Kremlin or that Khrushchev had come under such strong pressure from Kremlin hawks that he had to abandon his conciliatory position.

In reality, the 'second' message that Kennedy received on October 27 was supposed to have been first. It was only due to the sluggishness of employees of the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs—who delayed sending Khrushchev's original letter—that Kennedy read the conciliatory follow-on letter first and heard the aggressive, original message second.[16]

The confusion over the sequence of Khrushchev's messages could have led to disastrous consequences if were not for Robert Kennedy, brother of the American president and U.S. Attorney General. On the evening of October 27, Robert Kennedy met with Anatoly Dobrynin, Soviet ambassador to the United States. That meeting cleared up the misunderstandings and soon thereafter President Kennedy sent to Chairman Khrushchev a message that enabled the Soviet leader to accept the conditions for resolution of the crisis proposed by the American side: guarantee of non-aggression against Cuba in return for withdrawal of the Soviet nuclear missiles from Cuba.[17]

**Lesson 4: Do not rely purely on intelligence agencies for information.**

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[14] Kokoshin, *Razmyshleniya o Karibskom krizise v kontekste strategicheskoy stabil'nosti*, 5-6.
[15] Dobrynin, *Sugubo doveritelno. Posol v Washingtone pri shesti prezidentakh SShA. 1962-1986*, 71-72.
[16] Mikoyan, *Anatomiya Karibskogo krizisa,* 1047.
[17] Mikoyan, *Anatomiya Karibskogo krizisa,* 1048.

The actions undertaken by the militaries of the nations involved in the Cuban Missile Crisis demonstrated that decisions should not be based solely on information collected through intelligence. Both the U.S. and Soviet intelligence agencies made mistakes when drawing conclusions from their analysis of the situation during the crisis.[18]

Erroneous intelligence analysis led to erroneous decisions that increased the chances for the outbreak of hostilities. For example, General Thomas Power, head of the U.S. Strategic Air Command, issued an order on October 24, 1962 to put subordinate units on full alert, even though the situation did not require this. On October 27, 1962, General Stepan Grechko, who at that time served as deputy commander of the Soviet forces in Cuba with responsibility for air defense, gave the order to open fire at an American U-2 spy plane. Two missiles launched from the Dvina air defense system (NATO reporting name: SA-2 Guideline) hit the reconnaissance plane, killing the pilot. This incident almost pushed the crisis to the breaking point.

This study is intended neither to be exhaustively comprehensive nor to represent the ultimate truth. It is the result of the author's purely personal reflections, inspired not only by his memories as a direct participant in the menacing events of 1962, but also by the information on these events that has become available to him in recent years.

[18] Robert S. McNamara. *Vglyadyvayas' v proshloye: tragediya i uroki V'yetnama*, 356-357.


**Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs**
Harvard Kennedy School
79 JFK Street
Cambridge, MA 02138
Fax: (617) 495-8963
Email: belfer_center@harvard.edu
Website: http://belfercenter.org